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The Harp Renaissance: An Annotated Bibliography

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The Harp Renaissance: An Annotated Bibliography

The Harp Renaissance

An Annotated Bibliography

Dictionary / Encyclopedia Articles

Cranmer, Margaret. "Pleyel." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. Published online 2001; Accessed 27 Oct. 2019. <https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.21941>.

A very short (3 paragraph) article describing the Pleyel firm of piano makers whose line of succession includes Gustave Lyon, the man who developed the chromatic harp in the late 1800s. This article is sufficient only for high level, superficial information.

DeVale, Sue Carole, Bo Lawergren, Joan Rimmer, Robert Evans, William Taylor, Cristina Bordas, Cheryl Ann Fulton, John M. Schechter, Nancy Thym-Hochrein, Hannelore Devaere, and Mary McMaster. "Harp." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. Published online 2001; Accessed 29 Sep. 2019. <https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45738>.

This article is an extensive overview of the harp throughout history - specifically the evolution of the instrument mechanically, including performance practices and techniques, within different cultures. The article prioritizes most of its information first by region, then by harp type in chronological order. The exception to this is in the first section labeled "Ancient harps" which designates no region. The authors are well versed in their fields and the tone of the writing is scholarly. A few illustrations exist, including diagrams which are helpful in understanding the

mechanical workings of the pedaled harps. While navigating the article is tedious, it offers comprehensive and unbiased data concerning the harp.

Dissertations and Theses

Archambo, Shelley Batt. "Carlos Salzedo (1885-1961): The Harp in Transition", chap. III: Early Works/Impressionism. PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1984. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. <https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/303320508/ABDCC994BDE44AF3PQ/1?accountid=14608>.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation is specific to what the author describes as a distinct period in Salzedo's career, between 1910 and 1918, when his writing had strong Ravelian influences. The author uses examples from six compositions to demonstrate the devices Salzedo used that achieved an impressionistic style of harp music. Though her deconstructions are well done, they are wearisome in that it is unclear in why we need to know some of the information.

Chang, Chun-Hsien. "A Study of the Technique and Function of Orchestration in Selected Works of Claude Debussy: *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, *Nocturnes*, *La Mer*, and *Pelléas et Mélisande*", sec. VI: (2)Harp. PhD diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2002. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. <https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/pqdtglobal/docview/305522044/E4D134E4861F4428PQ/4?accountid=14608>.

The dissertation as a whole is aimed at analyzing four of Debussy's major orchestra compositions in order to reveal characteristics unique to Debussy's orchestration. Each chapter is a breakdown of particular groups within the orchestra, of which Section VI is for Strings and Harp. The author

is concise in his examples and uses short score snippets to demonstrate what he's trying to convey. He does an impeccable job of tying effect to thematic portrayal to emotion. He also uses varied and poignant examples, making his points succinctly. A diverse audience can appreciate the information Chang lays out from those interested specifically in Debussy's work, to those interested in Impressionist work, to those interested in a particular instrument.

Chen, Lee-Fei. "The Emergence of the Double-Action Harp as the Standard Instrument: Pleyel's Chromatic Harp and Erard's Double-Action Harp." DMA diss., University of Miami, 2008. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. <https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/304573659/527039131B524A7CPQ/16?accountid=14608>.

Chen doesn't argue a claim as much as investigates a fact that we accept as standard. The author uniquely includes a straightforward Introduction that includes sections called "Research Questions", "Rationale for the Study", and "Related Dissertations" (among others) which puts into perspective what Chen is trying to accomplish. The dissertation begins with an obligatory harp history and then effectively works its way through criticisms and praise of both the chromatic and double-action pedal harp from first-hand accounts. Chen's paper is impressive in its inclusion of first-hand information and side by side comparisons of its subject matter.

Journal Articles

Egan, Zach. "Ravel's *Introduction et allegro* and the Modernization of the Harp." *Hear Here!* 8 (Spring 2018): 8-22. <https://necmusic.edu/sites/default/files/2018-04/Hear%20Here%202018.pdf#page=15>.

Hear Here! is a Liberal Arts student journal from the New England Conservatory. In this article, Egan presents the argument that it was Ravel's "Introduction et Allegro" that reshaped the future

of the harp. The article can be broken down into these sections: mechanization of the instrument, competition between the major harp makers of the 1800s, brief biography of Ravel, "Introduction et allegro" reception and brief analysis, and what the piece means to the harp world today. His claim starts boldly and intriguingly as Egan details the competition between Pleyel and Erard for "best harp" but loses a lot of steam as he gets bogged down in the technical aspects of the work by Ravel. Egan's last paragraph is weak in comparison to his opening statement, almost as though he changed topics halfway through the article.

Method Books

Bochsa, Robert Nicholas Charles, and Charles Oberthur. *Universal Method for the Harp*. New York, NY: C. Fischer, 1912.

This method book is as much a treatise on harp playing as it is a lesson in fundamental music theory. About half of the book, the whole thing being 150 pages, is dedicated to progressive etudes. It covers the basics of both the single-action and double-action pedal harp. Bochsa covers a multitude of techniques and includes very few illustrations, instead relying on written descriptions. He includes many tables - tables of common arpeggios and terms, for example. In his own words, he provides the techniques necessary for performing works by the best harp composers, calling the effects being generated by modern harpists sensational and ridiculous.

Lawrence, Lucile, and Carlos Salzedo. *Method for Harp: Fundamental Exercises with Illustrations and Technical Explanations*. New York, NY: G. Schirmer Inc., 1929.

At 71 pages, and being in both French and English, this method book is less involved than its Bochsa counterpart. It is geared toward the contemporary harpist with an emphasis on new techniques and etudes (preludes) that employ many different effects. The book has both

illustrations and photographs. It goes beyond the method boundaries by also offering instructions on string changing and tuning. Because of its difficulty, I would be reluctant to start a beginning harpist with this book. But as an extended techniques book, it's fantastic.

Music Scores

Wagner, Richard. *Götterdämmerung*. Wagner: Part 2 Complete Harp, Keyboard & Miscellaneous Instrument Parts to Operatic and Orchestral Masterworks on CD-ROM. Orchestra Musician's CD-ROM Library, 12. Milwaukee, WI: CD Sheet Music, 2009.

Aside from being on an older data storage device (the CD), the sheet music provided is of high quality. The interface is extremely easy to use - simply click on the piece of music you'd like the sheet music for and it provides it as a PDF.

Primary Monographs

Adelson, Robert, ed. *The History of the Erard Piano and Harp in Letters and Documents, 1785-1959*. Vol. 1, *Inventions, Business, Composers and Performers*. Edited by Alain Roudier, Jenny Nex, Laure Barthel, and Michel Foussard. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Adelson's collection of letters is organized into three parts: Inventions, business, composers, and performers. Each part is then organized chronologically. As the editor states himself, the letters have been selected because of the information they contain pertaining to musical life of the time or of a particular composer. All letters have been translated from French to English. Some photographs of the original letters exist but all correspondences are typed via computer. It is a very well organized and comprehensive book - due largely in part to, again as the editor himself

states, the meticulousness with which the Erard family has maintained the firm's documents. There are even lists of the first ever double-action pedal harp purchases.

Secondary or Tertiary Monographs

Rensch, Roslyn. *Harps and Harpists*. Rev. ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007.

The author presents an in-depth overview of modern harp history, with a heavier humanistic emphasis than chronological - preferring to organize her work first by composer/virtuoso then by date. She simultaneously writes about harp mechanization and the virtuosos who pioneered the instrument. Her intended audience is harpists but, for the most part, is written in such a way that is accessible to anyone. There are many illustrations and photographs, both to represent more accurately what she is describing but also to convey how the harp is portrayed in art. For the reader interested in the journey, stories and connections, or a history lesson that is easier to digest, this book is ideal.

Sound and Video Recordings

The Harp - BBC Documentary. Directed by Gethin Scourfield and Philip King, presented by Catrin Finch (S4C & Hummingbird Productions Ltd., 2006).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zbXhMPqMDU>.

Catrin Finch starts, as most history lessons do, from the beginning with ancient harps and ends with the most contemporary uses of the instrument. She interviews harpists from different cultures, each of which has its own evolution of the harp. Her progression feels as though the story reaches its climax at the 2/3 mark where Finch plays Ravel's "Introduction et allegro" and

interviewee Isabelle Perrin speaks to the development of the double-action pedal harp leading up to that point. This documentary is a top notch visual resource in understanding the harp and presenter Catrin Finch is an internationally known and respected harpist.