

Thy Trembling Strings

*Music and songs from the Regency era for
harp, harp-lute, and parlour guitar*



Performed and arranged by

Sarah Deere-Jones with Phil Williams

Performed on antique instruments from the era, this selection of rarely heard dance tunes from a family archive, and the authentic music of a virtually forgotten Regency instrument, the harp-lute, all discovered by professional harpist Sarah Deere-Jones, make this recording a rare and revealing contribution to early 19th century repertoire.

Featuring—La petit montignard, Polish Waltz, La Penelope, Slow Air, Country Dance, Scottish Reel, The last Rose of Summer, Neil Gow's Lament for the death of his second wife, The Yellow Hair'd Laddie , O'Carolan's concerto, Non lo dira col labbro, La Conquerante, L'inconstant, Bach Rondo, O Lovely is the summer moon, La Nouvelle Chasse, La Flora, La Felesia, O Waly Waly, Rondo in F Major Boscha.



Recorded at the Cornwall Harp Centre, engineered by Phil Williams
www.regencyharp.co.uk
www.harp-lute.co.uk



Give to rapture all thy trembling strings....

A sequence of co-incidental but serendipitous events brought all the different elements for this recording together. Harpist and antiques enthusiast Sarah Deere-Jones, bought three neglected antique instruments from salerooms within the same year, all of which by chance originated from the same Regency period. After investing in their restoration, Sarah then started to explore the contemporary repertoire of her now fully playable Broadwood square piano, Erat pedal harp and Wheatstone Harp-lute and then found that an archive of family music left to her many years previously, also came from the same period of history. Sadly, despite the quality and interesting provenance of the music, it appeared to be rarely performed, a fact which became tempting to rectify! Research further revealed that the harp-lute, an instrument of which many hundreds were made and was highly fashionable at the time, had since become virtually extinct and was never now played authentically. Having tracked down the original tutor books and sheet music, Sarah taught herself to play this charming little instrument, resurrecting its sound and repertoire to modern ears for the first time in nearly 200 years, in this recording.

As there are already several recordings featuring Regency music for square piano, she decided to concentrate on the 'trembling strings' - the lesser known dance tunes for harp, and original repertoire plus some arrangements for harp-lute, compiling a unique combination of rare and charming Regency music, plus some classics to add to that already available.

Now the rich stream of music winds along.....

1. La Petite Montignard, Polish Waltz, La Penelope 4:02

Three quadrille tunes published in 1810 as 'performed by Mr James Paine and his band at the Argyll Rooms at Almack's, and the Carlton House Fete, arranged for pianoforte or Harp by F.J Klose.' Almack's was a dance and social club in St James' London, famous at the beginning of the 19th century and frequented by the rich and famous. This original book contains instructions on how the dances were to be performed, with scribbled notes from past musicians about how many times they were played! Our 'soiree' versions for harp and parlour guitar of these pretty tunes stand on their own as delightful chamber pieces.

2. Slow Air, Country Dance, Scottish Reel Light/trad 4:42

A collection of tunes played on the harp-lute, all authentic solo pieces for the instrument taken from the 'New and compleat instructions for playing on the harp-lute' by Edward Light, which was the first tutor book written by the inventor of the instrument in 1810. A light harp accompaniment has been added in places.

3. The last rose of summer, Moore. arr Deere-Jones 4:31

Words and Music Thomas Moore (1779-1852) Irish poet and performer, friend of Lord Byron and a member of Almack's club he was a celebrity of the age in London society. This song was published in the 1820s, this version has been arranged for harp-lute and pedal harp.

4. Neil Gow's lament for the death of his second wife, Yellow-Hair'd laddie, O'Carolan's concerto. 5:36

Neil Gow 1727-1807, was a prize winning Scottish fiddle player credited as writing at least 87 dance tunes, his second wife Margaret Urquhart died in 1805 which inspired this beautiful melody. Yellow Hair'd Laddie was a popular traditional tune in Regency Salons, even appearing in Jane Austen's personal music collection. The music of Turlough O'Carolan the 17th century blind Irish harper, was collected by Edward Bunting in 1792, and inspired a revival of interest in the Irish harp, encouraged by the beautiful harps then produced by the famous Belfast maker John Egan.

5, Non lo dira col labbro, G.F.Handel 2:00

This song is most usually known as 'Silent Worship' but the translation in that version was not done until 1928 and the English words in it bear little resemblance to the original meaning. From the opera 'Ptolemy' this song would have been sung in Italian in Regency times and the words actually translate as 'I will not say it with my lips, which have not the courage, perhaps the sparks of my burning eyes, revealing my passion, my glance will speak.'

6, La Conquerante and L'inconstant 3:03

Two quadrilles from Paine's album of dance music written for his band of musicians, L'inconstant from the 5th set and from the 7th set 'La Conquerante' which is dedicated to 'her grace the duchess of Wellington', who was with the Duke, a regular member of Almack's club. The Duke, after his successes in the war against France was one of the biggest 'celebrities' of his day, and proof that Almack's which was known as 'the seventh heaven of the fashionable world' only admitted the most select of society.

7, Rondo, Bach—Duet for harp-lute and harp, arr Edward Light. 2:17

Another authentic piece arranged as a harp-lute and pedal harp duet by Edward Light and taken from his 'New and complete directory on the art of playing on the patent British Lute-Harp' dated 1817. By this time his instruments were gradually evolving and had acquired 'ditals', small buttons that could alter the pitch of individual strings enabling fast accidentals to be played. In the harp-lute repertoire there are several duets for harp-lute and pedal harp or piano-forte, a popular combination.

8, O lovely is the summer moon. H. R. Bishop arr Deere-Jones 4:01

With words by Miss Anna Maria Porter, this pretty sentimental song is mentioned in 'The quarterly review' in 1823 and its composer Henry Bishop (1786-1855) was a well known composer in the early 19th century most famous for 'Home Sweet Home' which remained famous for 150 years after it was written. His later life was marred by scandal when his wife the singer Anna Riviere ran away to Australia with the harpist and composer Robert Bosch! Arranged here for harp-lute with harp added in second verse.

9, La Nouvelle Chasse, La Flora, La Felesia. 4:41

Another group of quadrille tunes all taken from set one of James Paine's book published in 1810, here played on harp and parlour guitar. This set of dances is dedicated to Prince Frederick of Prussia another regular client. In most of the sets there are dedications to important and no doubt influential members of the club. Whilst these tunes would have been played by a small ensemble at Almack's club, this old book contains arrangements of them reduced 'for harp or piano-forte' by FJ Klose and was obviously intended for the domestic market.

10, Waly Waly trad arr. Deere-Jones 3:45

This was another popular traditional piece in Regency salons, it appeared in 'Relics of Ancient English poetry' vol III by Thomas Percy and in the 'Edinburgh Musical Miscellany' 1793 , and today is a very well known traditional song with many versions of it across England although with variable tunes. It also appears in Jane Austen's personal collection of music, and the same tune is used in this arrangement for harp, harp-lute and sung by Sarah.

13, Rondo in F major, R.N.C. Boscha, 2:47

Robert Nicolas-Charles Bochsa 1789 - 1856 was a harpist, composer and rogue! After studying at the Paris Conservatoire, Bochsa was appointed harpist to the Imperial orchestra in 1813 but in 1817 he was forced to flee France to avoid prosecution for counterfeiting, fraud and forgery. Settling in London, Bochsa was one of the founding members of the Royal Academy of music and became the Secretary of this organisation in 1821, as well as professor of Harp, teaching the famous virtuoso Elias Parish Alvars. Although already married he ran away with the singer Anna Riviere to Australia where he died shortly afterwards

Oh Lyre divine, what daring spirit wakes thee now?

Our instruments- harp

Sarah's harp is an early 'double-action' concert harp with the original soundboard, made in London by the Erat company in about 1825; This 'double action' mechanism was invented by Sebastian Erard in 1810, and released the harp from the restrictions of the single action version before it, enabling it to gain all the accidentals required in classical music and leading to a blossoming of interest in the harp and its general inclusion at last, into the orchestra. Harps were then mass produced in their thousands by a community of excellent craftsmen all based in the Soho area of London of which Erat was one.

Harps were hugely fashionable amongst wealthy ladies, being the most elegant of instruments to perform upon in evening soirees, and there are many references to them being played by the rich and beautiful, namely Jane Austen's character Mary Crawford, in Mansfield House.

Harp-lute

The harp-lute was invented by Edward Light in 1798, and his instruments were made by Alexander Barry a London harp maker contemporary with Erat; it started as an instrument with a large fingerboard with around 7 strings and a set of fretless bass strings added beside them over a lute like body. Unlike guitars, they were played resting on the lap vertically using a harp style finger technique. The instrument evolved quite quickly and became more harp-like, the fingerboard being more or less abandoned and ditals added to help with accidentals. Later models were called the 'patent dital harp' and advertised as combining 'the sweetness of tone and general effect of the pedal harp with the portability of the guitar' adding that they were 'admirably adapted for persons travelling abroad'. Edward Light dedicated music for it to his most famous student, the prince Regent's daughter Princess Charlotte.

Other makers soon caught on to the fashion, one of the other more prominent ones being Charles Wheatstone who is more famous for concertinas, he added a second fingerboard to his instruments. However the harp-lute seemed to have become almost extinct by the 1840s, perhaps being superseded by the then vastly improved concert harp. Certainly Alexander Barry was bankrupt and imprisoned for debt by the 1840s and perhaps there is a connection, but the many examples of his harp-lutes left in museums and stately homes today, are a credit to him. Sarah has been able to obtain several antique instruments and using the original tutor books and sheet music has taught herself how to play it, the technique being similar to that of classical harp. We believe that this may be the first time this beautiful little instrument and its original music has ever been recorded.

Parlour guitar

The parlour guitar of the Regency period was a smaller instrument than today's modern guitars, and its gentle delicate sound was an extremely popular instrument for accompanying singing and other instruments. The *English guitar* was similar to a guitar but its body is of a more rounded shape, our antique instrument also has a Preston tuning mechanism at the end of the finger board requiring a harp-like tuning key to adjust it.

All of our instruments are tuned to old pitch and use authentic string gauges to accommodate their old and fragile frames. The pedal harp in particular at this time had a cumbersome and slow mechanism which was later perfected, but is the reason why some of the pedal changes can be clearly heard on this recording, an authentic sound which we made no attempt to disguise.

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This recording is dedicated to the memory of my godmother—Miss Elyn Crompton of Shillingstone Dorset, who left to me her family archive of Regency and Victorian music, and who would have very much enjoyed the results.

The title 'Thy trembling strings' and other lines of poetry are taken from 'The progress of poesy' by Thomas Gray. Painting reproduced under tray is of Kitty Stephens Countess of Essex 1794-1882 with her Wheatstone Harp-lute, painted by George Henry Harlow.

