

MARCEL TOURNIER

10 Pieces for Solo Harp

Edited by
CARL SWANSON



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Vallée de Sasso, effet de soleil, 1884 / Public Domain

CARL FISCHER

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PREFACE

Marcel Tournier (1879–1951) was one of the most important harpist-composers in the history of the instrument. He won a first prize in harp at the Paris Conservatory, and then taught the harp class there for thirty-five years after the death of his own teacher, Alphonse Hasselmans. But the primary focus of his life was composition, and specifically, compositions for the harp. Over his long career, he added a significant catalogue of very beautiful works to the harp repertoire. And yet many of his compositions are not well-known nor frequently played today, or are played only by harpists who were taught in the French tradition by teachers familiar with his works. This is unfortunate.

One of the main problems in learning many of Tournier's compositions is that frequently they are not notated the way they are actually played. Tournier was an excellent harpist. But when he was composing, he thought like a composer, obeying the rules of harmony, composition and note spellings. This was something very important to Tournier, as he states in another of his compositions. In a footnote at the bottom of the first page of his piece *Fresque marine*, he writes: "In order to simplify the engraving, certain parts of this piece are written the way the harpist has to play them, rather than musically correct, as they should be." His compositions, therefore, are not always presented in a way that the player needs to see them, and the result is the need for a lot of marking up and arranging before one can begin learning them.

This follows a long tradition that has plagued harpists for generations. The problem is that, while harp music superficially resembles keyboard music, in fact it is very different. To a keyboard player, A# and Bb are the same note. To a harpist, they are not. Figuring out enharmonic spellings, ways around chromatic sequences and unplayable parts, takes up a major part of every harpist's life. For this reason, harp music, if it is well written, functions as much like a tablature for guitar (which tells the player where to place the fingers) as a system that tells one what the pitches are. In much of Tournier's music, the notation tells us what the pitches are, but does not tell us where to place the fingers. The most egregious example of this is *Vers la source dans le bois*. It is a gorgeous, atmospheric piece. But on some pages, over half the notes have to be played enharmonically! No wonder it is such a difficult piece to learn.

The goal, therefore, of this edition is to make each piece immediately accessible and understandable. With these new engravings, all of the music is presented, for the first time, the way it is actually played.

At the time that Tournier's music was first published, there was no protocol for including the pedal changes, and most of Tournier's compositions have few

if any pedal indications. In this edition, all of the pedal changes are present, in an easily read font. In addition, there are pedal diagrams throughout each piece, as well as a standard pedal shorthand (4#, for example) to help in the learning and memorization process.

Tournier's notation is frequently not clear as to which hand plays what. Here, some passages have been re-notated to clarify this. In addition, there are fingerings, sometimes to show how a pattern that repeats throughout the piece can be played, and sometimes to show which hand is playing the notes in question. If any of these fingerings are uncomfortable, then change them. They are only suggestions.

Lastly, music one hundred years ago was printed on much larger paper. Now that all music is published in a smaller size, the reprints of the original editions are congested and hard to read. In this edition, the number of systems has been reduced for easier reading and less crowding.

Interpreting Tournier's Music

Tournier, like his mentor Debussy, was very precise about how he wanted his pieces played, and, like Debussy, wrote many musical indications to express that, usually in French. With both composers, the musical indications are as important as the notes, and ignoring them, or not understanding their meaning, will greatly diminish the effectiveness of the performance. For this reason, a glossary with translations of all the French words and phrases is included in this edition.

Tournier notated metronome markings on many of his pieces, and the general consensus among people who know his works well is that many of them are too fast. The American composer Daniel Pinkham told me years ago that metronome markings, put there by the composer, are notoriously undependable, because the composer most likely was hearing the music in his head and setting the metronome accordingly, and we all hear music in our heads faster than we would actually play it. So the advice here is, don't take the metronome markings too literally, and let each piece find its own tempo.

The pieces chosen for this first volume represent a variety of musical styles, a variety of musical colors and textures, and a variety of levels of difficulty. Some have gorgeous melody and harmony, with a straightforward musical structure (*Au Matin*, *Eternal Dreamer*), while others are almost abstract, atmospheric pictures inspired by the title of the piece (*Bells in the Snow*, *The Magical Aviary*). I think that everyone will find pieces in here that they like immediately, and others that will grow on them.

—Carl Swanson

ABOUT THE PIECES IN THIS EDITION

Au Matin (Morning)

Without a doubt, this is the most popular piece in the Tournier catalogue. Many harpists who play *Au Matin* could be forgiven for thinking it was the only piece he wrote, because in many ways it has so completely eclipsed the rest of his output.

The form of this piece is one that Tournier frequently used—critics might argue, too frequently—but here it works to perfection. Tournier loved the middle register of the harp for its resonance (mainly the third, fourth, and fifth octaves), and in order to make use of this, he turned the piece upside-down, placing the melody primarily in the bottom of left hand, with the harmony, in the form of fast arpeggios, in the right.

To play this piece successfully, it is necessary to separate the melody from the harmony, by playing it somewhat louder and the fast-moving arpeggios somewhat softer. The arpeggios serve several functions: 1) They, of course, provide the harmonic structure, and 2) their fast pace and rhythmic drive provide forward motion to the piece. But there is a third function that they serve as well. The harp is not a sustaining instrument. The notes decay quickly. So to give the impression that the longer notes are sustaining, the arpeggios fill in what would otherwise be empty space. It is a kind of sleight-of-hand that makes listeners think that they are hearing something that they are not. The arpeggios do not have to be very loud to do what they need to do. So it should not be necessary to overplay the melody. Reducing the volume of the arpeggios will let the left-hand melody resonate. This piece is approximately 3:30 to 4:00 minutes long.

Offrande (Offering)

Even when writing easier music for a lower technical level, Tournier produced first-rate compositions. This one is written entirely in Tournier's favorite part of the instrument, the middle register, and takes full advantage of its rich resonance. This piece would make a wonderful interlude on a recital between larger and more difficult pieces, or an excellent piece for use in any kind of church service. This piece is approximately 1:45 to 2:00 minutes long.

Vers la source dans le bois

(By the Woodland Spring)

Of all of the pieces that Tournier wrote (around one hundred), this one is the most problematic. In the original engravings, over half the notes on some pages have to be played enharmonically, making it difficult to read and learn. There are C \sharp s, for example, that have to be played B \sharp , and B \flat s that have to be played A \sharp . If these occurred only occasionally, one here and one there, it would not be a problem. But there are hundreds of them! So playing this piece from the original engravings means looking at one thing and playing another. The surprise is that this is not a particularly difficult piece technically. It is just monstrously difficult to read in its original form. This piece is approximately 4:00 to 4:30 minutes long.

Berceuse russe (Russian Lullaby)

While this piece is technically a low-to-middle intermediate level, it is the musical nuances and shifts in texture throughout that present the greatest technical challenge. To play this successfully requires mastery of several important technical issues: 1) the ability to place all chords and octaves at the moment that they are played and not a microsecond earlier; 2) the ability to place in sequence, that is, place only one note at a time ahead of the one being played (instead of placing blocks of notes); 3) the ability to play at least two dynamic levels simultaneously, in either hand, and; 4) the ability to muffle, with the tip of the finger, individual notes while playing others. This last is almost entirely a left-hand technique. This piece is approximately 3:10 to 3:45 minutes long.

La Volière magique (The Magical Aviary)

An aviary is a huge bird cage, as big as a house, with many birds inside. Tournier wonderfully evokes the sounds and chaos of an aviary. Much of the piece is written in the first and second octaves of the instrument. Like *Cloches sous la neige*, it is an abstract impression of an aviary, depending on sound effects and isolated note patterns to create the image. But what is the image Tournier had in mind? After all, he didn't call this piece *The Aviary*; he called it *The MAGICAL Aviary*. The image to me is that of a small child seeing an aviary for the first time. This piece is approximately 4:30 to 5:00 minutes long.

dedicated to Mme. Renée Benda

Etude de concert

Au Matin

(Morning)

7

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Allegro (♩. = 92)

Harpe

mf 4 3 4 3 4 3

4

C# Bb F# D#

8

C# F# D# Bb *mf*

12

F# *p sub.* G# Bb A# C# 2 3 2

mf 4 3 2 2 3 2

Offrande

(Offering)

(from Two Little Short and Easy Pieces)

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(4b) **Lent - d'un sentiment calme et rêveur -**

Harpe

G \sharp *mf*

3

D \sharp G \flat C \flat E \sharp D \flat *sf*

6

G \sharp *f* *p*

8

E \flat A \sharp G \flat *mf* *f*

dedicated to Miss Lucile Johnson (Rosenbloom)

Vers la source dans le bois

(By the Woodland Spring)

MARCEL TOURNIER

Edited by Carl Swanson

Harpe

Sans lenteur

ppp

Allegro moderato ($\text{♩} = 92-96$)

p murmure

mf

Berceuse russe

(Russian Lullaby, Op. 40)

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Calme, doux et expressif (♩. = 54)

Harpe

4

en cédant un peu

au mouv't

7

en cédant un peu

10

au mouvement

Harpe

p dolce

mf

più p

pp

mf

sf

p

mf

p

sf

mf

La Volière magique

(The Magical Aviary)
from Images, Suite No. 4, Op. 39

MARCEL TOURNIER

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Rubato, en s'inspirant du Mouvement qui suit

Harpe

$A\sharp$ $F\flat$
 $D\sharp$ $B\flat$

mf *souple et léger*

mf *pressez un peu*

5

p *cédez* *au Mouvement* *pressez un peu* *cédez* *au Mouvement*

8va-

10

8va-

Délégatement ($\text{♩} = 84-88$)

14

mf *dim.*

8va-

$A\sharp$ $D\sharp$

L'Eternel rêveur

(The Eternal Dreamer)
from Au Hasards des Ondes, Op. 50

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(5b) Nocturne (♩ = 58)

Harpe

C \sharp *p* *dolce*
estompé

mp *bien chanté*

3

pp *mp* *bien chanté*

5

mf C \flat B \flat

7

B \flat D \flat *mp* *bien chanté* *pp*

Clair de lune sur l'étang du parc

(Moonlight on the Lake)
from Images, Suite No. 1, Op. 29

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Très calme (sans aucune rigueur de mesure, comme une improvisation)

(♩ = 112 environ)

Harpe

(5b)

C

p dolce

5

9

F \flat

A \flat

A \flat

C \flat

A \flat

Tempo I

en cédant

13

p

A \flat - \flat

3 2 1 4 2 1

* Don't muffle anything in this piece.

Lolita la danseuse

(Lolita the Dancer)
from Images, Suite No. 1, Op. 29

53

MARCEL TOURNIER

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Animé, rythmé (♩. = 72)

Harpe

G#
D#

p très rythmé

5

mf sonore

11

F#
D#

19

F#
D#

p

sf

26

8va--

glissando

mf

The musical score is written for harp and piano. The harp part is in G# and D# and features a 'très rythmé' section. The piano part includes a 'sonore' section and a 'glissando' section. The score is marked with various dynamics including *p*, *mf*, *sf*, and *mf*. The tempo is marked 'Animé, rythmé (♩. = 72)'. The score is numbered 5, 11, 19, and 26. The harp part is marked with 'G#' and 'D#'. The piano part includes a 'glissando' section marked '8va--' and 'glissando'. The score is marked with various articulations including slurs, ties, and accents. The score is marked with various dynamics including *p*, *mf*, *sf*, and *mf*. The score is marked with various tempo markings including 'Animé, rythmé (♩. = 72)'. The score is marked with various performance instructions including 'très rythmé', 'sonore', and 'glissando'. The score is marked with various musical notations including notes, rests, and accidentals.

Cloches sous la neige

(Bells in the Snow)
(from Images, Suite No. 4, Op. 39)

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Modéré (♩ = 88)

Harpe

pp calme et lointain

p

p

4

p *sourd* *l.v.* *p* lointain *più p* *p* *2* *2* *3* *1* *3*

8

p *sourd* *mf* *p* *più p* *moins p* *E♭*

11 (5b)

p *G♭* *A♯* *peu à peu cresc.* *mf* *E♭* *f* *f pesante*

mf *sonore* *più sonore*

14

D♯ *dim. poco à poco* *mf* *①* *3*

① : The lowest note is plucked

Jazz Band

Op. 33

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Fougueusement (♩ = 184)

Harpe

*le plus **ff** possible*

p sub.

toujours en augmentant

* This pattern, which appears throughout the piece, could also be played: