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THE CROWN OF ARIADNE

ELEANOR TURNER HARP



For this recording I have chosen five striking works that show how the harp can evoke radically different atmospheres and be a means of expression for composers writing in highly diverse styles.

The centrepiece of the album is R.M. Schafer's highly original *The Crown of Ariadne*, based on events in the life of the Minoan Princess, Ariadne, who saved Theseus in his struggle against the Minotaur of Knossos on the Greek island of Crete. The harp is set amongst an array of small percussion instruments – bells, cymbals, crotales, a bell tree, triangles and wood blocks – all played by the harpist. I remember the first time I heard *Ariadne*, ten years ago, performed by Erika Waardenburg. I was mesmerised as she swept between the instruments on her left and right, deftly playing the harp all the while I knew I had to perform the piece myself, so I bought the score immediately! However, it wasn't until 2010 that I had the opportunity to devote my time to learning the music, when I was honoured with a Wingate Scholarship. The financial award enabled me not only to purchase the required percussion instruments, but also allowed me the luxury of studying the work intensively with Erika Waardenburg in the Netherlands.

As the Crown of Ariadne is the Northern Crown star constellation, I see the other pieces on this album as other stars, illuminating all the colours, emotions and virtuosity of the harp as a solo instrument. Mayuzumi's *Rokudan*, like *Ariadne*, uses percussive effects on the harp to draw us into the soundworld of the Japanese koto.

Eleanor Turner

THE CROWN OF ARIADNE

SUITE FOR HARP, PERCUSSION AND TAPE (1979, revised 1995) | RAYMOND MURRAY SCHAFER

1	Ariadne Awakens	3'47
2	Ariadne's Dance	1'48
3	Dance of the Bull	2'54
4	Dance of the Night Insects	3'34
5	Ariadne's Dream (1995)	4'32
6	Sun Dance	3'24
7	Labyrinth Dance	3'55

ROKUDAN (1989) | TOSHIRO MAYUZUMI

8	<i>i</i> Adagietto	1'56
9	<i>ii</i> Adagio	2'19
10	<i>iii</i> Lento	2'09
11	<i>iv</i> Tempo Rubato	2'16
12	<i>v</i> Allegretto	3'27

13 **REMINISCENCES OF TRANQUILLITY (2002) | YINAM LEEF** 8'30

14 **TRATTI PER ARPA (2003) | IG HENNEMAN** 7'59

15 **SWEET BLUES | BERNARD ANDRÈS** 5'37

58'09

Despite the extraordinary innovations of the early-nineteenth century English harpist, Parish Alvars (1808-49) – who invented various effects for his instrument involving harmonics, and pioneered the tuning key glissando – it is only recently that the harp has been generally recognised as the versatile and highly suitable instrument for virtuosity that it is. For a long time it has been more widely associated with the gurgling cadential flourishes in, say, works by Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky, or as ethereal accompaniment to treble choirs in such works as Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. Indeed, it has often suffered the humiliation in various published scores of having the piano suggested as a 'safe option' for performing its repertoire. That this has changed so much in the past century is largely due to the French harp virtuoso and composer Carlos Salzedo (1885-1961), who in a multitude of original musical works demonstrated that the harp is more than just a decorative salon instrument. Salzedo revived many of Alvars' virtuosic techniques while pioneering many of his own – such as rapping or otherwise using the soundboard as a percussive instrument, and such non-standard playing of the strings as using nails, plucking damped strings or near the tuning pegs – such as may be found in several of the works featured on this album.

It was one of Salzedo's pupils, Judy Loman, who in the 1970s approached the Canadian composer Raymond Murray Schafer (born 1933) to compose a solo harp work for her. Following a suggestion by the Japanese composer Takemitsu, Loman also suggested that the work might also include some bells for her to play. The result was the sequence *The Crown of Ariadne* in 1979, which – rather like the constituent parts of Stockhausen's epic *Licht* cycle – Schafer has made part of his on-going cycle *Patria*. In the world of Greek mythology Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete, is famous for helping Theseus to discover and kill the Minotaur within the Cretan Labyrinth, providing the Athenian hero with a ball of thread so he could retrace his steps to find his way out again. Schafer took inspiration from

this story to create a six-part sequence intended for dancers as well as harp and percussion. This was first performed by Judy Loman in Schafer's hometown of Toronto on 3 March 1979. Even without the dancers, the harpist provides something of a spectacle, surrounded as she is by various percussion instruments – including various bells, wood block, bongos and cymbal (altogether a richer array than Loman had anticipated!) – which she uses in performing the work, while herself wearing ankle bells which jingle during the second part, "Ariadne's Dance". Other unusual effects include the use of a tuning key to create eerie glissandos, so reviving a technique created by Alvars ("Dance of the Night Insects"), and the use of a pre-recorded harp tuned differently from the live harp (in "Labyrinth Dance").

Eleanor Turner has become closely identified with *The Crown of Ariadne*, having given a prize-winning performance of Schafer's work at Amsterdam's 2011 Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition, and subsequently attending a workshop just months later with both the composer and the work's original dedicatee Judy Loman at the Eleventh World Harp Congress in Vancouver.

The suite starts with *Ariadne Awakens*, in which a bell tree and three small bells at different pitches feature prominently. The harp is tuned with four quarter tones, adding to the exotic effect and creating a melting chromaticism that is enhanced further by the note-bending of Ariadne's theme (C-G-F) in the middle of the movement.

Eleanor Turner describes the following dance: "Ariadne creates a dance with fast footwork and deft changes to memorise the twists and turns of the Labyrinth, enabling her to help Theseus (with whom she has fallen madly in love) escape the Minotaur's lust. The harpist puts dancing bells on her ankles and simultaneously taps out a complex 'irrational' rhythm with her feet whilst playing a long, angular melody and counter-melody with her hands. The ever-present threat of the Minotaur

is heard in a repeated menacing bass note cluster with a pedal buzz (created by positioning a tuning key in a pedal slot, preventing the mechanism from working cleanly on that note and so causing a metallic buzz) in the middle of this dance. Bongos and special techniques on the harp, all executed simultaneously, coupled with the fact that the movement never pauses for a second, create a performance that is fuelled by dramatic tension and edge-of-seat suspense – for the audience AND the performer!”

On *Dance of the Bull*, Turner writes: “This movement calls for immense energy and vigour from the harpist, with thunderous double octaves, aggressive pedal slides, menacing *près de la table* passages (where one plays very close to the harp’s soundboard for a coarser timbre) and the ‘xylophonic effect’; a woody sound used in this movement to suggest the bull’s cloven hooves tapping the ground with impatience. In the middle of the movement the Minotaur plays a deadly game of ‘hide and seek’ with its prey. The harp is light, high pitched and balletic, yet the underlying bass pedal slides betray the presence of the Minotaur. The King’s Count is then heard roaring his approval of this evil sport, depicted on the harp by the zip-like noise of a finger cymbal being pulled rapidly down the entire length of one of the wound bass wires. This movement is made as aggressive and ‘un-harp’ as possible, by deliberately not damping any of the bass octaves so that they all continue to resonate. The volume builds tremendously and the harpist makes strings buzz and twang together to enhance the bullish effect!”

Then follows the more delicate *Dance of the Night Insects*: “This movement can be quite comical in performance, due to the variety of physical gestures that accompany the special effects. For example, at one point the harpist has to sing into the back of the harp’s soundboard through a cardboard tube! This recording captures the delicacy and precision of these effects; although some entertainment is lost, the aural experience is greatly enhanced by listening to each individual

sound without the visual distractions. We can imagine the spider dancing across its web, the moths flapping around the light of the glowworms and the mosquitoes pestering Ariadne in her sleep. The characteristic chirping of the nocturnal crickets and the grasshoppers’ wings rubbing frantically together remind us of our Greek surroundings and set the mood for *Ariadne’s Dream*.”

Ariadne’s Dream was added to *The Crown of Ariadne* in 1995, composed at Judy Loman’s request as the fifth movement to the original sequence. Eleanor Turner, who by including this movement has made the expanded work’s first complete studio recording, writes: “I feel that it would not be out of the question for Schafer to add further to *The Crown of Ariadne*, as it is still as alive to him as it is to those who perform it. Written purely for the harp, with no percussion instruments, *Ariadne’s Dream* is the emotional heart of the piece and offers a premonition of the tragedy that is to come. The music sets a sensual scene of Ariadne lying asleep, being visited by thoughts of Theseus and ultimately his rejection of her on the Island of Naxos.”

About the penultimate section, *Sun Dance*, Turner writes: “In 2011 I went on a sailing holiday in Greece – my first visit to a Mediterranean country as a tourist rather than a harpist. I bought several strings of bells; the kind that hang from the doorways of every shop and cause a terrible cacophony every time you accidentally knock into them! I play these in *Sun Dance* where Schafer directs the harpist to ‘ring all bells, triangles, crotales etc. furiously and let vibrate’. Every time I play those bells it takes me back to the Greek island where I found them and where I was first able to imagine the entire sensory experience that Schafer dreamed of when he conceived *The Crown of Ariadne*.”

Many of the unusual techniques to be found in Schafer’s work resurface in the lone harp work by the Japanese composer Toshiro Mayuzumi (1929-97). A composer of numerous film scores, of which the best-known is probably his score for John

Huston's epic *The Bible: In the beginning*, Mayuzumi was also a major concert hall composer, whose reputation – unlike so many other film composers – was not swamped by his career involving the big screen.

He studied at the Paris Conservatoire where he developed his enthusiasm for the Western avant garde, particularly the music of Edgard Varèse. This was blended with a deep interest in the music traditions of his own country. Mayuzumi's sole composition for harp, *Rokudan* ('Roku': six; 'dan': columns), starts with an evocation of the indigenous Japanese plucked stringed instrument, the koto: when given its New York premiere in 1989, the year of its composition, the *New York Times* observed admiringly how Mayuzumi "expanded his themes into vital, beautifully elaborate webs of sound".

Another composer not much associated with the harp but who has written masterfully for it is the Israeli composer Yinan Leef (born 1953). In response to a commission from the International Harp Contest in Israel, as the set piece for the 2003 competition in Tel Aviv, Leef composed *Reminiscences of Tranquility* during the first months of 2002. The composer himself writes: "When writing the piece I found myself facing two challenges. The first was to define the musical ideas, materials and sound-environment in ways that would best fit my melodic-harmonic language and yet be consistent with the construction logic of the harp and not create unreasonable difficulties that could in turn impair the musical flow. The second challenge was to find the emotional-structural framework that could bridge between the intimate nature of the instrument and the stormy period during which the work was composed, a time of terror, violence and fearful anxieties. The dialogue with the harp has served for me as a sort of mental refuge. The work's title – *Reminiscences of Tranquility* – comes to express the yearning for other, more delicate musical and emotional values. And when they are absent from the immediate surrounding reality, we turn to search for them in our inner being."

In contrast, there's *Tratti per Arpa*, composed in the following year by the Dutch musician-composer Ig Henneman (born 1945). Herself a viola player, Henneman leads several groups including the Ig Henneman Sextet and the Queen Mab Trio. Influenced by a range of Western 'minimalist' composers from Erik Satie to compatriot Louis Andriessen, Henneman has also taken inspiration from the severe style of Galina Ustvolskaya and the improvisatory work of Sofia Gubaidulina.

Tratti was composed to a commission from the Dutch harpist Godelieve Schrama. Eleanor Turner describes *Tratti* as "exuberant and outgoing", and writes: "Whilst staying in Amsterdam for the Gaudeamus competition, I was lucky enough to meet Ig Henneman and play *Tratti per Arpa* to her. Performing it to the composer was both exciting and nerve-wracking; it also led to a complete reinterpretation on my part! 'Tratti' is the Italian word for 'features'; it has no bar lines but exact and insistent rhythms, extreme changes in register and dynamic, is frighteningly angular in some places, silkily smooth in others – I think it is like contemporary dance and I can imagine the choreography for it! Meeting Ig inspired me and enabled me to make sense of the music; bringing exactness to the detail, but also freedom and a feeling of discovery to its spirit."

Finally *Sweet Blues*, a piece by a composer whose music is much known and beloved among harpists today. Bernard Andrès (born 1941) is a French harpist and teacher who has composed several dozens of works for harp, consciously cultivating a French style evident here in the Ravellian harmonic twist with which the main melody starts. Turner writes: "The first piece that I ever fell in love with on the harp was *Contes Vagues*, by Andrès, when I was about eight years old. To still enjoy playing his music is a testament to the range of styles M. Andrès composes in – from simple semi-contemporary pieces for children, to challenging avant-garde works for the advanced harpist, and with little gems like this 'Sweet Blues' in between."

I ELEANOR TURNER

Eleanor Turner is a musician of exceptional skill, recognized internationally for the warmth and passion she gives to her performances. In the 2007 Cardiff European Harp Competition she won First Prize – a magnificent Salvi concert harp – an achievement that led to numerous recitals in concert halls and festivals across Europe. Eleanor also won Third Prize and the Peutz Audience Award at the Netherlands International Harp Competition 2010 and Second Prize in the Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition for contemporary music, held in Amsterdam in 2011.

Eleanor started playing the harp aged five and made her London concerto debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall when she was fifteen, with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, conducted by Daniel Harding. This inspired her to pursue a career as a concert harpist; commissioning, performing and composing new music to showcase her instrument. Eleanor has been awarded funds by The Tillett Trust and the PRS Foundation for New Music, the Musicians Benevolent Fund for a groundbreaking project with hip hop dancer Lizzie Gough and a Wingate Scholarship to study contemporary harp repertoire, which led to this recording.

Teaching is an important part of Eleanor's life and she enjoys passing on the wealth of knowledge that she gained from her excellent tutors, principally Daphne Boden at the Royal College of Music Junior Department and Alison Nicholls. Eleanor has also studied with eminent harpists Catherine Michel, Erika Waardenburg, Ernestine Stoop, Helen Sharp and Hugh Webb.

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