Senior Recital:
Teo Charmaine, Harp

J.S. BACH
Fugue from Violin Sonata No. 1

D. SCARLATTI
Keyboard Sonata in D Major K.277
Keyboard Sonata in B minor K.27

MARCEL GRANDJANY
The Colorado Trail

----------------------------------- INTERMISSION -----------------------------------

P. HINDEMITH
Sonata for Harp

HENRIETTE RENIE
Légende
PROGRAMME NOTES

Fugue from Violin Sonata No. 1 -------------- J.S. Bach (Transcribed: Marcel Grandjany)

J.S. Bach wrote a set of six solo works for violin; three of which are Sonatas and the other three are Partitas. The Sonatas take the form of four movements while the Partitas take the form of dance suites. The three Sonatas are written in G minor, A minor and C major.

The four movements of Violin Sonata No. 1 are Adagio, Fuga, Sciliana and Presto. In all four movements, the key signature only shows B flat. However, it does not necessarily mean that they are in D minor or F major, but it suggests that Bach was using modal tonality.

The G minor Fugue is the shortest fugue written by Bach, and it is also the central movement of this Sonata. One main feature of this movement is the adamant entrances of three and four note chords. It portrays a variety of moods and characters, thus bringing dimension to the piece. This Fugue was further on transcribed for the organ as part of the Prelude and Fugue in D minor, BMV 539. The harp version of the Fugue is most likely adapted from the organ version.

Keyboard Sonata in D major K.277 & B minor K.27 ------ D. Scarlatti (1685 - 1757)

Scarlatti wrote 555 sonatas in his lifetime. They are all single movements that were largely in binary form, and a few in early sonata form. Most of them were written for harpsichord or early pianofortes. The Sonata in D major K.277 is in binary form with a modulation in the middle to its dominant key. It starts off with two independent lines that develop to form a more homophonic texture. Interestingly, the beginning gives off the feeling of an anacrusis, but the harmony reassures listeners of where the downbeat lies. The Sonata in B minor K.27 is one of Scarlatti’s earlier works and is more commonly performed. Tension is evident right from the beginning, with the music constantly evolving. There are a variety of moods, keeping listeners on their toes.

The Colorado Trail ------------------------------------ Marcel Grandjany (1891 - 1975)

Marcel Grandjany is a renowned harpist and composer. He studied with Henriette Renié and later on with Alphonse Hasselmans in Paris Conservatory. He was such a great teacher himself, that his influence is largely imprinted on harpists even till today.

The Colorado Trail is a fantasie piece written in 1954. The introduction only lasts three bars, but clearly sets the tranquility for the entrance of the theme. Though written in D major, the theme sounds like a chinese folk song through the use of pentatonic notes. This piece somewhat in the form of a rondo, with its first theme constantly coming back in bigger grandeur than the previous. The last return of the theme is an exception, where it takes the form of beautiful harmonics. It gradually transforms into a flush of arpeggios and gives a grandioso ending.
Sonata for Harp ---------------------------------- Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)

Hindemith dedicated this Harp Sonata to Italian harpist Clelia Gatti-Aldrovandi. He wrote it in 1939 while he was in Switzerland and on his way to the United States. This Sonata has three movements and it reflects Hindemith’s idiomatic writing for the harp.

The first movement, marked "Moderately fast," portrays the image of a person standing in front of a large church in a European plaza and listening to the organ play. It opens with a series of lavish chords that is both declamatory in its rhetoric and archaic in its modal harmony. Hindemith utilises the entire range of the instrument to display its nobility. The next movement is a scherzo, marked "Lively" as a reflection of children playing in the same European plaza. It includes many fast running arpeggiated passages with playful short motifs. The very last movement, "Lied," is based on a nostalgic poem by the nineteenth century poet Hölty to create a literal "song" without words. The poem describes the last wish of a harpist on the brink of death: that, after he passes on, his harp be placed behind the church altar as a memorial, where "at sunset" ("im Abendrot") it will sound, through the wind that lightly graze across the strings. Sound is produced at its own will, just like antique Aeolian harps. In this finale, the music gives off a beautifully sad and bittersweet essence.

Légende (The Dance of the Elves) ------------------------------- Henriette Renié (1875 - 1956)

This piece is a programmatic work based on the poem “Les Elfes” by French poet Leconte de Lisle. In this tale, a Cavalier rides through the forest to marry his Beloved. He was intercepted by a group of Elves, where the Queen of the Elves fell in love with him. She was furious to witness his strong dedication to his Beloved, and casted a spell on him. As the Cavalier flees away on his horse, he sees a haunting figure following him and cursed it. Unknowing to him, it was his Beloved and she ended up dying. Out of despair and grief, the Cavalier also tragically died. Till today, Légende is still largely popular among harpists. It is infamous for its challenging passages and is often used to show the virtuoso of the performer.

Henriette Renié was a child prodigy. She first learnt the piano, but started playing on the harp at the age of 8 under Belgian harpist and composer Alphonse Hasselmans. Renié entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of 10 and was unanimously awarded the Premier Prix in the Conservatory's annual concours the following year. Usually, students are only allowed to enter harmony classes at the age of 14, but an exception was made for Renié. She loved developing more repertoire for the harp, but due to her busy schedule, Renié could only dedicate one month a year to compose.

Légende was written in 1901 and premiered the following year. This piece was written in dedication to her long time friend and teacher, Mr Theodore Dubois, who was also the Director of the Paris Conservatory at that time. Renié’s love for orchestration is evident through the large variety of timbres in this piece. She also adored Cesar Franck, and the attention to harmony, counterpoint and layers were characteristic of Franck.
The Elves by Leconte de Lisle: (English adaptation)

Crowned with thyme and marjoram,
the happy Elves dance on the plain.

From the forest trail to the familiar fallow deer,
On a black horse, comes a knight.
Its golden spur shines in the dark night;
And when he crosses a moonbeam,
A silver helmet is seen shining with a changing reflection.

Crowned with thyme and marjoram, the
happy Elves dance on the plain.

They surround him all with a light swarm
that in the air mute seems to flutter.
- Hardi knight, by the serene night,
Where are you going so late? said the young Queen.
Bad spirits haunt forests
Come dance instead on fresh lawns.

Crowned with thyme and marjoram,
the happy Elves dance on the plain.
- No! my fiancee with clear and sweet eyes
Wait for me, and tomorrow we will be married.
Let me pass, Elves of the meadows,
Which go round in circles the flowering mosses;
Do not dwell far from my love,
for here are already the light of day.

Crowned with thyme and marjoram,
The happy Elves dance on the plain.

- Stay, knight. I will give you the
magical opal and the golden ring,
And, what is better than fame and fortune,
My dress spun in the moonlight.
- No! he said. Go then! And with her white finger
She touches the trembling warrior's heart.

Crowned with thyme and marjoram, the
happy Elves dance on the plain.

And under the spur, the black horse leaves.
He runs, he leaps and goes without delay;
But the knight shivers and leans;
He sees on the road a white form
That walks noiselessly and reaches out his arms:

- Elf, spirit, demon, do not stop me!

Crowned with thyme and marjoram, the
Happy Elves dance on the plain.

Do not stop me, odious ghost!
I’m going to marry my sweet-eyed beauty.
"O my dear husband, the eternal grave
will be our wedding bed," she said.
I am dead! - And he, seeing her thus,
Of anguish and love falls dead too.

Crowned with thyme and marjoram, the
happy Elves dance on the plain.