

# Harpblog

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The weblog of Camac Harps

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## The London Harp Sound



A new and quite spectacular CD is the latest release on Cala Records. The brainchild of conductor Geoffrey Simon and harp player Isabelle Perrin, *The London Harp Sound* features sixteen of Europe's top harpists—playing in ensemble!



*"Participating in this CD was surprising. I had not imagined how much fun it would be to play in a group of sixteen harpists, like a team, recording works that appeared at first sight to be utterly improbable for this ensemble. And the end result is really a success. Many thanks to Isabelle and Geoffrey for this happy adventure!"* Ghislaine Petit-Volta

*The London Harp Sound* is the newest addition to *The London Sound Series*, a popular range of massed single-instrument recordings from Cala Records. For example, *The London Horn Sound* is the world's best-selling French horn CD, ever. Virtuosity is at the heart of the concept, and *The London Harp Sound* is no exception. The arrangements are, to be honest, really difficult and the musicians all have to be top players in order to show off what each instrument can do in ways you never dreamed were possible.

"Although hard to play, each programme, including *The London Harp Sound*, is designed to be readily accessible to the listener—that is, to people who haven't necessarily had years of private music lessons", explains Geoffrey Simon, artistic director and conductor of *The London Sound Series*. "But 'accessibility' so often seems to be synonymous with musical dumbing-down—something which is not only patronising, but, I feel, totally unnecessary. Our recordings of large, single-instrument ensembles are meant to be fun and tuneful—they each include a wide-ranging selection of classical and popular music—while also displaying the best musicianship and in no way compromising the inner essence of what we do.

"For example, in *The London Harp Sound* we wanted to show how the harp is capable of producing singing, legato melodic lines. This is not something which it is famous for, and not something that is easy to achieve on the instrument. But it IS possible! That's why an arrangement of the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* was included, and in fact placed at the very start of the CD. Could anything be more of a challenge to recreate on the harp than that extraordinary solo flute beginning?"



*"It might even surprise some purists!"* Ieuan Jones

"Geoffrey and I chose most of the music for the CD together," says Isabelle Perrin. "I suggested *Un Bal* from Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. The original has such a famously difficult harp part, so I thought playing not only that, but the whole score, would fit in well with *The London Sound Series* concept of virtuoso pieces!

"I also had the job of engaging the sixteen harpists, so I approached top European players with a lot of orchestral experience. And who would enjoy and have fun working together! Musically, the harp ensemble is a challenging form, and on a human level it's difficult as well, when there is such a big group of you all playing the same instrument. You have to like each other, or you've got no chance."

*"Those few summer days at the beautiful church of St.Jude's in Hampstead Garden Suburb were a unique experience. Not only was the project musically challenging and satisfying but the artists were looked after in style and new international friendships were forged."* Karen Vaughan

Geoffrey Simon continues: "*The London Harp Sound* gelled beautifully as a harp orchestra, and was a joy to work with. Indeed, we have found that musicians all around the world love to perform in ensembles of their given instrument, with their friends and colleagues. Most of the available music is geared to student groups, however. This is fine, but not so interesting for advanced players and professionals. Our music fills this gap and, perhaps unsurprisingly, it has emerged that the harder the arrangement, the more demand there is for it! Performance scores and parts for the arrangements on our CDs can be ordered from our website, [calarecords.com](http://calarecords.com). Although most of *The London Harp Sound* arrangements were written for sixteen harps, we are also producing them in eight-part form, to be practical for more harp ensembles."

**THE LONDON HARP SOUND**

Isabelle Perrin  
principal  
Catherine Beynon  
Gabiella Dall'Olio  
Virginie Gout-Zschäbitz  
Claire Jones  
Ieuan Jones  
Skaila Kanga  
Jung Wha Lee  
Ghislaine Petit-Volta  
Charlotte Seale  
Ernestine Stoop  
Nicolas Tulliez  
Karen Vaughan  
Catherine White  
Suzanne Willison  
Geoffrey Simon  
conductor

1. Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune DEBUSSY 8:56  
2. Les Chansons du Piaf 8:24  
3. i. La vie en rose GUGLIEMI 3:14  
4. ii. L'hymne à l'amour MONNOT 2:44  
5. iii. Non, je ne regrette rien DUMONT 2:25  
6. Muo Li Hua (Jasmine Flower) TRAD. 3:36  
7. Prelude in F minor BACH 4:32  
8. My Baby Just Cares for Me KAHN/DONALDSON 3:32  
9. The Windmills of Your Mind LEGRAND 4:27  
10. Lullaby BRAHMS 2:15  
11. Un bal (from *Symphonie fantastique*) BERLIOZ 6:09  
12. Andalucía LECUONA 3:33  
13. Lady of the Lake SIMCOCK 7:05  
14. The Music of the Night LLOYD WEBBER 4:46  
15. La Ragazza ANDRÉS 9:35  
16. i. Andantino 2:28  
17. ii. Larghetto-Allegretto 1:44  
18. iii. Allegro Moderato-Allegretto 3:16  
19. iv. Moderato 2:07

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MCPS  
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The London Harp Sound was recorded with harps by  
Camac, Hornigacher, Lyon & Healy, Obermeyer and Salvi  
Cover Harp: Camac Oriane  
Music arranged by Richard Bissill, Tony Rickard and Paul Sarcich

[www.calarecords.com](http://www.calarecords.com)

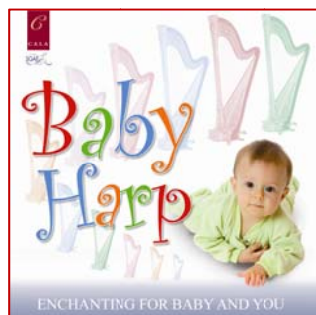
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*"It was a fascinating experience to meet, hear and work alongside so many European players, and to work on a huge variety of ambitious arrangements on such a large scale. The finished product certainly gives a unique slant on the potential of harp ensembles."* Skaila Kanga

*"The arrangements were challenging and fun, some quite unexpected, and deserve to become widely played. These recordings will I hope introduce many people to the gorgeous and varied sounds of the harp."* Catherine White

*"As orchestral harpists we rarely play in a section of more than two, so playing chamber music with fifteen other harpists was an entirely unique and extraordinary experience for me. Catherine Beynon*

An interesting and innovative feature of *The London Sound Series* is its reincarnation in a form for babies and young children, presented as "babymusic.com". This series has enjoyed widespread success for its ability to soothe babies and their parents. "We call it our Unique Musical Formula", says Geoffrey Simon. *Baby Symphony* was Creative Child Magazine's 2009 CD of the Year, and *Baby Cello* has won no less than three prizes: iParenting, Practical Pre-School Gold, and Creative Child's Seal of Excellence.



*Baby Harp* has already won a Practical Pre-School Gold Award. The CD consists of selected tracks from *The London Harp Sound*, "gently softened to soothe and enchant mother and baby." And in the spirit of attracting young families to the music, Bernard Andr s's *La Ragazza*, a well-loved harp ensemble work, appears on *Baby Harp* under the infant-friendly title of *Baby Day*, with the permission of the tickled composer.

You can hear sound samples of *The London Harp Sound* and *Baby Harp*, and order direct, from [calarecords.com](http://calarecords.com) and [babymusic.com](http://babymusic.com).



*"The London Harp Sound and Baby Harp: sixteen harpists from throughout Europe under the expert baton of Geoffrey Simon celebrate beautiful, popular melodies with the mellow and sinuous voice of hundreds of plucked strings. Two enchanting CDs for all the family, and perfect as Christmas presents too!"*  
Gabriella Dall'Olio