

GABRIEL FAURÉ

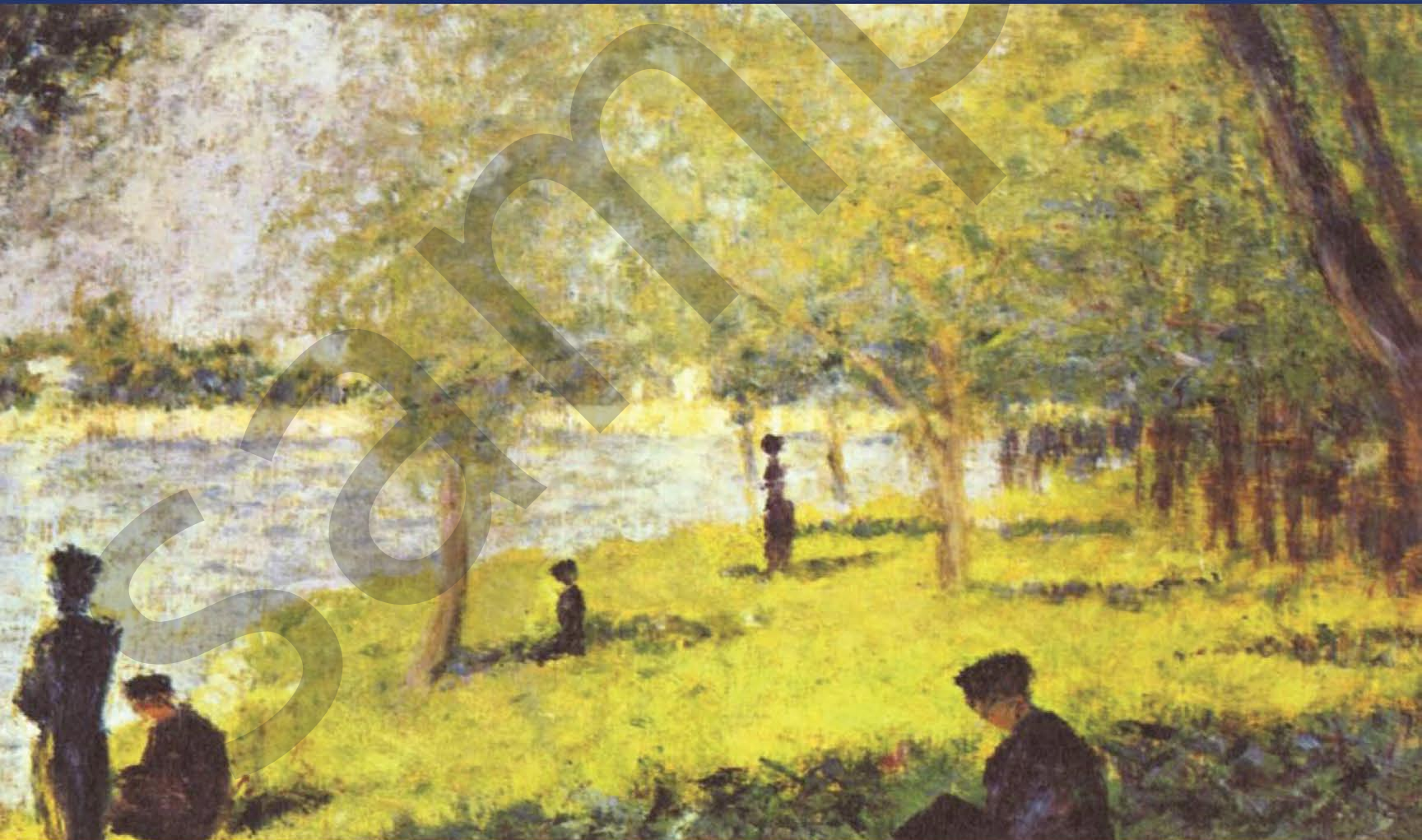
TWO MASTERPIECES

for Solo Harp

Impromptu, Op. 86 and Une châtelaine en sa tour..., Op. 110

Edited by

CARL SWANSON



CARL FISCHER®

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PREFACE

The years between 1900 and 1925 in Paris were some of the most fruitful in the history of harp repertoire. Debussy's *Danses sacrée et profane* and his *Sonate pour flûte, alto, et harpe*, Caplet's *Masque of the Red Death* and his *Two Divertissements*, Gabriel Pierné's *Concertstücke* and *Impromptu caprice*, and Ravel's *Introduction et Allegro* were among the many important compositions written during this period. Many harpists would give pride of place in this list, however, to the two pieces in this volume: Gabriel Fauré's *Impromptu* and *Une châtelaine en sa tour...*

These two pieces, published here in one volume for the first time, were written fourteen years apart. The first, the *Impromptu*, was written in 1904 for the end-of-year exams at the Paris Conservatory. The second, *Une châtelaine en sa tour...* was written in 1918 for, and dedicated to, Micheline Kahn, a very able and beautiful harpist who was friends with Fauré.

While both compositions are masterpieces, the *Impromptu* has always been more popular with harpists than the *Châtelaine*, probably because it fits the hand so well. It is simply so playable. Every serious student of the harp plays this piece at some point, and it appears on more recitals than anything else in the repertoire. The *Châtelaine*, in contrast, while very beautiful, is one of the most awkward pieces ever written for harp. More about that later.

There is a fascinating mystery that surrounds the *Impromptu* though. What follows is extracted from an article that I wrote for *The American Harp Journal* (Vol. 17, No. 2, Winter 1999).

Who Actually Wrote the Impromptu of Fauré?

In 1990, at the end of the World Harp Congress in Paris, Catherine Michel and I drove the illustrious harpist, and our former teacher, Pierre Jamet, down to his summer home in Gargillesse. He was 97 years old, and it was clear his health was failing. He was extremely thin and frail, and when we picked him and his nurse up, his thoughts were veiled and foggy. But as we drove south and talked with him, he perked up considerably, and by the time we stopped for dinner in Orléans, he was once again the sharp and witty raconteur that I remembered from my own student days.

Over dinner, Catherine posed a question to him that took me by surprise, and the response he gave left me momentarily speechless. "What truth," she asked, "is there to the story that Hasselmans had a very considerable hand in the composition of Fauré's *Impromptu*?" She was referring, of course, to Alphonse Hasselmans, the harp teacher at the Paris Conservatory at the time of

the composition of the *Impromptu*, and the piece's dedicatee. Jamet's voice got very low, and he leaned his head towards us, wincing as he remembered an 87-year-old *scandale* that was still fresh in his memory. "The story is true," he said. "But don't tell anyone." Astonished, I asked for more explanation. "Well," he said, "Fauré had accepted the commission for the competition piece that year [1904], and at some point realized that he would never finish it on time. So he turned over what he had done to Hasselmans, who then completed it. ...Of the two Fauré pieces for solo harp," he continued, "I prefer *Une châtelaine en sa tour...* It's more awkward, but it's pure Fauré."

Could this possibly be the case, I thought? For me, it had the instant ring of truth, for reasons that I will explain later. And it was coming from the mouth of an eyewitness and contemporary of the principals involved. Jamet had studied with Hasselmans and knew Fauré, as well as several of the students who had been in that year's Conservatory class. But first, to understand how this **could** have happened, it is necessary to explain the circumstances under which the piece was composed.

The Paris Conservatory at that time had juried exams at the end of every academic year. The exam for each instrument (called a *concours*, or contest) consisted of one piece, either from existing repertoire, or a brand-new composition, especially written for that year's exams. If the competition piece was from existing repertoire, any student who already knew it had a leg up on anyone who didn't. But they were all equal when it came to a new piece. The commissions for new pieces were given out in great secrecy, and the publisher knew that it had to be ready to sell on a specific date. On the day the *concours* pieces was announced, the students would rush across the *rue de Madrid* to the music store to buy their copy and get to work. Regardless of how long or short a time they had been at the Conservatory, all the students played the same piece for the jury, who would then award an unspecified number of first prizes, second prizes, and first and second honorable mentions to each class. (The word "class" here refers to all the students taught by one teacher—usually twelve—who were taught in classes three times a week. The weekly private lesson was taught by the teacher's assistant.)

Unlike most other commissions that Fauré received, this one had a deadline set in stone, and Fauré knew it. On the surface it would appear that there would be no difficulty meeting the deadline. Fauré was by then a well-known and distinguished composer at the forefront of French musical composition.

Paul Verlaine

The poem is an image of medieval courtly love, which is the admiration and affection for someone totally out of reach and unattainable, and for whom the admirer has no hope of knowing intimately (much like the adulation for movie stars and famous people today). One might ask, given the piece's setting in A minor and overall melancholy and brooding mood, if it is really about the lady in the castle tower, or about the sentiments of the man on the ground watching her.

There are two corrections to this edition of the *Châtelaine* that are not in the original Durand publication. Both were discovered by Pierre Jamet, and confirmed by Micheline Kahn, the dedicatee of the piece. The first is in m. 27, and is the bass note on the third beat. In the Durand edition, that note is a Cb. It is supposed to be a C natural.

The second correction concerns m. 97, the next to the last measure. In the Durand edition, the left-hand chord is the same as the left-hand chord in the last measure. It is supposed to be an octave higher. Stated another way, the left-hand chord in m. 97 is supposed to be one octave lower than the one in m. 96, not two octaves lower.

The Reasons for This Edition

Both of these pieces, like most of our standard repertoire, were published at a time when there was no protocol for printing harp music the way harpists actually have to play it. There are few if any pedal changes included, and there are no enharmonic spellings when often that is the only way a passage can be played. The distribution of notes between the two hands is frequently not clear or is simply wrong. As a result, any harpist wanting to play one of them has to spend countless hours figuring these things out and marking up the piece. In the case of the *Châtelaine*, the original edition is so distant from how it has to be played that many harpists just give up and put it aside.

The goal of this edition, then, is to present both pieces the way they are actually played. All of the pedal changes are included, and all notes that have to be played enharmonically are printed that way. Some of the notation has been altered from the original to show more clearly which hand plays what. The fingerings that I have included are there to help clarify how a passage can be played but are just suggestions, and it will be easy for anyone to change them as needed to suit their own hand. Learning either of these pieces from this edition should require minimal marking up.

Pedals

There are 176 pedal changes in the *Impromptu* and 146 in the *Châtelaine*. The changes take time to work out and, in the case of the *Châtelaine*, are particularly tricky. It would have been pointless to re-issue these pieces without including all of the pedal changes. So they are all here, in a size large enough to read easily. The pedals are written where space permits. It should be possible to get used to these pedals as they are without re-writing anything. If, after four or five days, something is still bothersome, use white-out tape (not the liquid) to cover a pedal marking.

Technical Considerations

Both of these pieces are advanced repertoire. There are several points of technique that have to be mastered in order to play them. The first is the ability to place chords and octaves at the moment they are played and not a hair sooner. The second is the ability to place in sequence, meaning, to place only one note at a time ahead of the one being played, instead of placing blocks of notes. The third is the ability to play at least two dynamic levels simultaneously, in either hand. And the fourth is the ability to muffle, with the tip of the finger, individual notes as other notes are being played. This last one is almost entirely a left-hand technique.

I have not in any way changed or added to the musical markings of either piece, and have not eliminated or changed a single note. The changes that were made to the *Châtelaine*, which were substantial, were done in order to make the piece playable, to eliminate or at least reduce the chance of pedal slides and buzzes, to simplify the pedaling, and to clarify how numerous passages have to be played. The musical integrity of both pieces has remained unchanged.

—Carl Swanson

IMPROMPTU for Harp

GABRIEL FAURÉ, Op. 86
Edited by Carl Swanson

Allegro molto moderato ♩ = 76

Harpe

ff

C_b D C

7

p *f* *p*

A_b — b G_b F_b G_b A_b — b F_b — b

C_b

12

f *p* *cresc.*

A_b — b F_b A_b — A_b D_b — b

C_b

16

(5b) *f*

20 *poco rit.*

24 *a tempo*

27 *dim.*

29 *mf* *G# sempre dim.* (4b)

31 *pp* *G#* *C#* *8va* *a tempo* *f* *p perdendosi*

34 (5b)

Meno mosso

Chords: C \sharp , G \sharp , A \sharp

Dynamic: *p* a piacere

Hand labels: RH, LH

Dynamic: *dolce*

Chords: A \flat , G \flat , C \flat , A \sharp , C \sharp

Dynamic: *f*

Chords: F \flat , A \flat , C \flat , F \sharp , C \sharp , G \sharp , F \sharp

Hand label: 8va---

Tempo: *a tempo*

Chords: E \sharp , D \sharp , G \flat , D \flat

Dynamic: *p*

Hand label: LH

Chords: E \flat , C \flat , D \sharp , A \sharp , D \flat , F \flat , A \flat , F \sharp , C \sharp

60

8va-----
a tempo

dim. f

65

cresc. f sempre dim.

71

espressivo LH

75

(4b)

79

p

à Micheline Kahn

UNE CHÂTELAINE EN SA TOUR ...

(Paul Verlaine)
for Harp

GABRIEL FAURÉ, Op. 110
Edited by Carl Swanson

Andante ♩. = 88*
all RH

Harpe

p

5

9

13

cresc. poco a poco

17

f

p

F# C# F# G#

G#

G# Bb Gb Cb

B# D# C# 4 F# G#

*This is Fauré's own tempo marking. It is too fast.
This piece is usually played at ♩. = 72-79

21 (All ♩)

pp

- G \sharp Eb F \flat G \sharp

23

p

F \sharp B \flat G \sharp B \sharp F \sharp

25

cresc.

G \sharp E \flat G \sharp F \sharp
D \flat

27

f

E \flat B \flat A \flat D \sharp B \sharp

29

B \flat

31 (2b) *p*

A4 Db Ab

33 (4b)

Gb Eb D4

35 (1b)

A4 G#4/B4 C#4 G4 Ab

37 (all 4) *cresc.*

A4 Bb C#

39 *f*

Eb C4 Eb B4 G#4 F#4 D#4

41 **L'istesso tempo**

F#
D#

43 (5b)

G#
Bb

Ab
D# Gb

Eb

46

Eb

E# A#

C# D#

Ab D#

G# Cb

A#

49 *cresc.*

Eb D#

Eb

Ab D#

A# C#

Eb

51 **Sans presser**

f

G#
Bb

G#
Bb