Senior Honors Recital

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

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Abstract

My senior recital consisted of the *Petite Suite* for harp by David Watkins, *Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp* by Vincent Persichetti, *Impromptu, Op. 86* by Gabriel Fauré, *Rhapsodie* by Marcel Grandjany, *Scintillation* and movements I and III from *Préludes intimes* by Carlos Salzedo. All composed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the pieces showed the virtuosity and special sound effects that can be achieved on the pedal harp. Audience members received program notes informing them about each piece in the recital.

Acknowledgements

- My harp teacher, Elizabeth Richter, has been integral in helping me to become a better harpist. She coached me on the pieces performed in the senior honors recital and was always willing to help with any odds and ends. Thank you for sharing the gift of music with me and making my life a little easier with your willingness to help.

- Thanks especially to Christine Major, who lent her flute playing to make the recital a little more interesting and special.

- Without the work and facilities of the Ball State recording studio, I would not have such a polished recording of my recital. I appreciate all the hours spent recording and editing the material.

- I would also like to thank the backstage crew, who took care of the lighting and of opening and closing any number of curtains and doors.

- Most of all I would like to thank my parents and God, who allowed me to have all the opportunities that led to my being able to perform a senior recital.
Artist's Statement

Throughout the spring, summer, and early fall of 2004 I spent time planning for my senior recital. I wanted to choose challenging repertoire that was also pleasing to the audience. My harp teacher reserved a date for my recital in Sursa Hall on December 8, 2004, and I began to practice my selected pieces.

Having already heard the *Petite Suite* by David Watkins, I decided to perform it as the opener for my recital because of the vitality of the first and third movement. This piece was also a bit unique because it had a program, or storyline. The challenge was to make each movement sound exactly like the scene it was supposed to invoke. The “Prelude” sparkled with the dawn, birds merrily swooping over the river Seine. The “Nocturne” depicted a calm, cloudy night with a glimpse of starlight. “Fire Dance,” the third movement, needed as much energy as I could give to conjure the image of a wild South American dance.

The second piece on the program, *Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp* by Vincent Persichetti, provided variety with its use of the flute. I had not done much chamber music, so I welcomed the opportunity to work with another instrumentalist. Persichetti’s work was not immediately likeable for me, but as I worked on the piece and heard how the flute and harp parts intertwined, I began to appreciate his ingenuity. The serenade also allowed me to show the audience some less traditional sound effects for harp, such as the dampened nail glissando and the pedal slide.

*Impromptu, Op. 86*, by Gabriel Fauré, is a standard in the harp repertoire. I had never played the piece, so I decided to learn it for the recital. The piece helped me to learn pedal maneuvering, chord identification, and memory skills. Another challenge was making the melody come through in a clear and beautiful way when it was part of a cascade of notes.
Fauré was French, so I learned to interpret the piece in French Romantic style. I chose this piece for the end of the first half because of its impressive finish.

*Scintillation*, by Carlos Salzedo, gave me exposure to a nearly atonal setting in its first section, a sound to which I was not accustomed. It also helped me to explore the depth of the contrasts I could make on the harp. Subito dynamics, glissandi, unusual rhythms, and a *bisbigliando* section helped to make the piece full of excitement. As the most challenging piece on the program, its length and difficulty made keeping energy throughout the piece a hard task. Because of the piece I was able to build endurance in performance.

Two movements of Salzedo’s *Préludes intimes*, “tenderly emoted” and “profoundly peaceful,” followed *Scintillation*. Their placement in the program was designed to allow me to rest after the previous difficult piece. The movements also contrasted with the rest of the program because of their tranquil quality. Although the notes were easy, controlling each note was essential for an interesting execution. Large dynamic shadings had to be made in a few beats. Hopefully the audience felt the thoughtful and contemplative character of the movements.

*Rhapsodie*, by Marcel Grandjany, ended the program. Its Romantic style and impressive ending were perfect for a grand finish. This piece, composed by a harpist, captured the many colors of sound a harp can create. The piece challenged me to widen the contrasts I could make with the harp’s tone while maintaining a good sound. In order to make the piece more interesting, I learned to make each phrase musical. I learned to think of themes and pictures for different sections of music even though there was no program.

After learning each of the pieces on my recital, I had become more proficient at telling a story through music, playing chamber music, enduring throughout pieces that demanded a lot
of energy, and contrasting tones, colors, and dynamics. With my advisor’s help I had researched the history of each piece to give me a better understanding of the composer’s intentions and its context in harp repertoire. The program order was arranged to show the harp’s wide variety of moods while keeping the audience interested. After months of careful planning, my recital was presented on December 8, 2004.
GRACE BAUSON

harp

in a

SENIOR HONORS RECITAL

assisted by

Christine Major, flute

Petite Suite .................................................. David Watkins
   Prelude
   Nocturne
   Fire Dance

Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp .................... Vincent Persichetti
   Larghetto
   Allegro comodo
   Andante grazioso
   Andante cantabile
   Allegretto
   Scherzando
   Adagietto
   Vivo

Impromptu, Op. 86 ........................................ Gabriel Fauré
   ... Intermission ...  

Scintillation ................................................... Carlos Salzedo
   (1885-1961)

Préludes intimes ......................................... Carlos Salzedo
   tenderly emoted
   profoundly peaceful

Rhapsodie .................................................... Marcel Grandjany
   (1891-1975)

Grace Bauson is a student of Elizabeth Richter.

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the 
requirements for the Honors Program at Ball State University.

SURSA HALL

Wednesday, December 8, 2004
8:00 p.m.

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David Watkins, a British harpist, won the International Competition for Harp Composition in the United States in 1961 with his Petite Suite for harp. He wrote the following descriptions for each movement:

**Prelude**  Early morning on the Seine. The Sun shines and the surface of the water is only disturbed by swallows, dragonflies and a little boat. Cows graze in the meadows which lead down to the water. One hears only the joyous cries of swallows and the song of birds from the wood on the southern bank.

**Nocturne**  The countryside at Andé lies under the low and heavy clouds of a summer night—only the noise of crickets disturbs the restless stillness. Suddenly, stars shining through a break in the clouds discover the Seine—moving silently and serenely through the night.

**Fire Dance**  A piece which evokes the exciting ritual dances of South America. The style of this dance was inspired by the sound of the little Paraguayan harp where the effects are usually simple but rhythmic impulse very strong.

Vincent Persichetti, a twentieth-century American composer, was famous for his varied and unpredictable style. His Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp, composed in 1957, exemplifies his diverse compositional techniques in its eight contrasting movements. Especially notable is his use of polytonality, particularly in movements two and three. Persichetti was influenced in his composition for harp by Carlos Salzedo’s introduction of new sound effects. The second movement uses a gushed chord on dampened strings played with the nail, making a percussive sound. Pedal slides are used in the first, seventh, and especially, eighth movement. Each movement portrays a different mood, engaging the listener with rhythmic and melodic variety.

Gabriel Fauré’s Impromptu for Harp, written in 1904, is Romantic in style. Its first theme is stated in chords in the beginning, followed soon after by a statement of the second theme, majestic chords alternated with a slow lyrical section. Both themes are developed throughout the piece in a virtuosic display of notes. This showpiece for harp is full of lush harmonies and beautiful melodies.

Carlos Salzedo, a French composer, pianist, and harpist, was on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music for over 30 years. He is best known for his revolutionary innovations for many aspects of the harp. Aside from developing a technique that takes natural body movements into consideration, Salzedo created many sound effects for harp. His numerous compositions helped to make the harp an instrument of the twentieth century. Scintillation, written in 1936, begins with a meditative theme. It is followed by a flurry of gushed chords and glissandos, a scintillating section, a return of the theme, and more gushed chords to create an impressive finish.
Salzedo’s Préludes Intimes, written in 1917, characterize his earlier compositions, which tend to use the lush chords of Impressionism. “tenderly emoted” and “profoundly peaceful” are taken from this set of five preludes. While not extremely difficult, their beauty makes them stand out in the harp repertoire.

Rhapsodie by Marcel Grandjany, an influential French harpist, is based on a Gregorian chant, salve festa dies, used in the Roman Catholic service for Easter Sunday. Grandjany, who taught at the Juilliard School of Music for many years, was known for his lush harmonies and wide variety of colors, and the Rhapsodie showcases exactly those traits. The theme, introduced in the beginning, is first stated in chords, then in a more lyrical section. As it develops, arpeggios enhance the piece. Toward the end of the piece the theme is stated in a free, chant-like form before launching into a triumphant finish.