

## A Selection Box from Rachel Talitman's Harp & Co.

A survey by Rob Barnett

Harp supremo Rachel Talitman has laboured for her instrument and repertoire and has done so with unwavering conviction. That this has borne artistic achievement as a musician is not taken for granted. Talitman has been the driving force through which her label [Harp & Co](#) has placed so much before audiences. MusicWeb International has already reviewed various of her discs ([Cras](#); [Hasselmans](#); [Cardon](#); [Lefèvre](#); [Damase](#); [In the Light of Ravel](#); [Bochsa](#)) but the time has arrived to give an overview of a selection of her discs. Her efforts have harvested many rare, and some not so rare, composers and have Ms Talitman as the player hub around which she has drawn together a 'family' of elite instrumentalists. These musicians pride themselves on technical proficiency and fidelity to emotional essence. Although she has the occasional solo, Talitman's role is perhaps grievously underestimated as the titles of so many of these compositions relegate her position to the end of a long list of instrumentalists as "and harp". Four of the nine discs I have listened to are anthologies and five are devoted to a single composer. There's a struggle to find a negative side to these discs but despite their merits there is a tendency to opt for short playing times. In addition, the label is reticent about dates of works and recording session minutiae. That said, these seem, going by the close-up yet uncloying results, to date from the 2000s and 2010s.

Ms Talitman's profile can be scanned as follows: born in Tel-Aviv and graduate of the city's university. She studied with Suzanna Mildonian at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels where she secured the higher diploma for harp and chamber music with distinction. She specialised in French music with Pierre Jamet (1893-1991; [review](#) [review](#) [review](#)) in Paris. Winner of many prizes, she taught harp at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp until 1985. In 1980 she branched out, with bassoonist Luc Loubry, to found the Harpeggio Ensemble. Harpeggio plays, records and promotes unknown harp repertoire and the composers who found inspiration in the instrument both in chamber and orchestral contexts. Talitman's discography, through her label Harp & Co, is capacious and continues to strain at the boundaries of even the knowledge of experts. She plays a Wurlitzer harp with strings by Budin.

### French Music for Harp and String Quartet

**André CAPLET (1878-1925); Marcel SAMUEL-ROUSSEAU (1862-1955); Marcel-Lucien TOURNIER (1879-1951)**

Rachel Talitman (harp), Benjamin Braude (violin), Irina Sherling (violin), Samuel Barsegian (viola), Dieter Schutzhoff (cello)

**HARP & CO CD5050-04 [47:00]**



Marcel-Lucien Tournier's *Féerie* glistens amid splashes of cooling sound but ends in high drama. His *Images: Suite No. 3* is distributed across three movements with a distinctive North African atmosphere. The movement titles are worth reciting and the magical music, complete with sinuous Berber twists in the harmony, is consonant with the images these titles conjure: I. *Les années grises sur la route d'El-Azib* (Grey Donkeys on the road to El-Azib); II. *Danseuse à la fontaine d'Ain-Draham* (Dancer at the fountain of Ain-Draham); III. *Soir de fête à Sedjenane* (Evening Fete at Sedgenane). Anyone would think that Antoine de Saint-Exupéry has also been in Tournier's mind. This score is a further example of the wholly to be welcomed French obsession with France's more exotic 'outremer' possessions; the same that, in their different ways, gripped Bizet, Delibes, Roussel, Cras, Messiaen and Tomasi. After such dark and exotic seduction we come to Marcel Samuel Rousseau and the blessed salve of his attractive *Variations Pastorales sur un Vieux Noël*. The melody can be heard in engagingly dewy terms at the end. The longest work here is André Caplet's masterly *Conte fantastique* which pays court to Poe's *Masque de la Mort Rouge*. Again Poe's hold on French culture can be seen on the music side in [Debussy's two abortive operas](#), [Schmitt](#) and in this work. There are

several Caplet items to seek out if you are persuaded, as well you might, by the wonderful *Conte*. These include [Harmonia Mundi](#) and [Timpani](#) discs and two recordings of a work every bit as remarkable and weirdly eerie as the *Conte*, the *Épiphanie* for cello and orchestra ([Phillips](#); [Nielz](#)) which echoes with memories of the Great War and much else.

### **Frida KERN (1891-1988)**

#### **Music for harp and ensemble**

Rachel Talitman (harp), Pierre-Henry Xuereb (viola), Luc Loubry (bassoon), Mihi Kim (flute), Benjamin Braude (violin), Ilija Laporev (cello), Philippe Gonzalez (oboe), Emmanuel Chaussade (clarinet), Ivo Hadermann (horn)

**HARP & CO CD5050-08** [65:00]



Refuting expectations raised by her Vienna and Linz connections, we can now hear the music of Frida Kern (nee Seitz). It turns out to be light on its feet and, in the case of the *Fröhliche Impressionen*, engages with plenty of cheerful bonhomie. The microphone set-up and selected venue lend the solo instruments a cozy orchestral sound-signature. The *Thema und Variationen* is a smilingly gracious and inventive piece. Kern studied with Franz Schmidt and Robert Heger so perhaps her time with Schmidt lent even lighter wings to her variation writing; lighter than Schmidt in his *Husarenlied Variationen*. Kern's *Spanischer tanz* is more a product of the Arab kingdoms of central and southern Spain and steers clear of the more bracing breezes of North Iberia and the Basque coast. Its kinship is with *Boléro* and *Aranjuez*. *The Four Pieces for Wind Quintet* play very thoughtfully with the textures and timbres of the wind quintet in terms both pensive and playful. The very substantial *Ballade* gives Talitman a rare chance to shine as soloist, which she does and in doing so takes care to give us insight into the score's fine and dark shades.

### **French Recital for Viola and Harp**

**Louis-Toussaint MILANDRE (floreat ca. 1756–1776 d. 1782); Louis Joseph Ferdinand HÉROLD (1791-1833); Nicolas-Charles BOCHSA (1789-1856); Ernest CHAUSSON (1855-1899); Lili BOULANGER (1893-1918); Pascal PROUST (b.1959); Jean-Michel DAMASE (1928-2013)**

Pierre-Henry Xuereb (viola); Rachel Talitman (harp)

**HARP & CO CD5050-14** [67:59]



The selection here - a series of wholly convincing arrangements - takes the listener by the hand and lights upon music from the last three centuries. Milandre's *Suite* is a rustic charmer with a courtier's sensibility. It is in three movements. We know Hérold better for his [operas](#) (there are 30 of them including [Le Pré aux Clercs](#)), the overtures from which kept his name alive for many years, ballets including [La Fille Mal Gardée](#) and, more recently, his four [piano concertos](#). The four harp and viola sonatas combine gentle ways with Mozartean aplomb. Bochsa, a presence during the early and mid 19th century, is represented by his bejewelled and highly decorated *Nocturne* which like Hérold makes play with melodies and treatments of a Mozartean caste. Before now I cannot recall hearing Chausson's diminutive *Hébé Chanson Grècque dans le mode phrygien* (long title; short piece) for viola d'amore and harp. Here we are far removed from the earlier decorous pieces on this disc and into something more tender and touching. Twice as long as the *Hébé*, the *Pièce* Op. 39 for viola and harp is kindly, almost Finzian, romantic and quite magical. Lili Boulanger's little *Nocturne* manages to be impassioned and relaxed. The sorrowing *Le Carpe et le Hanneton* by Pascal Proust is a melodious

dirge for a fish and its insect prey. It touches on realms laid bare by the second Chausson piece. We end with Damase's dreamlike surreality in *Hallucinations* which, as the liner-note says, conveys the sense of navigating "between dreams and hallucinations". Damase ([review review](#)) is not in awe of dissonance but only so far as it serves his accessible expressive needs. This disc is said to be a sequel to Harp & Co's [Lefèvre disc](#).

**Jean-Michel DAMASE (1928-2013)**

**Chamber Music for Harp**

Marcos Fregnani-Martins (flute), Damien Ventula (cello), Jean-Bernard Beauchamp (trumpet), Rachel Talitman (harp)

**HARP & CO CD5050-18** [48:00]



After Harp & Co's CD of Damase's concertos and concertante works this helping of his chamber music makes for a natural successor. The *Sonata* for cello and harp dates from 1984 but is vintage Damase in its long airborne *cantabile*. The lacy inveiglement of its middle movement acts as a prelude to the deep shadows cast by the *Adagio* which is as dark, Herrmann-like and oneiric as *Hallucinations* on the last disc. What feels like redemption comes in the sunny full-daylight of the first and final movements of the 1947 *Trio* for flute, viola and harp. Its striving *Adagio* is laced with regret and nostalgia which are dispelled by the gamin high-pitched close. The *Aubade* for solo harp is tricksily constructed and suggests quick, mechanistic writing, finely shifting colours and somersaulting changes of tempo. This virtuoso piece for the harp should be urgently sought out by harpists looking to impress both listeners generally and panels at musician competitions. The last piece is unusually instrumented: for trumpet and harp. The *De l'Ombre à la Lumière* is well named for, like Orpheus leading his beloved from the Underworld (but with a less tragic outcome), this too has the feeling of emerging from gloom into a dazzling midday. A central sauntering episode is perhaps at odds with this trajectory but it allows the listener to draw breath away from the main line of action.

**Belgian Chamber Music: Michel LYSIGHT (b.1958) and Jean ABSIL (1893-1974)**

Rachel Talitman (harp); Erez Ofer (violin), Marco Fregnani-Martins (flute); Igal Braslavsky (viola); Karolina Maziarz (cello)

**HARP & CO CD5050-28**



First recordings of works by two Belgian composers: Jean Absil and Michel Lysight. It's not the first time they have shared a [disc](#). As for Absil, his music is no stranger to recording. The site holds reviews of his [Flemish Rhapsody](#) and [Piano Music](#).

Michel Lysight studied with great distinction in and around Brussels. Talitman's notes assure us that Reich and Pärt "played an essential part in the evolution of his personal language." He wrote *Les Chants de Casanova* for counter-tenor, choir and orchestra which was given in Brussels in 2010 and in Lille later the same year. The *Chronographies X* for flute, violin, viola, cello and harp is part of a life-long series of numbered pieces and is life-enhancing, rich in resilient yet delicate tunes and not at all minimalist. The *Trois Instantanés* (Three Snapshots) for flute and harp are flights of very seductive melodic fancy and some sleepy Fauré-like contentment. Much the same can be said of the three movements that make up *An Awakening* for violin, cello and harp. *Ripple Marks* for flute, viola, cello and harp is an easy-flowing delight with the viola taking prominence. *Labyrinthes* for flute solo

continues the 'line'. Before taking fluttering flight, it mines chilly strata from which came Vaughan Williams' *Three Vocalises*. Lysight is another very approachable yet substantial discovery who beckons rather than bludgeons the listener. If Naxos can step forward with a CD of orchestral [Groslot](#) (who also finds home on Harp & Co) then Lysight's orchestral works should be an easy conquest.

Absil was a graduate of the Royal Music Conservatory of Brussels. There his teacher was Paul Gilson but he also studied privately with Florent Schmitt. In 1922 his cantata *La Guerre* came second in the Prix de Rome. We are reminded that there are five symphonies: 1 in D minor (1920), 2 (1936), (1943), 4, (1969), 5 (1970). Add to this complement three piano concertos, two violin concertos and a viola concerto. The Second Symphony recorded in 1958 for Belgian Decca was on Cyprès (Musique en Wallonie) CYP3602. Another Absil notable is the reputedly huge radio opera, *Peter Breughel the Elder* (1950). Just after the end of the Second World War Boult conducted Absil's *Rhapsody No.2* for Belgian Radio. Absil's *Sicilienne* for violin and harp is in much the same region as the Fauré *Pavane*. It fully justifies its place on this disc which ends with the same composer's *Concert à Cinq* for flute, violin, viola, cello and harp. This grainy three-movement work breathes into the textures a measure of dissonance and prickly goose-bumps alongside the same elysian melodic tendency indulged in *Sicilienne*. It's a very imaginative work and, like a whirlpool, draws the listener into many complexities without resort to the fearsome or the dull.

### ***In the light of Ravel***

**Maurice RAVEL; Robert GROSLLOT (b.1951); John METCALF (b.1946); Sergiu NATRA (b.1924); Michael LYSIGHT (b.1958)**

Rachel Talitman (harp), Marcus Fregnani-Martins (flute), Jean-Marc Fessard (clarinet), Daniel Rubenstein (violin), Laurent Houque (violin), Raphael Aubry (viola), Clément Holvoet (viola), Hélène Dautry (cello), Johannes Burghoff (cello), Akhtamar Quartet

**HARP & CO CD5050-39 [58.41]**



Michael Wilkinson has already [reviewed](#) this disc but I will add a few personal slants. The Ravel *Introduction et Allegro* is luscious, pertly executed and recorded. The other pieces, inspired by the Ravel and all laid out for harp and ensemble, here receive what I take to be their recording premieres (Metcalf aside). Groslot and Lysight (already mentioned above) make a contribution of one work apiece. The former's *Poème Secret* - along with the Natra piece - is a tougher listen by comparison with the Ravel, Metcalf and Lysight. The Groslot has more in common with his own less than fully ingratiating [Concerto for Orchestra](#) rather than his *Violin Concerto*. Lysight's *A Tribute to Philip K. Dick* presents a yielding and tonal profile. It reaches out to the listener and does so with a glistening in the eyes. Metcalf's *Septet* has been recorded before on [Signum](#) as part of an all-Metcalf collection. It is a most heart-warming, welcoming and moving piece and I urge you to find a way of hearing it. The three movements of Natra's *Pour Nicanor* are full of angular character. The work was commissioned by Nicanor Zabaleta who used to be the house harpist on Deutsche Grammophon ([review](#) [review](#) [review](#)). Rather like the Groslot, the Natra is something of an acerbic palate-freshener in this company. All these pieces confront the danger of being outpaced by their Ravel model. In fact, they manage quite nicely on their intrinsic merits.

### **Joseph LAUBER (1864-1952)**

#### **Music for Harp**

Rachel Talitman (harp), Pierre Henri Xuereb (viola), Shiho Ono (violin), Marcos Fregnani-Martins (flute), Noe Nathorp (cello), Pierre Martens (bassoon)

**HARP & CO CD5050-031 [67:00]**



The Swiss composer Joseph Lauber was born near Lucerne. A student of Rheinberger, Massenet and Louis Diémer, he made his career in Neuchâtel and Geneva and numbered Frank Martin among his pupils. Rachel Talitman's notes tell us that he wrote more than two hundred works, including five each of symphonies and concertos. His last work was the oratorio *Le Drame de Saul de Tarse* (1951). Harp & Co introduce us to all his chamber works featuring the harp. The *Fantasia* Quintet is an extended romantic single movement with some very attractive writing. The *Petite Suite* for harp and flute is in three movements. Typically cool and lonely, it finds a skip in its stride in the central movement. The disarming and dancingly playful *Danses Médiévales* (four of them) can be heard from Laurel Zucker on [Cantilena](#) but stand out here in the company of Lauber's own harp scores. The *Bassoon Sonatine* is just short of five minutes' playing time but lays claim to the same territory as the *Danses* and *Petite Suite*. We end with the lacy vulnerable web that is the four-movement *Suite printanière* for solo harp. The insert suggests there are only three movements but playing the disc reveals four.

**Leopold WALLNER (1847-1913)**

**Music for Harp and Viola**

Rachel Talitman (harp), Pierre-Henri Xuereb (viola)

**HARP & CO CD-5050-033 [46:42]**



Wallner, from a generation or two before most of the other composers addressed here, was Ukrainian. He had the distinction of having Liszt as his godfather. Not surprisingly his music follows the trackways established by Chopin and the practitioners of *bel canto*. Even so his music is far from conventional as the technically demanding *Intermezzo* from the *Suite Polonaise* goes to show. It also survives a dollop or two of salon sentimentality along the lines of Field, Gottschalk, Godowsky and Paganini. The *Rhapsodie russe* takes much the same tint as does the Chopin-indebted *Mazurka de concert*. The *Élégie* is a harp solo, piquant and of music-box precision. As for the *Rêverie* it takes us back, lilac-toned, to the dewy-eyed salon and the florally luxurious drawing room. Even so, Wallner finds a very affecting sob to breathe into the viola part. This delivers a well-calculated end to the disc. Earlier in the recital the winsome *Berceuse*, heard here in an arrangement for viola and harp, has a fresher and more original feeling.

**Anna SEGAL**

**Chamber Music for Harp**

Rachel Talitman (harp), Jean-Marc Fessard (clarinet), Nicolas Deletaille (cello), Adrien Eble (oboe), Daniel Rubenstein (violin), Ensemble Mendelssohn

**HARP & CO CD 5050-041 [65:10]**



Furnishing a coincidental link with Wallner, the young Israeli composer Anna Segal was born in the Ukraine. Her music for harp is dedicated to Rachel Talitman. The *Double Concertino* for harp, clarinet and string quintet, running to a substantial 21 minutes, is in three movements. Its darting energy and slow-blooming nostalgia play to one of Talitman's expressive strengths. The sinuously beguiling sway

of the music links to Sondheim's music in *A Little Night Music*. At various times it is reminiscent of Ravel and of Samuel Barber's *Knoxville*. The piece ends basking in the easy midday heat. The *Sonata* for harp and cello is again in three movements which are unusually paced and structured. They can seem to stumble but it is by design. Instruments are used "sans frontières" such as the knock-on-wood contributions in the *Tango* finale. The *Dialogue* for harp and clarinet is a dreamy questing essay but with "sharp corners" and "awkward elbows". *Image* for harp and violin cleverly entwines a mesmerising harp line with a gangling solo violin line. The *Lullaby* and *Ballade*, two pieces for harp, explore the instrument's gift for minimalism and an equally strong and ballad-spinning past that stretches back into antiquity. The *Suite* for harp, oboe and strings has five movements and moves us into a more subtly and variably coloured world. This blends Mediterranean warmth, Stravinskian bleakness and Ravel-style lambency. It's all attractive and if the focus can be unstable the sense of motion constantly shifting is never less than agreeable.

### Details of individual discs

#### French Music for Harp and String Quartet

**André CAPLET (1878-1925)** *Conte fantastique* [17:20]

**Marcel Samuel ROUSSEAU (1862-1955)** *Variations Pastorales sur un Vieux Noël* [10:11]

**Marcel-Lucien TOURNIER (1879-1951)** *Féerie* [9:30]; *Images: Suite No. 3, Op. 35* [10:07]

Rachel Talitman (harp), Benjamin Braude (violin), Irina Sherling (violin), Samuel Barsegian (viola), Dieter Schutzhoff (cello)

**HARP & CO CD5050-04** [47:00]

#### Frida KERN (1891-1988)

*Fröhliche Impressionen*, for violin, viola, cello, flute and harp Op. 51 [12:37]; *Variations* for harp and viola d'amore, Op. 61 [18:10]; *Spanischer tanz No. 1* for bassoon and harp, Op. 24 [6:25]; *Four Pieces for Wind Quintet*, Op. 25 [15:51]; *Ballade* for harp, Op. 59 [12:14]

Rachel Talitman (harp), Pierre-Henry Xuereb (viola), Luc Loubry (bassoon), Mihi Kim (flute), Benjamin Braude (violin), Ilija Laporev (cello), Philippe Gonzalez (oboe), Emmanuel Chaussade (clarinet), Ivo Hadermann (horn)

**HARP & CO CD5050-08** [65:00]

#### French Recital for Viola and Harp

**Louis-Toussaint MILANDRE (floreat ca. 1756–1776 d. 1782)** *Suite: Polonaise* for viole d'amore and harp [7:03]

**Louis Joseph Ferdinand HÉROLD (1791-1833)** *Sonates 1-4* [29:33]

**Nicolas-Charles BOCHSA (1789-1856)** *Nocturne* Op. 51 [9:18]

**Ernest Hébé CHAUSSON (1855-1899)** *Hébé Chanson Grècque dans le mode phrygien* for viole d'amore and harp [3:40]; *Pièce* Op. 39 [8:31]

**Lili BOULANGER (1893-1918)** *Nocturne* [3:25]

**Pascal PROUST (b.1959)** *La Carpe et le Hanneton* [2:44]

**Jean-Michel DAMASE (1928-2013)** *Hallucination* [6:25]

Pierre-Henry Xuereb (viola); Rachel Talitman (harp)

**HARP & CO CD5050-14** [67:59]

#### Jean-Michel DAMASE (1928-2013)

**Chamber Music for Harp:** *Sonata* for cello and harp (1984) [16:50]; *Trio* for flute, viola and harp (1947) [16:04]; *Aubade* for harp [6:46]; *De l'Ombre à la Lumière* for trumpet and harp [8:41]

Marcos Fregnani-Martins (flute), Damien Ventula (cello), Jean-Bernard Beauchamp (trumpet), Rachel Talitman (harp)

**HARP & CO CD5050-18** [48:00]

#### Belgian Chamber Music

**Michel LYSIGHT (b.1958)** *Chronographies X* for flute, violin, viola, cello and harp (2011) [14:09]; *Trois Instantanés* for flute and harp [6:57]; *An Awakening* for violin, cello and harp (2002) [9:51]; *Ripple Marks* for flute, viola, cello and harp (1999) [3:27]; *Labyrinthes* for flute solo (1997) [5:23]

**Jean ABSIL (1893-1974)** *Sicilienne* for violin and harp (1939) [3:02]; *Concert à Cinq* for flute, violin, viola, cello and harp (1950) [10:51]

Rachel Talitman (harp); Erez Ofer (violin); Marco Fregnani-Martins (flute); Igal Braslavsky (viola); Karolina Maziarz (cello)

**HARP & CO CD5050-28** [50:37]

### *In the light of Ravel*

**Maurice RAVEL (1875-1937)** *Introduction et Allegro* [10.42]

**Robert GROSLLOT (b.1951)** *Poème Secret* [14.36]

**John METCALF (b.1946)** *Septet* [13.30]

**Sergiu NATRA (b.1924)** *Pour Nicanor* [13.22]

**Michael LYSIGHT (b.1958)** *A Tribute to Philip K. Dick* [6.31]

Rachel Talitman (harp), Marcus Fregnani-Martins (flute), Jean-Marc Fessard (clarinet), Daniel Rubenstein (violin), Laurent Houque (violin), Raphael Aubry (viola), Clément Holvoet (viola), Héléne Dautry (cello), Johannes Burghoff (cello), Akhtamar Quartet

**HARP & CO CD5050-39** [58.41]

### **Joseph LAUBER (1864-1952)**

**Music for Harp:** *Fantasia - Quintet* for viola, harp, flute, violin and cello [16:28]; *Petite Suite* for harp and flute [16:36]; *Danses Médiévales (4)* for harp and flute [16:23]; *Sonatine* for bassoon and harp [4:36]; *Suite printanière* for solo harp [13:38]

Rachel Talitman (harp), Pierre Henri Xuereb (viola), Shiho Ono (violin), Marcos Fregnani-Martins (flute), Noe Nathorp (cello), Pierre Martens (bassoon)

**HARP & CO CD5050-031** [67:00]

### **Leopold WALLNER (1847-1913)**

**Music for Harp and Viola:** *Suite polonaise:* (arr. viola and harp) [12:40]; *Rhapsodie russe* (arr. viola and harp) [8:10]; *Mazurka de concert* [8:16]; *Berceuse* (arr. viola and harp) [5:38]; *Élégie* [6:11]; *Rêverie* (arr. viola and harp) [5:37]

Rachel Talitman (harp), Pierre-Henri Xuereb (viola)

**HARP & CO CD-5050-033** [46:42]

### **Anna SEGAL**

**Chamber Music for Harp:** *Double Concertino* for harp, clarinet and strings [21:52]; *Sonata* for harp and cello [14:18]; *Dialogue* for harp and clarinet [5:51]; *Image* for harp and violin [2:00]; *Lullaby* for harp [3:44]; *Ballade* for harp [4:00]; *Suite* for harp, oboe and strings [13:59]

Rachel Talitman (harp), Jean-Marc Fessard (clarinet), Nicolas Deletaille (cello), Adrien Eble (oboe), Daniel Rubenstein (violin), Ensemble Mendelssohn

**HARP & CO CD 5050-041** [65:10]