



The WholeNote Magazine
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Impressions de France

Caroline Léonardelli, harp

Ottawa-based harpist Caroline Léonardelli presents an attractive selection of late 19th and early 20th-century harp music by Paris Conservatory-educated composers. Her previous recording *El Dorado* received a JUNO Award nomination. Beyond technical proficiency and adherence to the French school of her teachers, it is her artistic sense of pacing and of shaping melodies within cascades of notes that help make these performances commanding. Léonardelli captures both the sense of a wonder-filled fairy tale in Marcel Grandjany's Impressionist *Dans la forêt du charme et de l'enchantement*, and the moods of meditation and exaltation in his Gregorian chant-inspired *Rhapsodie*. Grandjany's teacher was less-well-known Henriette Renié, who deservedly receives recognition here with the premiere recording of her challenging, aptly conceived *Ballade No. 2*.

One of Léonardelli's intentions for this disc is to honour the long French harp tradition, involving interaction between teachers, students, composers, performers, and manufacturers. The disc opens with the *Étude in E-Flat Minor* by harp virtuoso Felix Godefroid, who helped the Érard Company improve the double-action harp, followed by the *Pièce de concert, Op. 32* by centenarian Henri Büsser (1872-1973!), written for Renié's teacher Alphonse Hasslemans. There are also intriguing works by more familiar composers Saint-Saëns, Roussel and Ibert. I found Roussel's ingeniously chromatic *Impromptu, Op. 21* especially heartfelt, and Léonardelli's personal association with its dedicatee Lily Laskine makes this recording particularly valuable.