

The Development of the Modern Pedal Harp and Its Influence on European Compositions

An Honors Thesis (MUSP 498)

By

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Abstract

The pedal harp has undergone several changes since its inception in the eighteenth century, and the music for the harp has increased and evolved over the years as well. The pieces that I chose to perform for my senior recital were all compositions by composers around Europe, but each exemplify a different section of time of the harp's progression. The pieces that were performed included *Variations on a Theme of Mozart* by M. I. Glinka, *Sonata in A Major* by Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, *Viejo Zortzico* by Jesús Guridi, *Absidíoles* by Bernard Andrés, and *Moldau* by Bedřich Smetana and transcribed for harp by Hans Trneček. These pieces were chosen to be performed not only because of their individual difficulty levels, but also because together, these pieces exemplify most of the time periods that the harp has been a part of and create a well-rounded recital. This project not only included the learning and performing of these pieces, but also explaining their place in the history of the pedal harp until the present day. A recording of the senior recital can be found at the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1OSGeOjT3fXC5BvnGghbDhlNAGg0aLPme>

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Process Analysis Statement

As a Ball State University music performance major with a concentration on the harp, I have had the opportunity to learn more than just the usual repertoire that most harpists know. I have become more knowledgeable about technique, history, and pieces for harp that are not currently part of the standard repertoire, with many thanks to my professor, Elizabeth Richter. Every music performance major must complete a senior recital for their main instrument, but I wanted to do more than just perform notes on a stage. For my senior recital, I was able to include pieces that are becoming increasingly popular in the harp repertoire, while also including some lesser-known works. The pieces that I chose to perform were all written by European composers, but they were written during different times within three centuries. These pieces often are closely related to what was happening in the time period in which they were composed, so it is important to know the context of what was happening to the harp when these pieces were written. The repertoire that I decided to perform on my senior recital was *Variations on a Theme of Mozart* by M.I. Glinka, *Sonata in A Major* by Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, *Viejo Zortzico* by Jesús Guridi, *Absidioles* by Bernard Andrés, and *Moldau* by Bedřich Smetana and transcribed for harp by Hans Trneček. This was the order of my senior recital; however, I must note that this order was based on many factors and does not follow the history in which the pieces were written. The difficulty of these pieces were because of aspects that were different between pieces, from ornamentation to complex rhythms, and these aspects have to do with what time period the pieces were composed in.

Harps in the Eighteenth Century

The turn of the eighteenth century was a time for experimentation and change in the mechanics of the harp. One of the greatest steps taken towards advancing the capabilities of the

harp was the addition of pedals, which connected to hooks at the top of the instrument that would shorten the length of the string and raise the tuned note up a half step.¹ The mechanisms that connected the pedals at the bottom to the hooks at the top ran through the hollow column of the harp and through the neck of the instrument.² Although many were working towards advancing the harp so that accidentals could be easily played during the early seventeenth century, it is believed that a man named Hochbrucker was the first to create the single action pedal harp. He created instruments in Germany, and around 1720, he had completed his idea of a single action harp with seven pedals, one for each note found within every octave. Because of his innovations, harpists could use the pedals to perform pieces in many keys and easily create chromatic notes in the middle of a piece without using their hands.³ There is some confusion as to which Hochbrucker created this new harp though. Jacob Hochbrucker is supposedly the one to actually create the first pedal harp,⁴ but his son, Simon Hochbrucker, performed on this type of harp in Vienna in 1729 for Charles VI and was credited with its invention during this time.⁵

No matter who was the true inventor of this new instrument, its popularity grew throughout Europe. Although it was becoming more popular because of its capabilities, it took a while for composers to include the harp in their works. The music that harpists often played was originally for keyboard instruments,⁶ but of course, not all keyboard works could be played on the harp since there were still limitations.⁷ Pedal harps were becoming popular across Europe

¹ Roslyn Rensch, *Harp and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 127.

² Roslyn Rensch, *Harp and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 128.

³ *Ibid*, 127.

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ Maria Christina Cleary. "The Invention of the 18th Century: the Harpe Organisee and Pedals." *The American Harp Journal* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 23.

⁶ Hans Joachim Zingel. *Harp Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Translated and edited by Mark Palkovic. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3.

⁷ *Ibid*, 3-4.

and were being innovated in many countries, yet repertoire was not being produced at the same pace. The first known publication for a pedal harp was not released until 1760; at least, this was the case in Paris.⁸ This makes sense, however, because the instrument would need time to grow in popularity, and as this was before the time of mass production, the instruments and all components were made by hand, making them rarer and expensive.

Friedrich Wilhelm Rust was an eighteenth century German composer for several different instruments, including the harp. His family was musical, although the family is not currently well-known in music history and composition. Rust was born in 1739 and became a talented pianist and violinist early on. As did many musicians of the time, Rust first studied law, starting in 1758, but studied with other musicians throughout and after his academic studies. He even received instruction from W.F. Bach and C.P.E. Bach. Much of Rust's life then revolved around music, and he began to teach and compose frequently, as well as bring musicians in his community together through local concerts.⁹ He was also honored by working for the prince as his music director.¹⁰ The compositions that he wrote included odd ensemble combinations with brass, strings, and winds, and also included piano sonatas. Rust wrote four pieces that included harp, although the exact dates of these compositions are uncertain. This is not much in comparison to the compositions for other instruments by Rust,¹¹ but even the classical composers known today only slightly scratched the surface when writing for harp. Rust passed away in 1796, however, which means his compositions were truly a product of the Classical era.

⁸ Maria Christina Cleary. "The Invention of the 18th Century: the Harpe Organisee and Pedals." *The American Harp Journal* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 29.

⁹ Lutz Buchmann. "Rust family." *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Accessed 12 Feb. 2020.

¹⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Rust. Edited by Bernhard Päuler. *Sonata in A Major for Flute (Violin, Oboe) and Harp or Piano*. (Amadeus: 1990), 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Harp by Friedrich Wilhelm Rust is a great example of the music found within the eighteenth century. This piece is a three movement work, and it begins with a faster *Allegro* movement, followed by the slow *Andantino Grazioso* movement and ends with the moderate *Minuetto I* and *Minuetto II* that come together as one final movement. These tempo markings are placed in a common format for a three movement sonata of this time period. The way that this sonata is written leads to many possibilities for instrumentation for a performance; for example, the violin part can easily be transferred to a flute or an oboe part. Also, the harp part could easily be performed on a keyboard instrument, such as a harpsichord. For my performance, I decided to perform with an oboist. Although the oboe was not the original chosen instrument, it adds a new and interesting tone to the piece. My goal was not necessarily to perform this piece with complete historical accuracy, but to make this music new and enjoyable for the listeners in my audience. Another aspect of the music that I decided to change was not to take any of the repeats found within the first movement, as well as the second repeat of the second minuet. This was a personal decision based on the length of the piece. Having these repeats made the piece significantly longer, as well as made the part more difficult for the oboist because of the sustained notes, and in order to keep my listeners interested in this older composition, the decision was made to make these cuts.

When rehearsing this piece with the oboist, the parts came together rather quickly, as there were a lot of similarities that can be found between them. Most of the issues that arose in learning the piece had to do with the couple of measures where the divisions of the beat were different, such as in measure 30 of the first movement, where the oboist plays sixteenth notes over the triplets found in the harp part. Also found in the first movement is a short phrase of imitation that caused some issues in rehearsals. This is in measure 85 when the harp begins the

passage and the oboe plays a similar motive in a fugue-like manner. This normally would not be an issue, but this instance caused eighth notes to be played in the oboe part over triplets found in the harp part. These issues were resolved by being sure that both parts were starting together on the larger beats and not focusing too much on the subdivisions being done within the other part. The other issue that came up in rehearsals was balancing the instruments. The oboe can be rather loud, and even though the modern harp is significantly louder than the single action harps of the eighteenth century, it was difficult to keep up with the volume of the oboe.

This piece was the one that took the least amount of time to learn, mostly because memorization was not necessary. Most chamber works with harp are not to be memorized, in case something goes wrong during the performance. Having the music makes it easier to get back on track. I started working on this near the end of the fall semester before my recital, so overall, it only took a few months to bring together. I had read through the piece earlier than that, as well as listened to recordings of how the oboe part sounds in comparison to the harp part, but the real work did not begin until later, since I was focusing on memorizing the other pieces. I began rehearsing with the oboist in the middle to end of January, and we had rehearsals once or twice a week, since the only consistent issues were the ones mentioned above.

For my own harp part, there were only a couple of pedal changes throughout, since this would have been written in a time for single action pedal harps. Because of this, most of my focus was bringing up the speed of the fast movements, working on the ornamentation, such as the trills and turns, and working on the sections with triplets over eighth notes. The speed came fairly easily as I became more knowledgeable of the piece and spent more time with it. The trills and turns, which are surprisingly not used in this manner as frequently in modern pieces, took some time and concentration. One issue that I consistently had with the turns in particular was

making sure every note of the quick ornament came through. I struggled with fully playing all of the upwards notes of the turns, and they often got lost because of the quickness of the ornament. The issue of the two against three, or triplets over eighth notes, was mostly sorted out, but it took until the last few days of practice before my performance to actually get these right. Some of these sections got significantly easier as the tempo increased, but the sections in the second movement, where the overall tempo was much slower, needed work up until the recital. This piece was a great addition to my recital, and even though it did not take as much time to prepare as the others had been, it still had its difficulties, yet came together well in the end. I decided to make this the second piece of my recital, so that I was able to do a solo piece first. I felt that having it earlier in the recital, though, would help the audience think about its place in history.

Harps in the Early Nineteenth Century

The harp significantly progressed as an instrument when the nineteenth century began. This was the time that the action of the pedals was taken to a new level, literally. Sebastian Erard, a French instrument constructor, was able to create a double action harp through various innovations built off of the already existent single action pedal harp. One of these innovations had to do with the hooks at the top of the instrument (connected to the pedals) that shortened the length of each string to make it a half step higher. Erard decided to use a stronger disk instead, and since he was creating a double action harp, he needed two separate disks so that the string could be raised a half step twice if need be, or a full step altogether.¹² These disks are very similar to what is found on a modern pedal harp, so his innovation proved practical. Not only did he have to rework the mechanisms of the harp, but Erard also had to make sure the structure

¹² Roslyn Rensch, *Harps and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 148.

of the harp could handle these new tensions. He was diligent in his work to make sure the instrument would be sound in its structure, and he did this by having more wood in the neck of the instrument, as well as brass plates around the mechanisms near the top of the harp.¹³ This first edition of the double action pedal harp was completed in 1811 and cost Erard 20,000 pounds.¹⁴ He was not the only one to start producing double action harps, however, and each country seemed to have its own unique take on decoration and structure.

Mikhail Glinka was a popular composer at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century, and although he did not play or have much experience with the harp,¹⁵ some of his compositions include the harp or were written solely for the instrument. Glinka was born in Russia in 1804, right at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was born into a rich family, which allowed him to study music at a higher level at an earlier age. For example, in 1818 and when he was around fourteen years old, he began music studies at the Pedagogical College, and from there, Glinka expanded his compositional ideas by looking at classic Western music in the 1820's, especially orchestral works and symphonies.¹⁶ Although Glinka had other jobs in his life, music had quite an influence, and he was even considered one of the first Russian nationalistic composers. He would use elements of the past, whether from his nation's folk songs or from the music of classical composers from the west. He wrote for both soloists and large ensembles, such as operas, throughout his career, and he became an inspiration to many of

¹³ Roslyn Rensch, *Harp and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 147.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 148.

¹⁵ Hans Joachim Zingel. *Harp Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Translated and edited by Mark Palkovic. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 62.

¹⁶ Stuart Campbell. "Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich." *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Accessed 2 Mar. 2020.

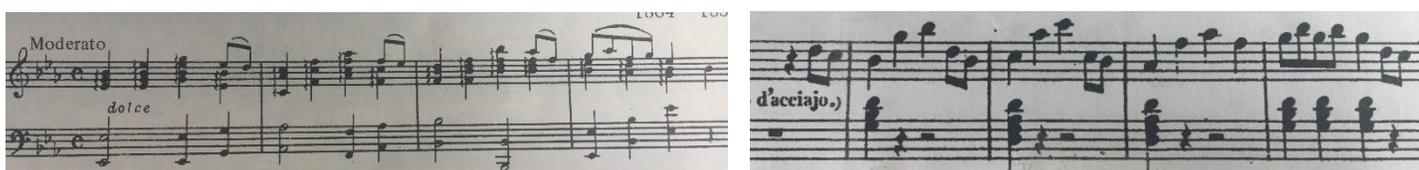
the popular Russian composers that would come after him.¹⁷ He even personally helped some of them before his death in 1857.

Mikhail Glinka, as mentioned before, took elements of the past and used them in an innovative way. This can be seen in his piece titled *Variations on a Theme of Mozart*, which can be performed on either the piano or the pedal harp. This theme and variations piece was most likely written in the 1820's, although the first instance of its publication that is known was in 1878 in *Monatsbericht*.¹⁸ This piece is in E-flat major, and all of the pedal changes that occur within the piece happen on one of the flat notes, to make the flat note into a natural or to bring it back from a natural. This means that if the harp was tuned so that all the A, B and E strings were flat, the piece could technically be played on the single action harp. Since the single action harp was still used during this time period, as well as the newly developed double action harp, it would make sense that it would be possible to play on either instrument, but having a double action harp would make it much easier, since the harp could stay in the normal diatonic tuning. It is important to note, though, that even though this is one of the few pieces that Glinka had written for solo harp, it is also stated that it can be performed on piano, as it often still is today. There are some changes that have been made to the piece, as can be seen in many different editions, such as the third variation for harp which includes harmonics. This variation would not be possible on the piano. This work is open to being changed because it is a theme and variations, though, and as long as the theme remains intact, the variations can be slightly changed to better fit the instrument performing.

¹⁷ Stuart Campbell. "Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich." *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Accessed 2 Mar. 2020.

¹⁸ Hofmeister. *Monatsbericht*. 1878: page 198. Accessed 4 March 2020.

The biggest issue that arises with this piece has to do with the theme itself. The theme is supposedly by Mozart, but scholars have yet to find the exact theme within any of Mozart's works. The belief is that it comes from his opera *Die Zauberflöte*, also known as *The Magic Flute*.¹⁹ After some research, I located a part of a theme from the opera that many claim to be the source, but when looking deeper at the structure, this musical motive is extended to create Glinka's theme. The motive comes from the end of the finale of the first act, during Papageno's "Bell tune", and it occurs in the accompanying glockenspiel part.²⁰ In Glinka's theme, the rhythm is not exactly the same as this; the harmonic sequence is not the same, although it does have similarities in its simplicity, and even the key signatures are not the same. Despite all of this, there is still something about the theme that alludes to Mozart's musical motive. The first three measures of both themes are an arpeggiation of whatever chord in the harmonic progression is being played. The motions are very similar, as the first three beats are a slow arpeggio upwards, and then the last beat is used to lead the music back down so that a similar motion can occur in the following measure on a new chord. Although the intervals are different, as well as the harmonic progression, these motions are what connects these themes, as can be seen in the examples provided below.



Example 1: *Variations on a Theme of Mozart* by M. I. Glinka, opening measures of theme, compared to *Die Zauberflöte*, Act 1 "Papageno's Bell Tune" by W. A. Mozart taken from the scores of these pieces.

¹⁹ M. I. Glinka. *Variations on a Theme of Mozart*. Lyra Music Company: 1998.

²⁰ Ibid.

My question when discovering this information was why Glinka would say that it is Mozart's theme when it is definitely not the same and only these motions within the music allude to Mozart. Perhaps Glinka wanted to show this connection to the Classical era in his title or maybe he did not want all the credit. Another possibility is that he did not write this piece the way that performers read it today. I came across a short background description of this piece by Dr. Blair Johnston that discusses the idea that Glinka's sister is the reason that the piece is still available to the public because apparently, the work was lost shortly after composition. Lyudmilla Shestakova, Glinka's sister, was supposedly able to recreate it based on memory so that it could be published.²¹ Although I was unable to find any other sources discussing the origins of its publication, it is a possibility that *Variations on a Theme of Mozart* was rewritten by his sister, since the first publication that is known of this piece was in 1878, as mentioned before, which was after his death.

Learning this piece was not extremely difficult when compared to the other solos that I learned for my senior recital because it is a theme and variations. The element that makes learning and memorizing easier is that the theme grounds the performer and is always there to fall back on. This helped with most of the memorizing, especially for the first, fourth and fifth variations. The first variation just includes more arpeggios, and once the fingerings and connections were figured out, it was easy to keep under my fingers. The fourth variation had more arpeggios in the left hand, while the right hand took on more ornamentations, but the tempo, *adagio cantabile*, and mood of the variation made it the simplest in my opinion. The fifth and final section of the piece is only octaves in the left hand with nonstop broken triads in the

²¹ Blair Johnston. "Mikhail Glinka: Variations on a theme of Mozart, for piano (or harp) in E flat major, G. vi13." *AllMusic*. Accessed 4 March 2020.

right. This was fairly simple to memorize, but the issue that I had with it was the cramping in my right hand. In order to fix this, I was instructed to make my overall dynamics in the variation quieter, so that I was not pulling so hard on the strings and tensing up. It helped significantly. The quick tempo occasionally made me want to play louder, so I had stay aware of my dynamics every time that I practiced it so that I would not tire myself.

The two that were more of a challenge in my opinion were the second and third variations because these two were not as close to the original theme as the other variations were. The second variation was difficult to bring together mostly because it strayed from the main theme. It was difficult to find the melody and bring it out because only fragments of it could be found in this variation. The motion was downwards in this variation, instead of the familiar upwards motion. On top of this, the pedal changes were slightly different because of the chromaticism found in this variation, and it was fairly easy to trip over my own fingers because of the turns and placings. When looking at the third variation, it does not seem too difficult because there are no large chords and the pattern is very similar throughout. The harmonics were difficult to find on any harp, though, because the harmonics are written mostly above middle C and performed in the left hand, which in that range would usually be done with the right hand. To add to this complication, many harps are different in construction and size, which means that the placement of my hand to produce a harmonic is in a different location on my personal harp when compared to the concert grand harp that I played in my senior recital. To help overcome this challenge, I made sure to practice on the concert grand harp often before the recital. The other challenge with this variation had to do with the fast moving right hand part, which was not consistent in the spacing of intervals. It was very easy to just gloss over some of the notes, which led to learning a few of the notes incorrectly when I was focusing on the speed. When brought to my attention

that a few of the notes were incorrect, tedious re-learning of the notes and placings was necessary to be accurate. Although the audience would not notice the few incorrect notes, it was important to be as accurate as possible.

I placed this piece first on my program because of its history, its length, and its mood. It is significantly shorter than *The Moldau*, for example, as it was only around five and a half minutes. A shorter piece allowed me to have enough time to get that first bit of adrenaline out that comes with performing, and because I had more time to work on this piece, I felt that I was more prepared to perform it first. I began working on it shortly towards the end of my junior year, so having that extra time over the summer to become more knowledgeable about the piece allowed me to be more prepared for my recital. The mood is very similar to what most people would think of when thinking about classical harp music, so it was able to catch the attention of the audience with its beautiful melody and well-written variations, which accentuate what sounds best on the harp.

Harp in the Late Nineteenth Century

Harp-makers in the middle to late nineteenth century continued to push the harp into new realms by perfecting the double action harp and making it more popular. One important harp company of the late nineteenth century that came about in the United States was Lyon & Healy, and their first harp was released in 1889. This is an excellent example of perfecting the double action harp because Lyon & Healy made their harps sturdier and more intricate in construction. They were not as noisy when the mechanisms were activated. In 1893, Lyon & Healy won an award for their 45 stringed and eight pedaled harp (the eighth pedal was for opening and closing shutters over the holes in the soundboard). This complex harp was also very ornate, with a gilded column and decorated soundboard. Overall, this company continued the work of Erard but

brought it even further by introducing more capabilities and accuracy, with less mechanical noise.²² This was only one of the many companies that continued the work and strove to perfect the instrument, but Lyon & Healy continues to be a favorite company for many harpists today.

As the harp was made more sturdy and reliable, many more composers included the harp in their works. Glinka wrote solo harp pieces despite not playing the instrument, but many more included the harp in large ensemble works, such as symphonies and other orchestral works. The harp was used occasionally in the Baroque and Classical ensembles, but it really gained popularity in the Romantic era. Hector Berlioz was one of the first composers to really push the capabilities of the harp in the orchestra in his *Symphonie Fantastique* and he continued to write for multiple harps, often including at least two harps. On one occasion, he included ten harps in his work. Other well-known composers, such as Liszt and Wagner also made use of harps.²³ Often these harp parts were ineffective because composers did not know the harp well enough and asked for too many notes at once, or chromaticisms that were near impossible to play. According to Rensch, there were several composers in the nineteenth century who could create an effective harp part in their large scale works, one of whom included Bedřich Smetana.²⁴

Bedřich Smetana was born to a rich and musical family in 1824, and after some troubles in his education, he decided to become dedicated to his music. He was a gifted pianist and instrumentalist, but he soon proved to be a gifted composer as well. He left for Prague to study composition while teaching music to a wealthy family.²⁵ He broadened his output of musical genres and found real success in composing opera, and he wrote several through the 1860s to

²² Roslyn Rensch, *Harp and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 188-189.

²³ Ibid, 174.

²⁴ Ibid, 176.

²⁵ Marta Ottlová, Milan Pospíšil, John Tyrrell, and Kelly St Pierre. "Smetana, Bedřich." *Grove Music Online*. 28 Sep. 2018. Accessed 3 Mar. 2020.

mid-1870s. Many of his works are nationalistic, as Glinka's works had been, because that was a common element of the music found in the nineteenth century. This includes his operas, but his most obvious nationalistic symphonic is called *Má Vlast*, or *My Country*. This is a cycle of symphonic poems and each is supposed to represent an element of his homeland. Smetana was successful in his career through the end of his life, despite being rather sick and sent to a mental institute before his death in 1884.²⁶

Although the harp does not appear in every symphonic poem of *Má Vlast*, it does appear in my personal favorite, called *Vltava*, also known as *The Moldau*. The Moldau is a river that runs through what is now the Czech Republic, and it even passes through Prague, where Smetana went to study composition. This piece is supposed to exemplify the river itself, as well as the places and things that it flows past. The symphonic poem is broken into seven different settings. Since these ideas are fairly different throughout the piece, the harp is not always included in every setting, but the music reflects the ideas well. The first, "Die ersten Quellen der Moldau," is about the springs or the beginning of the Moldau River. The music sounds like the water rising up and flowing through use of scales in the woodwinds, and the "water" builds as more instruments are added to the orchestration. "Waldjagd" refers to hunting in the forest near the river, and "Bauernhochzeit" is about a wedding festivity, possibly around farmlands near the river. "Mondscheinnacht, Nymphenreigen" refers to nymphs dancing in the moonlight, which is a folklore addition to his nationalistic piece. This section sounds nymph-like, since the simple melody can be found in the higher voices while the accompaniment is light, yet quick and complex. "St. Johann-Stromschnellen" is referring to St. John's rapids, found within the river

²⁶ Marta Ottlová, Milan Pospíšil, John Tyrrell, and Kelly St Pierre. "Smetana, Bedřich." *Grove Music Online*. 28 Sep. 2018. Accessed 3 Mar. 2020.

itself. This section has a lot of build-up, starting with scales that then lead to large chords and arpeggios, which was an effective way to represent this turbulent portion of the river. “Breiter strom Moldaus” is referring to the river broadening out, as the main theme is restated with more power behind it. The final section is “Vyšehrad,” which refers to the fortress in Prague that overlooks the Moldau River. This symphonic poem is extremely programmatic because of these shorter sections and descriptors within the music itself. It is a wonderful example of Romantic music and of an effective harp part that is found within it.

Vltava is a symphonic work for many instruments, but Hans Trneček took up the task of making it a solo work for the harp. Trneček was qualified to do this, as he was both a Czech composer and a professional harpist. He became a harp professor in Prague, while also performing with orchestras.²⁷ Although the transcription was published in 1914, the year of Trneček’s death,²⁸ this piece still has connections to the late nineteenth century. Most of the elements from Smetana’s original piece are translated to the harp solo, but Trneček took some liberties in his work in several different ways. For example, Trneček decided not to include the sections of the piece that the harp does not originally play in, such as “Bauernhochzeit” where the wedding is pictured through music. This entire section is cut from the transcription. Another change that Trneček made had to do with the key signatures, but when looking at these keys, it is clear to see that they were meant for the harp because these key signatures include many flat notes.²⁹ One of the more controversial changes that he made had to do with the ending of the piece. Smetana’s original idea of this ending had to do with the instruments dying down and

²⁷ Marta Ottlová and Milan Pospíšil. "Trneček, Hanuš." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 3 Mar. 2020.

²⁸ Dana Schneider. “Arranging and Rearranging: Harpists and the *Moldau*.” *The American Harp Journal* 26, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 26.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 27.

getting quieter or dropping out altogether with a repeating arching pattern, and then the piece ended with surprisingly loud dominant to tonic chords. What Trneček did was to use a completely different musical idea that included only the tonic chord being arpeggiated for several measures at an increasing dynamic. The final chords were not as much of a surprise, as they were all tonic chords once again and the dynamics were not different from the arpeggios before them. It is not known why Trneček strayed so far from the original and changed the mood of the ending, but many harpists do not follow this transcription at this point in the music. Many world-renowned harpists are choosing to perform this piece with more of a likeness to the original piece by Smetana.³⁰

Since I learned this piece for a personal recital and not a harp competition, I also decided to take some liberties in the notes that I played. I personally found the version discussed and provided in an American Harp Journal article to be more closely related to Smetana's symphonic poem, and this version had more of a feeling of finality to it. I did not find the Trneček version to be as emotional and musical, so I decided to perform the measures provided in the article. I had originally read through and had started to learn the version that Trneček had written, but since I had started this piece with much time to learn it, I decided after the fact to switch versions. I had started learning this piece a full year before the recital, but I was able to perform it a few times with this new ending at the end of the fall semester before my senior recital. I spent the following months making my memory even stronger and cleaning up a few details.

The dynamics of the version that I played were a part of the reason I chose to do this ending as well. Throughout the piece, the harp has to compensate to create the sound of an

³⁰ Dana Schneider. "Arranging and Rearranging: Harpists and the *Moldau*." *The American Harp Journal* 26, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 31.

orchestra, so the dynamics are often rather loud. Because it is over ten minutes in length, it can become tiring to be playing at a louder dynamic so frequently. The cramping of my wrists and hands became a frequent occurrence, so much so that I had to consider dropping some notes and sections throughout the piece. I wanted to perform the piece in a way that was as close as possible to Smetana's original piece, but I had to drop the repeat of the main theme in the first section because of this cramping. Some of the chords in this section were large, and the constant stretching was not healthy for my smaller hands. The chords grew even larger throughout the piece, which may have worked well for Trneček, depending on the size of his own hands. The stretches of a sixth interval between my fourth and third fingers were too much for me to handle, however, so during the Vyšehrad theme, I had to drop a note from a couple of the chords. This allowed me to keep my speed up while not injuring myself.

This piece was the most rewarding, although most difficult, piece for me to learn for the recital. Because it was one that really resonated with me, I was able to learn it and memorize it more quickly than expected. The most difficult section overall had to be "Mondscheinnacht, Nymphenreigen" because of the jumping in the right hand and the many pedals at once later on in the section. Of course, each section had something difficult to overcome, whether it was notes, rhythm, or tempo control, but overall, it was rewarding to learn and will always be an important part of my repertoire. Since *The Moldau* took the longest to prepare and was the most important to me, I left the best for last and ended my recital with this impressive piece.

Harp in the Early Twentieth Century

The construction of the harp was mostly figured out by the time that the twentieth century rolled around, and even though the focus switched to composing more works for pedal harp, the harps themselves were getting more strings and becoming larger in general, so that the range and

projection of the sound became even stronger. By 1927, Lyon & Healy had a wide range of harps to choose from with varying numbers of strings and different designs. Their pedal harps ranged from 41 strings to 47 strings. 47 strings is the size of a concert grand today, and some of these styles have stood the test of time and are still in production today, such as the style 23 harp.³¹ Not only were the harps themselves growing, but so was the following of those that played the pedal harp, as more professional harpists were teaching. Some of the greatest harp teachers were prominent during the early twentieth century, such as Carlos Salzedo, Marcel Grandjany and Henriette Renié. These teachers were also composers and made more styles of music accessible to harpists, since the repertoire for all levels of harpists was not extensive at that point in time.

One of the many new ideas to come to harp repertoire had to do with musical elements related to the Basque region in Europe. Although it spreads over the southern region of France into the northern area of Spain, the Basque region is like its own country because this area has a similar culture despite the country line. It is said to be “one of the oldest European communities,”³² and it has a very distinct culture and even its own language. Another element of the Basque region that is distinct is its music. There are many elements of the music of this area that make it separate from the rest of the music being produced in Europe. The music overall is rather pleasant to listen to when it comes to the key signatures and tonality, but the rhythms are what set it apart. These tend to be rather complex, especially in the popular zortzico from this region. This was a type of dance that had an asymmetrical meter, often in 5/8. This meter often makes the listeners expect another beat within the measure, since 6/8 is much more commonly

³¹ Roslyn Rensch, *Harp and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 194-196.

³² Denis Laborde. "Basque music." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

found in Western music, so even though this type of meter is not unheard of, it is still distinguishable and stands out to the listener. Not only was the meter different from the music of Europe, but the rhythms are also interesting. The rhythms, especially those found in the zortzico, frequently include dotted eighth notes. The forms of Basque music are also usually in a form similar to ABA, where the beginning section comes back again at the end. These pieces can often be divided into three sections in this manner. These are only a few of the characteristics of Basque music, and even though some of the elements were commonly used in twentieth century music and music from before the twentieth century, what made them Basque was the combination of all these elements.³³ Many composers were incorporating the Basque musical tradition in their own harp pieces, including Carlos Salzedo and Jesús Guridi.

Jesús Guridi was a composer who was born in 1886 and kept his homeland of Spain close, no matter where he ended up traveling in his life. He was born to a rather musical family, and most of those that were musically inclined in his family played a keyboard instrument, such as the piano or the organ. This gave him a strong background as he gravitated towards the organ himself and sought to make music his career. He traveled to Paris for studies when he was around 18 years old, and he had many instructors in many different areas of music, such as organ and composition. Although Jesús Guridi is not widely known today in the twenty-first century, he was fairly successful throughout his lifetime. He wrote different genres of music, from instrumental to operas, and his operas seemed to be received well at their premieres. He had musical jobs other than being a composer; for example he was an instructor at a conservatory for both organ and theory. No matter where he went, though, Guridi seemed to hold onto his homeland and incorporated pieces of Spain into his music. He was originally from the Basque

³³ Denis Laborde. "Basque music." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

region of Spain and liked to incorporate the rhythm patterns from that area within the music he created before he passed away in 1961.³⁴

Although it is not known just how much Jesús Guridi knew about the harp, he did write a solo harp piece called *Viejo Zortzico*. This piece is a great example of the type of music that contains elements of the Basque region. The most obvious musical element is the time signature, which is in 5/8. As mentioned previously, this was very common in Basque music, specifically in the zortzico dance. This meter, although distinct when listening to it, does bring some complications when learning because much care must be taken to be sure that an extra beat is not accidentally placed in each measure. Even after learning and memorizing the piece, I still needed to count much more carefully than I usually need to while practicing and performing. The rhythms of the piece also added to the challenge of making sure the music was being performed the way that it was meant to be performed because this zortzico made use of the dotted eighth notes. Not only during practicing did I need to count constantly, but even during the performance. It was too easy to get off track with all of the dotted rhythms within an already uncommon meter. Also, the first note of the piece occurs halfway through the third beat of the measure, so counting before any notes were even played was important as well.

I began looking at this piece halfway through the fall semester before my senior recital. I had originally planned on *Rhapsodie* by Marcel Grandjany to be a part of my recital, but after months of work on this piece, I realized that I was not progressing quickly because I did not truly enjoy it. My professor and I agreed that my energy should be put towards a piece that I truly enjoyed while also diversifying the program more. This decision to drop *Rhapsodie* for the time

³⁴ A. Menéndez Aleyxandre, and Antoni Pizà. "Guridi (Bidaola), Jesús." *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Accessed 4 Mar. 2020.

being allowed me to learn *Viejo Zortzico*. This piece does not have an overabundance of pedal changes, as *Rhapsodie* does, but the rhythms were significantly more challenging. In this piece, I was able to be expressive, especially with the occasional measures of cadenzas that were meant to be free of rhythm and tempo, but other than those instances, the rhythms were to be strictly kept. I quickly picked up this piece because I enjoyed it; although, memorizing was also an issue. Because of the ABA' structure of it, it was easy to get lost when the returning A section came back, and a few times when I was playing through the piece before the recital, I played both A sections exactly the same, which led me into a loop. The final A section is slightly changed so that the piece can end, but because I was not concentrating well enough on what came next, I accidentally played what was in the first A section. When realizing how easy it was to create a loop, I made sure to keep focused on what I had already done and what was supposed to come next. Because I realized this complication and focused on it, I did not create a loop during my recital, and I was able to play the sections correctly. I placed this piece third on my program, right before the intermission, because it allowed me to have another solo that many would find enjoyable after my duet with the oboist.

Harp in the Late Twentieth Century to Today

The harp community from the late twentieth century to the present day has been focused on continuing to expand the repertoire, and many advances have been in the music and literature surrounding the harp. Harp compositions, along with all other genres of music, are becoming much more diverse in sound and structure. Harps themselves have not changed for a while now, and although there are new models being made, the overall construction and developments on harp production have not been significant since the early twentieth century. As mentioned previously, some popular Lyon & Healy models created in the early twentieth century are still

being produced today in a similar manner that they were first created. Many harpists today are focusing on continuing what the great harpists of the early twentieth century had begun, which includes the growth of the repertoire and solidifying the technique of performance.

Although the repertoire for harp is ever expanding, some of these new pieces that are specifically for harp are written by composers that obviously do not have a strong background in the instrument. Many composers believe they can write as they would for a piano, and often that is the case; although, there are ways that can help a harpist out so that not as many markings have to be written in by the harpist before learning a piece. Harpists view key signatures differently than other musicians, because even though it gives an idea of how to place the pedals in the beginning, harpists do not need to be constantly thinking about the key signature throughout the piece. Most instrumentalists have to continuously think about what the key signature says, but the pedals on a harp keep the notes in the correct signature throughout the piece, once placed correctly. Chromatic notes and modulations call for the need of pedal changes, and once those pedals are changed, the harpist is thinking mostly about the specific notes instead of the key signature. Having pedal changes that are written in the music can help harpists be able to start learning a piece sooner because they do not have to take the time to figure out those markings on their own. Some composers that are not harpists sometimes write arpeggios or scale-like passages like they would for a pianist, but composers that have a background in harp know what fits under a harpist's fingers. Harpists only use eight fingers, instead of ten for pianists, and often, the pieces written by non-harpist composers can be awkward because they do not take this into consideration. In addition to this, many composers do not use the harp to its full capabilities. The harp can create new and interesting sounds, especially ones that sound percussive. Harmonics are a great way to add a beautiful and

interesting tone, and even tapping the soundboard is becoming commonly used. Composers that are harpists have these ideas in mind when creating a piece that has a specific mood, but composers that do not know the capabilities and restrictions of the harp sometimes create pieces that are awkward or not written for the harp's fullest potential.

One harpist that is continuing to create new styles of harp repertoire is a man named Bernard Andrès. Bernard Andrès is a French composer who has a very strong background in harp, which is different from most of the composers of the pieces that I performed for my senior recital. Trneček was the other composer that was a harpist, but *Moldau* was originally an orchestral piece by a composer that was not a harpist. Andrès was born in 1941 and continues to compose for harp to this day. Even though he was studying piano and composing at a very young age, he did not begin playing the harp until around 1960, while he was in his late teens. His background in piano must have been helpful because he picked up the harp quickly in the following years and eventually became the first chair harpist for two different orchestras in France. He slowly began to revive his composition skills after these accomplishments and began creating modern harp repertoire. His works are usually very different than anything that has been written in the past and are exploratory in the use of modes. These pieces are not what most people would think of when they think of harp music, but they have become a very important part of the harp repertoire today, especially when it comes to modern style music. Bernard Andrès continues to help the harp community to this day by continuing his composing and giving masterclasses.³⁵ There is not much biographical information to be found on him because he is still continuing his work.

³⁵ Isabelle Perrin. "Bernard Andres." Isabelle Perrin: Harpist – Artistic Director to the World Harp Congress. Norges musikkhogskole: Norwegian Academy of Music. Accessed on March 21, 2020.

Bernard Andrès's compositions are mostly modern in style, which can be more difficult for some audience members to listen to. It is obvious to a harpist that this composer knows the harp well, however, because many of the processes he uses to create a piece are beneficial to a harpist. One such piece that was written by Bernard Andrès with the harpist in mind is titled *Absidioles*, which has several different moods and uses new ways of writing musical ideas out, including key signatures. Andrès does not use the normal key signatures that other composers use, but he makes each section easier to comprehend for a harpist. He includes a written-out scale before each new section, with sharps or flats before each note, so that there is no confusion about which pedals should be placed. He still does not include the specific pedal changes in between these sections, at least in the publication that I used, but he is still thinking about the harpist by not including the normal key signatures. *Absidioles* is mostly about creating a mood, rather than presenting a series of musical themes. Throughout, there are accented notes that are meant to be brought out more than other notes, but again, these are not really themes. Bernard Andrès does not have a program for this piece, so most would look towards the title for some explanation behind the inspiration and reasoning for the accented notes he chose. An absidiole, according to Merriam-Webster, is basically an apsidiole, which is "one of the smaller... apses in a church having several apses."³⁶ These can often be seen from the outside of the church and add to the architecture and interest of the building. However, when listening to this piece, not many people would think of a church, since some of the moods presented are rather unsettling. He may have chosen the title based on liking the word itself, but as mentioned, it should not be assumed that the title was inspiration or idea for a program for the entire piece.

³⁶ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "apsidiole," accessed March 21, 2020.

Since the piece is modern, with more emphasis on creating an atmosphere rather than a theme, it was important to keep in mind during my practice that the notes that were accented needed to be brought out more. I had first learned this piece in my junior year, as I was building up repertoire after my junior recital, so after a performance early on, I put it aside for a while to focus on the other pieces. The first time I learned and memorized it, I did not focus on the accented notes, and I did not get the tempos correct. I believe that muscle memory was important with this first time memorizing the piece, so when I began studying it again during the end of the fall semester before my senior recital, I needed to focus on these accented notes and speeds. Although my memory came back quickly, I realized it was mostly just remembering where and how my hand was placed, rather than actually remembering the notes, so I took some time to focus on the notes with the music in front of me, even though it was memorized. Along with this focus on the notes, I double checked to see where the accented notes were. Many of these indicated accents were notated differently, so I also tried to create the very specific type of accent that was called for. The tempos came easily since I had already memorized the piece, and before the recital, I actually had to slow down a few sections after I tested myself with the metronome. The most difficult part of learning this piece was memorizing the actual notes so that I was not relying on muscle memory. Themes are usually very helpful in memorizing, because I can always just play the melody if the accompaniment notes are forgotten for a little while. Since this piece is atmospheric, it took more time to think about the specific notes because I did not have the themes to fall back on. Concentrated memorization was also important with the pedal changes because often, while I was playing through the piece, I would lose my concentration and change a wrong pedal. Even though the audience would probably not have noticed if I had changed a wrong pedal in my recital, it would have made me panic, and it

would have made the piece inaccurate. I prepared by spending more time learning all of these components. I decided to put this piece second to last on the program because I wanted to complete my recital with *The Moldau* but still wanted *Absidiales* to be near the end since it was the most recently composed of the pieces that I performed. I heard a few remarks after the recital about my audience members not enjoying this one as much, but even though that was the case, it was important to incorporate new music in my program.

Learning and performing *Variations on a Theme of Mozart* by M.I. Glinka, *Sonata in A Major* by Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, *Viejo Zortzico* by Jesús Guridi, *Absidiales* by Bernard Andrés, and *Moldau* by Bedřich Smetana was a great accomplishment and a rewarding experience. After my senior recital, I felt not only relieved, but very proud of myself. Having a year to prepare some of these pieces allowed me to be more musical because I had the time to learn and memorize the pieces, and the notes were not in the way of my musicianship because I had taken the time. Each piece had its own difficulties, and many of these difficulties were based on the history of the harp and when the pieces were written within that history. Not only was learning the pieces rewarding, but reflecting on their place in history and in comparison to the development of the pedal harp itself was a rewarding and informative experience that will help me in my career after graduation. These pieces may have been written in different time periods between the eighteenth century and the late twentieth century, but these pieces are still relevant and useful in performances done today.

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