

LE GROUPE DE SIX – GERMAINE TAILLEFERRE ET IONESCO

The play, regarded as a foundation stone of the Theatre of the Absurd, would have fully harmonised with Winnaretta's consistent championship of the experimental and the avant garde throughout her life in Paris and Venice.

It is of interest to note a musical connection between Eugène Ionesco and one of Winnaretta's important protégées, Germaine Tailleferre. Although this came about long after Winnaretta's death, it is eloquent evidence of how Winnaretta gave her favoured protégés the impetus and support they needed earlier in their careers, enabling them to develop their art in a multitude of unexpected and fruitful directions later in life. Tailleferre, along with her fellow members of Les Six, Francis Poulenc and Darius Milhaud, benefited enormously from Winnaretta's patronage in the Twenties. In 1923, following the success of Tailleferre's ballet *Le Marchand des Oiseaux* with the Ballet Suédois, Winnaretta commissioned her to write a piano concerto in the same style as the ballet. This concerto was premièred by Alfred Cortot and won high praise. Many years later, in the late Fifties, Tailleferre turned her attention to chamber opera. Thanks to private patrons of the stature of Winnaretta earlier in the century, this genre had undergone a major revival, a reaction against the grandiose values of opera production that had prevailed in the 19th century. Furthermore, the format was a logical choice for the private patron, since it is portable, manageable and practical to produce in a domestic setting. Stravinsky's *Renard* and De Falla's *Retablo* are two examples of the genre that were directly commissioned by Winnaretta. Tailleferre's first composition along these lines, in 1957, was *La Petite Sirène*, a chamber piece based on a Hans Christian Andersen story adapted by Philippe Soupault. Her second, in 1959, was an adaptation of *Le Maître*, an absurdist short play by Ionesco. Like *Rhinocéros*, it is considered central in the Absurdist repertoire.