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Henriette Renié: A Threefold Legacy

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Abstract

In 1810, Sébastien Érard patented a double-action mechanism that would dramatically alter the trajectory of the pedal harp. While this invention granted the harp a newfound voice in orchestral music, the harp still struggled to gain ground as a solo instrument. The harp's increased complexity necessitated that harpists themselves explore the instrument's abilities and demonstrate these to the musical world. It is to one such harpist, Henriette Renié, that the harp owes much of its credibility as an instrument worthy of the solo stage. From her prodigious beginnings at Paris Conservatoire, Renié's concerts captivated musicians and the public alike. Her spirit on stage exuded a love of the harp and indeed, of beauty itself. Finding existing literature to be somewhat limited, Renié gifted the harp repertoire with significant works that showcased the harp's virtuosic abilities and inimitable qualities. Yet, her influence might not have been so widespread had it not been for her love of teaching. Committed to cultivating a love of the harp in each of her students, Renié instructed numerous harpists, including Mildred Dilling, Marcel Grandjany, and Susann McDonald. This article demonstrates Mlle. Renié's vital role in the advancement of the harp as a solo instrument by drawing on biographical information, interview transcriptions, student testimonials, and score study. Renié heralded the harp's potential for the entirety of her career, and her legacy rightly serves as an inspiration to today's harpists. In surveying the impact of her performances, compositions, and teaching, it is clear that Mlle. Renié's mastery of the harp was outmatched only by her love for it.

Keywords

Renié, Henriette Renié, harp, harpists, harp performance, harp composition, harp transcription, solo harp, pedagogy, Paris Conservatory, Sébastien Érard, Mildred Dilling, Marcel Grandjany, Susann McDonald

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Henriette Renié: A Threefold Legacy

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In 1810, Sébastien Érard patented a double-action mechanism that would dramatically alter the trajectory of the pedal harp. This development significantly broadened the instrument's capabilities as each string could be tightened by not only one, but two, half-steps. Whereas prior to the double-action pedal harp, harpists could only play in a limited number of keys, they could now perform in any chromatic combination. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Romantic composers such as Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky would take advantage of the harp's chromatic abilities, increasing the instrument's role in the orchestra.¹ Although these composers and others granted the harp a newfound voice, this may have hindered the advancement of the harp as a solo instrument; for many now considered the harp primarily for orchestral use.² The harp's increased complexity necessitated that harpists themselves explore the instrument's soloistic capacity and demonstrate this to the musical world. It is to one such harpist, Henriette Renié, that the harp owes much of its credibility as a solo instrument. Renié's stunning performances, cutting-edge compositions, and pedagogical contributions played a significant role in the advance of the harp as an instrument not only for ensemble settings, but for the solo stage.

Born in Paris in 1875 to a middle-class artistic family, Renié began taking piano lessons before the age of five.³ Her father, an actor and singer, often performed with the Paris Opera, and it was at one such performance that Renié first saw renowned harpist Alphonse Hasselmans. Fascinated by Hasselmans's playing, she decidedly told her

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¹ Slaughter, "Henriette Renié," 14–15.

² Slaughter, "Henriette Renié," 15.

³ Renié, "Three Interviews," 9.

father, “That man is going to be my harp teacher!”⁴ Sure enough, the young artist began harp lessons with Hasselmans at the age of eight and advanced so rapidly that she was asked by Hasselmans to study harp at the Paris Conservatoire just one year later. At age ten, Renié played in the Conservatory’s end-of-the-year competitive examination. According to Renié’s mentee and later biographer, Françoise des Varennes, the young harpist’s “sole ambition was to play the same pieces as the ‘grown-ups’ and to be awarded—at most—an honorable mention.”⁵ To Renié and her family’s surprise, she was awarded second place. The only reason she was not awarded with first place (*Premier prix*) was because the school’s director, Ambroise Thomas, insisted that “even a prodigy should not be sent out on her own, after having had only two and one-half years of instruction.”⁶ Renié’s professional career was not far away, however. She won *Premier prix* at the following competition in the spring of 1887. Even at the dawn of her career, young Renié had already captured her audience. Upon the announcement of the first-place winner at the Conservatoire, pandemonium broke loose such that Ambroise Thomas found it quite difficult to restore silence.⁷

The humble star’s performance career thus inaugurated, Renié began playing private concerts for nobility and famous composers, but it wasn’t until age fifteen that she gave the first of her solo recitals in Paris.⁸ Renié’s career as a professional musician is remarkable considering she battled a twofold stigma: that of her gender and that of her instrument. While women met newfound freedoms in France during Renié’s lifetime, such as the ability to pursue secondary education, many women musicians still faced discriminatory challenges. Women were often encouraged to study piano or harp, but the purpose of musical studies in the French public eye was predominantly to make a woman more suitable for marriage. The harp had a particularly limited reputation as an instrument which gave “young ladies an opportunity to display pretty hands, well-rounded arms, and neat feet.”⁹ It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that women were permitted to study musical subjects outside of performance, such as composition and theory, at conservatories.¹⁰

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⁴ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 26.

⁵ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 31.

⁶ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 32.

⁷ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 33.

⁸ Slaughter, “Henriette Renié,” 13–14.

⁹ Slaughter, “Henriette Renié,” 14.

¹⁰ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, xiv–xv.

Like women in the professional music field, the harp, too, was hindered by stereotype. Roslyn Rensch describes that critics during the nineteenth century perceived the harp as a “thankless instrument” only capable of “arpeggios, harmonics, and chords.”¹¹ Before Érard’s double-action mechanism and the compositional contributions of Renié and her contemporaries, classical musicians’ perception of the harp’s limitations was, unfortunately, not far from the truth. Nevertheless, amid these societal impediments, Renié’s “incontestable musicianship immediately placed her beyond any problems of discrimination.”¹² Her virtuosic command of the instrument was undeniable. Carlos Salzedo, another harp virtuoso and composer renowned for his innovative writing, said of Renié: “She is as high above all other harpists as heaven is above earth.”¹³ Renié’s delicate balance of artistic interpretation and technical facility inspired professional musicians and the public alike. One journalist wrote, “The harp owes to her what the guitar owes to Segovia: the public, completely won over, has given the harp its stamp of approval.”¹⁴

One factor which surely set Renié’s performances apart from those of her contemporaries was her dedication to proper harp technique. Varennes notes, “All the works for harp during that period owed something to her, for she not only interpreted them, but enhanced their stature immeasurably by the art and technical perfection she brought to each performance.”¹⁵ According to Varennes, it is the practice of “interior correspondence” which made Renié’s playing “inimitable.”¹⁶ Interior correspondence refers to the pressure of the finger upon the string before it is played, akin to the preparatory breath of a wind player. In the second part of her eminent *Méthode Complète de Harpe* (Complete Method for Harp, c. 1939–1945), Renié describes this anticipatory pressure and its centrality to phrasing: “Expression can only be produced by a more or less intense pressure of the finger on the string....The wrist must accompany the movement of each finger by following the melodic line.”¹⁷ For Renié, technical considerations, such as careful attention to the tone quality of each string, did not overrule

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¹¹ Rensch, *The Harp*, 117.

¹² Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 61.

¹³ Dilling, foreword to *Complete Method*.

¹⁴ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 65.

¹⁵ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 61–62.

¹⁶ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 103.

¹⁷ Renié, *Complete Method*, 2:141.

expression or musicality. Rather, technique served as the conduit through which passionate artistry could flow. It was the means, not the end of Renié's playing.¹⁸ She writes:

One often reproaches the harp for its dryness, its buzzing, its inability to take account of the sonorous values, etc....It is not the fault of the harp, but, too often, alas, the fault of those who play it. Rightly, more than the science, it is the inner sentiment which will pass through in the pressure of the finger, in the movement of the hand or wrist, which makes it possible to achieve the effect which one desires. Then one obtains some sonorous effects deemed impossible.¹⁹

The "inner sentiment" Renié describes seems to have arisen from her spirit—from her love of the instrument and indeed, of beauty itself. Renié believed that true excellence in music could not be achieved by placing too much attention on oneself or one's audience. Some performers, she noticed, could perform technically demanding passages with ease, but lacked emotional expression. Others, however, placed too great an emphasis on emotion in an attempt to move their audience.²⁰ To Renié, the mark of a true artist was passion, which "entices the audience with an irresistible dynamism by giving oneself the generosity with which one delivers all that one possesses."²¹ In a letter to Odette de Montesquiou, one of her students, Renié writes:

It is necessary to prepare everything thoroughly and to be able to control what one does when one works. In public, however, it is necessary to do away with personality and to think of nothing but the piece which one wants to understand and to convey, with the desire to lift hearts toward the beauty of the music and to not flatter the audience.²²

Renié strived to perform harp repertoire, transcriptions, and her own compositions in a manner that did not attempt to persuade the audience of her virtuosity or originality. Nor did she seek to convince the audience

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¹⁸ Renié, "Three Interviews," 10.

¹⁹ Renié, foreword to *Complete Method*.

²⁰ Montesquiou, "Personal Journey," 51.

²¹ Montesquiou, "Personal Journey," 51.

²² Montesquiou, "Personal Journey," 51.

of the harp's legitimacy as a solo instrument. This may have been one of her goals, but she set any such motives aside while on stage and simply allowed the music to speak for itself. Renié's spirit of self-denial in performance seems to have been inspired considerably by her faith. Renié was a member of the Catholic Church, and her religious convictions are evident in her mentions of beauty and its source. In her later years, concert preparation became quite taxing on Renié's health. However, the artist found comfort in recalling that she was only a vessel of beauty, and that even the most brilliant performances of her youth had only been glimpses of perfection. After an illness which compelled her to postpone a recital, Renié wrote the following in her journal.

The artist's soul ardently pursues an unattainable ideal; it has a passion for beauty which it can barely glimpse; it knows that the day it believes itself in possession of beauty, it will fade like a flower, since true Beauty is not attainable in this world; all one can try to do is to put oneself in such harmony with it that its rays can be reflected back and—perhaps? Shed light all about us.²³

Although Renié held that beauty in a perfect sense was unattainable, this did not stop her from pursuing it. The harpist brought excellence to every phrase she encountered but soon found existing harp literature to be somewhat limited. Although Sébastien Érard had rekindled interest in the harp at the turn of the nineteenth century with the double-action mechanism, most of the existing harp repertoire during Renié's time was written for the single-action pedal harp.²⁴ This may have been due to the pedal harp's increased demands on the performer. Many deemed Érard's instrument as one "for the gifted genius and serious concert artist, rather than for the casual amateur."²⁵ Fortunately, Renié was both gifted and serious, and during her training at the Conservatoire, she took harmony and composition classes which gave her ample skills and experience to showcase the harp's strengths through her compositions.

Composed in 1901 and debuted the following year, *Légende* was Renié's first major solo work for harp and remains one of her most popular and challenging compositions.²⁶ This programmatic piece was inspired by

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²³ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 102–103.

²⁴ Slaughter, "Henriette Renié," 36.

²⁵ Rensch, *The Harp*, 117.

²⁶ Yeung, "Program and Edits," 38.

French poet Leconte de Lisle's "Les elfes," and Renié included the full poem within the score. "Les elfes" depicts a knight's journey over the plains on the eve of his wedding. The knight is soon surrounded by a group of joyous elves. When the young Elf Queen attempts to seduce him, the knight defiantly proclaims his love for his betrothed. He tries to escape but is met by a spirit which he soon recognizes as the ghost of his dead fiancée. Overcome with grief, the knight joins his beloved in death as the elves continue their mirthful dance.²⁷ Renié utilizes the harp's unique abilities to portray the mystic, fairylike tale of Leconte de Lisle's poem. When asked in an interview about whether the harp was much different from the piano, Renié replied, "It's an error to always compare these two instruments, each having its own individual resources....It's obvious that pianists can't have the poetry of harmonic sounds, the variety of the glissando, the airy effects, nor the direct contact with the string which, in my opinion, makes the harp a unique instrument."²⁸

Renié took full advantage of the harp's distinctive qualities in *Légende*. An introduction in the key of C minor establishes a grave and eerie tone for the piece. Yet, a whimsical quality is maintained through Renié's florid embellishments in mm. 14 and 17.²⁹ Measure 23 begins a march-like section in F minor which depicts the knight's travels, but the knight's journey is halted by fermatas in mm. 51–52 before he encounters the mischievous elves at m. 53.³⁰ At m. 75, the elves' dance is conveyed through playful thirty-second notes in B-flat minor before the knight's refusal to stay in the lyrical *Andante* section. The drama increases throughout the piece, as do the demands on the performer. Renié wrote solo compositions at varying levels of difficulty, but her virtuosic ability and compositional innovation shine through her bold manipulation of the instrument. Certain passages of *Légende* exemplify these daring techniques. For example, m. 21 contains rapidly descending tenths separated only by the interval of a third between the hands (Example 1).³¹

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²⁷ Leconte de Lisle, "Les elfes."

²⁸ Renié, "Three Interviews," 13.

²⁹ Renié, *Légende*, 2.

³⁰ Yeung, "Program and Edits," 39.

³¹ Yeung, "Program and Edits," 39.

Example 1: Passage of descending tenths from *Légende*, m. 21.³²

Renié's direct experience with the harp as a performer allowed her to excel in utilizing the instrument's enharmonic capabilities. Since the double-action mechanism allows the harp's pedals to be changed to any chromatic combination, it is possible for a harpist to play, for example, an F-natural pitch on the E string by making the E sharp, or a B-natural pitch on the C string by making the C flat. In some cases, enharmonic spelling allows harpists to devise a simpler fingering for a chromatic passage, or to play repeated notes more rapidly and with greater fluidity. Measures 165–172 of *Légende* include constant thirty-second notes in the right hand, alternating between D-flat and three C-naturals (Example 2). Renié includes this passage as an example in her *Method* under a subsection labeled “Other Synonyms (enharmonic notes) for ‘Harpistic’ Effects” and makes it clear that she intended these thirty-second notes to be executed by playing a B-sharp enharmonic for two of the C-naturals.³³

Example 2: *Légende*, mm. 165–166.³⁴

Renié's use of enharmonic spelling appears not only throughout her compositions, but in her transcriptions as well. The following example (Example 3) is from her transcription of Franz Liszt's *Le rossignol* (*The Nightingale*).

³² Renié, *Légende*, 3.

³³ Renié, *Complete Method*, 1:82.

³⁴ Renié, *Légende*, 10.

Example 3: Renié's transcription of Liszt's *Le rossignol*, mm. 69–72.³⁵

The musical score is written for a single melodic line, likely for the harp, in 2/4 time. It consists of two systems, each with two measures. The first system's first measure shows a descending glissando in the right hand, marked 'gliss.' and '11', with a 'cresc.' marking in the left hand. The second measure shows a descending glissando in the right hand, marked '10', with a 'loco' marking above it. The second system's first measure shows a descending glissando in the right hand, marked '10'. The second measure shows a descending glissando in the right hand, marked '10', and a 'ff' marking in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, and dynamic markings.

This swiftly descending ledger-line pattern is deceptively simple because the enharmonic pedal combination indicated by Renié allows the written pitches beginning in m. 69 to be produced by playing descending scales.

Renié sought to demonstrate not only the unique capabilities of the harp, such as tasteful glissandi, elaborate embellishments, and enharmonic combinations, but also that the harp could keep pace with the dense chromatic harmonies of the late Romantic era. One can observe Renié's fluent use of modulation in *Légende*, which includes many key areas including the key of C minor in the introduction, the key of F minor in the *Allegro moderato alla marcia* section, B-flat minor in the *Vivo* section, B-flat major in the *Andante* section, and F major in the *Moderato* section. Renié's use of chromaticism is especially apparent in the knight's apprehensive march beginning at m. 23. Yet, *Légende* is far from Renié's most chromatic work. *Danse des Lutins*, published in 1911, holds an infamous place in the harp repertoire for including approximately 300 pedal changes in three and a half minutes of music.³⁶ Renié wrote excellently for her instrument, but due to her busy schedule of teaching and performing, she was only able to devote one month of each year to composition.³⁷ Nevertheless, she expanded the harp

³⁵ Liszt, *Le rossignol*, 3.

³⁶ Houser, "Five Virtuoso Harpists," 47.

³⁷ Yeung, "Program and Edits," 38.

repertoire through solo compositions, numerous transcriptions for harp, and the first multi-movement concerto for harp, her renowned Concerto in C Minor. Her Concerto especially attracted the world's attention to the soloistic abilities of the harp. Upon hearing a piano reduction of the work, Camille Chevillard, the conductor of the *Orchestre Lamoureux*, asked Renié to perform it at the Great Concerts of Lamoureux. At age twenty-five, Renié premiered her Concerto in C Minor, and the performance was met with notable praise given the particularly harsh reviews of music critics on concerti that year.³⁸ Until Renié's performance of her Concerto, the harp had never been featured as a solo instrument with orchestral accompaniment.³⁹

Renié's selfless pursuit of beauty was evident in her performances, and her adoration of the harp is apparent in her compositions. However, both of these passions were made manifest in her pedagogy. From her earliest days as a harpist, Renié was committed to sharing her love of the harp with others—apparently whether they desired to learn or not! Nine-year-old Henriette found her first harp student by declaring to her brother's friend, "Ferdinand, I am going to teach you to play the harp!" The young mademoiselle got her way, and Ferdinand Maignien went on to become the harpist for the Paris Opera.⁴⁰ By the age of thirteen Renié had begun teaching harp students, most of whom, like her peers at the Conservatoire, were twice her age.⁴¹ Renié began any student's first lesson by asking, "Do you love the harp?" and this question proved to be more than a conversation starter.

In her *Complete Method for Harp*, Renié establishes in the foreword that a student must truly like the harp in order to play with "suppleness," a quality Renié identifies as the foundation of her method. Since each student differs in ability and anatomy, Renié recognized that instruction must be varied for each student and that a "broad and cautious spirit is necessary in order to apply even the fundamental principles wisely."⁴² Rather than producing tension with laborious drills on one principle, Renié's *Method* addresses several topics within an individual "lesson." For example, the second lesson includes an exercise on four consecutive notes, a three-finger exercise on ascending and descending inversions,

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³⁸ Renié, "Three Interviews," 12.

³⁹ Renié, "Three Interviews," 12.

⁴⁰ Varennes, *Henriette Renié*, 30.

⁴¹ Slaughter, "Henriette Renié," 23.

⁴² Renié, foreword to *Complete Method*.

rules and exercises for playing intervals up to an octave, and two brief children's pieces.⁴³ Renié explains the reasoning behind this broad introduction of the instrument as follows.

In the first lessons, it is necessary to put everything to work in order to make the beginner like the harp, believe in its beauty and in its sonorous expressive power. To this end, it is well to "display" before him the alluring magic of the special effects in which this instrument is so rich.⁴⁴

Due to the quick pace of the method, Renié herself and others have advised that a great length of time be devoted to each "lesson." Twelve lessons for the beginning harpist are included within the first part of her method, labeled "Technique," while the second part of Renié's method, "Syntax," is directed toward the more advanced harpist. Especially throughout the second part of her *Method*, Renié includes several examples written by other composers to help students put into practice the techniques she describes. Renié even includes others' works in the "Technique" portion of *Method*. In the fourth lesson, Renié presents Hasselmans's "Petite Berceuse" and credits the composer as follows: "This very simple little piece sums up in part that which has just been taught. It is an excellent work, and immediately makes a habit of playing with shading."⁴⁵ While she included many of her own examples as well, it is notable that Renié was more concerned with finding the perfect way to help a student understand a concept than she was with her own recognition.

While Renié was devoted to increasing her students' love of music and the harp, she was far from lenient in her instruction. As mentioned previously, Renié's recognition that absolute perfection was unattainable did not hinder her from pursuing it, and she expected equal effort from each of her students. In a lovely account of her experience as a pupil of Renié, Odette de Montesquiou wrote the following.

I learned how to discover all the richness of the instrument from which she drew a thousand varied timbres. Time ceased to exist when she focused on

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⁴³ Renié, *Complete Method*, 1:12–15.

⁴⁴ Renié, foreword to *Complete Method*.

⁴⁵ Renié, *Complete Method*, 1:24.

seeking out the ways for you to improve a phrase, avoid a buzz, or find the precise stroke to be given to a string so that the desired sound could be produced....Like a statue beneath the fingers of the sculptor, the piece changed shape and came alive with relief and movement. She would work a passage with demanding intensity until she arrived at the perfection she sought to communicate to you.⁴⁶

Renié taught private lessons as well as group lessons, including a harp ensemble comprised of seven students. She taught lessons out of her home for all seventy years of her pedagogical career, and this was her primary source of income. Her own financial burdens along with those of her family during unfortunate times demanded that Renié teach as many students as possible.⁴⁷ Fortunately for the energetic artist, her love of teaching was equal to her love of playing the harp.⁴⁸ Later, when her poor health forced her to reduce the frequency and length of performances, she found perhaps an even greater joy for teaching as a way to ensure an appreciation of her beloved instrument in the coming decades. Consider the following dialogue between an interviewer and Renié.

INTERVIEWER. When you think back on your beautiful and rich career, what feelings do you have?

RENIÉ. A feeling of amazed gratitude toward Providence, and prodigious memories, but it is as if they are detached from my present personality; when I speak of the past, it seems like it is about another person.

INTERVIEWER. However, you still bring the same ardor to your teaching!

RENIÉ. Yes, maybe even more! I not only work for myself, now. I work for those who are going to continue after me. For an artist, I believe that the hope of passing the torch onto other hands, far from saddening him or

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⁴⁶ Montesquiou, "Personal Journey," 49.

⁴⁷ Slaughter, "Henriette Renié," 24.

⁴⁸ Renié, "Three Interviews," 10.

her, on the contrary gives peace and joy to his or her life!⁴⁹

Through her performances, compositions, and pedagogical finesse, Renié undeniably inspired a future generation of harpists. Most notably, several of Renié's pupils followed in her footsteps, devoting their lives to promoting the harp as an instrument worthy of recognition in the solo realm. In 1917, American harpist Mildred Dilling travelled to Paris to study with Renié after Salzédo, her instructor at the time, encouraged her to do so. Dilling continued to spend her summers in training with Renié and would later connect Harpo Marx, her most famous student, with Renié.⁵⁰ Dilling brought Renié's zealous adoration for the harp back with her to America, as well as Renié's *Légende*, a piece which Dilling showcased frequently, incorporating the story of Leconte de Lisle's poem into her programs.⁵¹ The star's enthusiasm and charisma helped to garner appreciation for the harp in the United States as she performed seven concerts at the White House and over two thousand solo recitals.⁵² She even began her own radio show, airing fifteen minutes of harp music on the News Broadcasting Company before the weekly New York Philharmonic concerts.⁵³ Dilling also performed many world tours, traveling to countries including Hong Kong, Japan, India, Israel, Turkey, Mexico, and Cuba.⁵⁴

Marcel Grandjany was another famous pupil of Renié. Although he later trained with Hasselmans at the Conservatoire, Grandjany simultaneously continued studies with his first teacher.⁵⁵ Grandjany was born in France and studied there but would eventually settle in New York, accepting a job as the head of the harp department at the Juilliard School of Music after an extensive touring career. Grandjany's concert at the Salle Érard in Paris was, perhaps, the most notable event of his performance career because the program was comprised entirely of harp solos.⁵⁶ Even though Renié had made significant strides for the harp as a solo instrument, a solo harp concert was still a reasonably rare occurrence. Like Renié, Grandjany was very interested in broadening the harp repertoire, composing works for harp solo and ensemble as well as

⁴⁹ Renié, "Three Interviews," 16.

⁵⁰ Govea, *Nineteenth*, 56–57.

⁵¹ Rensch, *Harps and Harpists*, 281.

⁵² Rensch, *Harps and Harpists*, 280–281.

⁵³ Govea, *Nineteenth*, 57.

⁵⁴ Govea, *Nineteenth*, 58.

⁵⁵ Rensch, *Harps and Harpists*, 203.

⁵⁶ Rensch, *Harps and Harpists*, 203.

transcribing many classics for the harp.⁵⁷ His technique, too, mirrored that of Renié. He wrote, “The harp is not entirely a plucked instrument. What I do...is to press each string in such a way as to create a legato from note to note within every phrase.”⁵⁸ How reminiscent of the “interior correspondence” Renié describes in her *Method*!

Despite the perceived limitations of the instrument, Renié successfully exposed the capabilities of the harp as a solo instrument through her passion-filled performances, innovative compositions, and dedicated pedagogy. Even from her prodigious beginnings at the Paris Conservatoire, Renié’s humble search for beauty and excellence in performance won the public’s adoration and drew the attention of the musical world to the harp as an instrument worthy of consideration among the solo instruments. Finding the existing harp repertoire disappointingly limited, Renié tried her own hand at composition, producing classic harp compositions and transcriptions, including her beloved solo work, *Légende*. Lastly, Renié did not seek to attract attention to her own virtuosic capabilities but made every effort to pass on the torch, imparting her appreciation of the harp’s beauty to her many students. Clearly, Renié’s mastery of the harp was outmatched only by her love for it.

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⁵⁷ Rensch, *Harps and Harpists*, 203.

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