

# HarpColumn

practical news for practical harpists

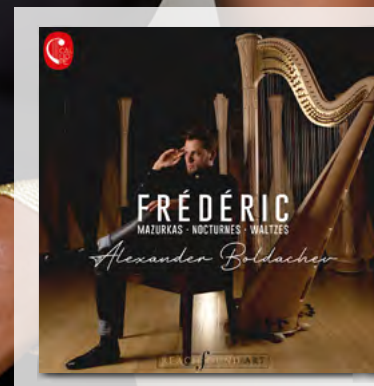
creating great music  
with composers

annual summer  
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playing  
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# Brandee Younger



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## features

### summer harp camp roundup • 12

Harp camp might look a little different this year, but we've rounded up the details on nearly 40 programs happening in-person and online this summer. *by Danielle Kuntz*

### five things to know about virtual harp camp • 15

Thinking about a virtual harp camp this summer? We'll tell you what you need to know. *by Hannah Palmquist*

### being Brandee • 22

NYC harpist Brandee Younger has had quite a year in 2020, but not the kind of year you might think. *by Alison Reese*



### together we create • 28

Composers, harpists, and harpist-composers share their advice for working together. *by Rosanna Moore*

## departments

### from the editor • 6

Musicians keep doing what they do best.

### harp news • 7

McHenry and Younger named to college teaching positions



### sounding board • 8

Playing for the vote. *by Liana Alpino*

### advice • 10

How to generate more income during COVID.

### this much I know • 34

Harpists will make it happen. *by Skaila Kanga*



### recording review • 36

New albums borrow music written for other instruments.

### music review • 38

Ten new transcriptions of classic Tournier works.

### strange but true • 40

On-the-job training.

### classifieds • 42

cover photo by Kyle Pompey  
Keayra Pompey, creative assistant

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## Harp Column

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# when all else fails, create

With so much beyond our control,  
musicians continue to create

by Alison Reese

**M**erriam-Webster might have crowned “pandemic” as the word of the year, but for musicians, it was the term “force majeure” that really defined 2020. Any musician who has had a contract canceled in the last year is all too familiar with the term. It’s the rarely invoked (prior to 2020) clause in contracts that frees either party from fulfilling their obligations when something extraordinary happens beyond everyone’s control, e.g., a global pandemic.

Every time the phone rang and you heard “force majeure,” another booking was crossed off the calendar. The term might as well mean, “too bad, so sad, you’re out of luck.” There is no recourse for the canceled gigs and lost income. It’s the bad news the subject of our cover interview, Brandee Younger, heard time and time again last spring as her once full gig calendar was wiped clean by the pandemic lockdown in New York City. After a concert she and her partner, bassist Dezron Douglas, had scheduled at Columbia University was canceled, they had a brainstorm. They decided to go ahead and play the concert...from their apartment living room in Harlem. They called it “brunch” and livestreamed it on a Friday morning at 11 on Facebook. The response from the audience that tuned in was immediate and intense.

“We realized what people were going through during that first livestream,” Younger recalls in “Being Brandee” on pg. 22. “People were struggling. They needed this. The concerts sort of became an obligation.”

For months, Younger and Douglas played those Friday morning brunch concerts. In fact, they are still playing brunch nine months later, just not quite as often. (You can find them on Patreon if you want to tune into their brunch concerts, past or present.)

Most of us are beyond tired of talking and reading about the pandemic and lockdowns and cancellations and quarantines. However, as many of us are on the verge

of going a full year without playing much if any live music, in the traditional sense, the stories of creation and adaptation coming out of our small community are positively inspiring.

Younger and Douglas’ lockdown brunches not only gave her listeners an hour of hope and sustenance during the darkest days of early lockdown, they also turned into a record deal. News of the lockdown brunches spread far

and wide as national media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Forbes* magazine, and NPR picked up the story. The Chicago-based label International Anthem approached the duo about turning their Friday concerts into an album. Aptly named *Force Majeure*, the recording was released in December. Just like that, the duo flipped force majeure in their favor. As Douglas points out, “You can take the work

away, but you can’t stop musicians from being creative.”

More evidence of the truth of this statement is everywhere you look. Nashville harpist Liana Alpino shares her story of helping voters come away from Election Day with a positive experience by getting involved with Play for the Vote. “As a musician living through a pandemic, performances have been few and far between,” she writes in our Sounding Board column on pg. 8. “Play for the Vote [was] a tangible way to use my music for an important cause.”

And in “Make It Happen” on pg. 34, Skaila Kanga tells us about her new composition for harp and narration, translated into 13 languages. She is confident that when the pandemic finally eases, the need for our musical contribution to the world’s well-being will only expand. “We have to be ready for that day with our practice, our projects, our creative ideas, and our artistry,” she writes. “The world will need us more than ever.” ●

*Alison Reese is editor of Harp Column. She is a freelance performer and teacher in West Michigan. You can email her at areese@harpcolumn.com.*

“Merriam-Webster might have crowned ‘pandemic’ as the word of the year, but for musicians, it was the term ‘force majeure’ that really defined 2020.”

## TALK TO US

Do you know a harpist who you think others should hear about? Do you have a unique perspective you want to share?

We want to hear from you. Email your ideas to areese@harpcolumn.com



# Two harpists named to college teaching posts

## YOUNGER APPOINTED TO FACULTY AT TWO NYC SCHOOLS

**Brandee Younger** has been appointed to the harp faculty at both The New School and New York University, of which she is an alumna.

“As an alum of NYU Steinhardt, I am delighted to join the faculty. NYU’s broad programming and music business opportunities make it a unique, one-of-a-kind place for music students looking to make a career in the field. I look forward to continuing to expand the department, alongside Bridget Kibbey, with lessons, technique classes, chamber music, and masterclasses. This June, we will present a summer intensive program through the school that I am really excited about.”

At The New School, Younger has accepted a dual appointment at the Mannes School of Music and The School of Jazz and Contemporary Music. “With my own career spanning across genres, being able to work with students across Mannes and the Jazz schools is quite relevant and timely. I have long been an admirer of the schools’ progressive curricula and creative teachings, and I look towards sharing what I have with the students. In addition to lessons, I am excited to lead an Alice Coltrane Ensemble.”

Read more about Younger in our interview with her on pg. 22.

## MCHENRY JOINS FACULTY AT TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Texas Christian University recently appointed **Mallory McHenry** to its harp faculty. “This position is so meaningful to me because I am able to carry on the torch of my first harp teacher, Dr. Laura Brandenburg,” McHenry says. “The harp program at TCU is special and full of life and hope given the current times. Dr. Brandenburg held the position for 20 years, and preceding her, Sydney Howell held the position for 29 years—a lot of powerful history built an amazing program. I am excited to keep the momentum going.”

As an educator, McHenry has served on the faculty of the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. She currently operates the McHenry Suzuki Studio in Austin, Texas, where she offers pi-

ano and harp lessons to students of all ages. She is currently a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin.

## GLOWING HARP ANNOUNCES 2021 COMPETITION

The **Glowing Harp Competition** has announced the repertoire for its 2021 contest, which will take place online. The contest is open to harpists of all nationalities in four categories divided by age. Applications must be submitted by April 1 and must include the following: a completed application form and video recording of stage one repertoire, a current CV, a recommendation letter, two photos, copies of scores, and a copy of the applicant’s birth certificate. The competition jury includes harpists from Slovenia, Ukraine, and France. Prizes include a performance with the Kharkiv State Philharmonic, a scholarship to the Vienna Harp Days, a Camac Odyssey harp, and multiple Camac harp accessories. Repertoire requirements are listed at [glowingharp-ukraine.com](http://glowingharp-ukraine.com).

## CAMAC LAUNCHES LIVESTREAMED CONCERT PROGRAM

French harpmaker **Camac Harps** has launched the online concert series Les Jeudis Classiques (Classical Thursdays) in collaboration with musician and filmmaker Julien Hanck. The concerts are livestreamed on Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. CET from the stage at Camac’s showroom in Paris. Performing artists include Alexandra Bidi, Sylvain Blasel, Hélène Breschand, Agne Keblyte, Mélanie Laurent, David Lootvoet, Constance Luzzati, and Marcel Cara, who opened the series on Thursday, Nov. 26. The free concerts will be streamed through Jan. 28 on Camac’s YouTube channel.

Camac’s concert series was created in response to the current ban on live musical performances throughout France and other parts of Europe, says Camac’s artist relations manager Helen Leitner. “Without being played and heard, music is silent,” says Leitner. “Our harps would be silent without harpists...so we have conceived this project for one simple reason. We are celebrating music and musicians.”



Clockwise from top left: Mallory McHenry is appointed to the Texas Christian University faculty; Mary Lattimore’s new album receives national praise; and Brandee Younger is appointed to teaching positions at two NYC schools.

## LATTIMORE’S LATEST ALBUM RECEIVES PRAISE

**Mary Lattimore’s** album *Silver Ladders* made *The New Yorker’s* “Best Music of 2020” list, coming in at number three. The list’s author Amanda Petrusich describes the album as “dissonant and surreal, apt and welcome company for a year that felt the same.” Petrusich gives a shout out for the album’s standout track, “Sometimes He’s in My Dreams.”

Lattimore’s new album also received praise from NPR, who named it one of the “50 Best Albums of 2020.” Author Lars Gotrich states that Mary Lattimore “plays the harp like wind through the leaves—in circles that slowly spiral outward, shifting the scenery in small gestures that open to wide vistas.”

*Silver Ladders* was produced by Slowdive’s Neil Halstead and was recorded over nine days at his studio. Released on Oct. 9, the album is available to stream online or purchase as an LP or CD.

Read more about Lattimore in our cover interview with her in the July/August 2020 issue of *Harp Column*. ●



# a musical call to the polls

Play for the Vote allows musicians to be involved on Election Day

by Liana Alpino

## TALK TO US

Sounding Board is a place for your opinion and commentary about harp-related topics. (Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Harp Column* editorial staff.) Send submissions to: areese@harpcolumn.com.

**E**lection Day. A day, especially in 2020, many people seemed to simultaneously look forward to and dread. Personally, I was conflicted about how I felt about the day. Sometimes I ask myself how I can effect change and if my single contribution really matters. We're continuously told that every vote counts, but sometimes it's hard to see the bigger picture. Experts told us that the 2020 presidential election would be the most important election of our time. I certainly didn't want to be passive about it, but I also didn't know how I could make a difference in the world around me or how I could contribute to my community, especially during a pandemic. That's why when I heard about Play for the Vote, I was immediately intrigued by its mission and wanted to know how I could get involved.

I learned about the Play for the Vote initiative through Facebook—although many people find social media to be taxing or annoying, I am constantly surprised by what I learn and find. Play for the Vote is the brainchild of professional cellist Mike Block. The goal of the initiative is to increase voter turnout by providing a positive experience with live music at polling locations. A simple idea with a potentially monumental impact.

As a musician living through a pandemic, performances have been few and far between. Play for the Vote would be a tangible way to use my music for an important cause. I had read countless news articles and social media posts that spoke of the general public's dread of going out to vote in such uncertain times. Many friends had also expressed heightened levels of anxiety over the pending election results. I just knew that sharing live music at the polls could have a positive influence on people's voting experience, not only in 2020, but also in future elections. Music is also proven to help lessen stress and anxiety, so all the more reason for me to get involved. I wanted to be a part of something positive and helpful to encourage people to step out and vote.

When Election Day came, it was a brisk 38 degrees as I loaded my harp into the car at 6 a.m. I purposefully chose the 7 to 9 a.m. performance slot, as it was

peak voting time, and I wanted to "surprise" the sleepy voters with some peaceful harp music. They did wake up early before work, after all, to perform such an important task. Admittedly, I am *not* a morning person, so add sleep-deprivation to the cold temps, and I was not a happy camper. But, I donned my fingerless gloves, a beanie, and some fleece leggings under my dress pants, and was ready to greet the day.

As I loaded in and set up at my assigned polling location, I was met by many curious stares. Fortunately, those questioning expressions soon grew to smiles as I began to play. Remembering that the only factor tying these strangers together was the voting process, I chose to perform a wide variety of genres to appeal to more people. The folks at my polling location heard some country classics, modern pop tunes, classical favorites, and more.

I was pleasantly surprised by the number of people who thanked me for being there or came up to tell me that the music enhanced their voting experience. I later saw a post on social media that read, "There's a lady playing a harp [at my polling location]. So beautiful and soothing. Just what I needed to hear this morning." These comments affirmed that I was doing something worthwhile and reminded me of something I had forgotten—music really is a universal language that can cross barriers and bring people together. I realized after so much time spent apart in quarantine, the election was a way for people to connect to each other for the first time in a long while. The opportunity to bring humanity and beauty to what can feel like a disconnected process of pressing buttons on a ballot was truly special.

The Play for the Vote initiative was thrown together in about five weeks. Amazingly enough, over 1,000 musicians in 48 states participated. There were violinists, cellists, harpists, you name it. It was neat to see a variety of musicians participate, from young children to symphony principals. I hope that Play for the Vote contributed to increased voter turnout this year, though I may never know what the definitive effect was. What I do know made a difference was that I got involved in my community, in something larger than myself, and after feeling so discon-





Liana Alpino performs outside a polling place in Tennessee on Nov. 3, 2020, as part of Play for the Vote. For more information on Play for the Vote and how to get involved with future elections, visit [playforthevote.com](http://playforthevote.com).

nected for so long, it felt deeply rewarding to connect with and help people. Of course, there is also the added bonus that the U.S. voter turnout was its highest in over 100 years at approximately 65 percent according to the *Washington Post*. Additionally, my state of Tennessee hit a new record for voter turnout (according to *The Tennessean*)!

Ultimately, waking up in the wee hours of the morning and playing in the freezing cold was worth it. Apart from voting, I felt it was a calling of civic duty to be a part of this initiative. I look forward to the inevitable growth of this project in helping to re-associate positivity with the voting process. As I watched the election results teeter between 50.1 and 49.9 percent in many states, I'm also reminded that every vote *does* count. Furthermore, I'm reminded that every little action we do for our community counts too. And when you combine that with others' efforts nationwide, you really can effect change. ●

*Liana Alpino is a freelance harpist and harp instructor based in Nashville, Tennessee. In her spare time, she enjoys composing new works for harp and making pop songs more accessible for the harp through her arrangements.*



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## Question: How can I generate more income during this time of diminished performance opportunities?

**T**his year certainly has had many challenges for those of us in the arts, hasn't it?

In these uncertain times, it's time to get creative! People are still planning events, only on a smaller scale. Contact your clients, event planners, and function facilities about micro-events. The harp is perfect for these small, intimate gatherings. Sometimes you can even perform virtually!

Get on a roster for online performances, perhaps through your school or as an alumnus. If you play at a library or other venue which has a concert schedule, propose playing online for them.

Teach! Let your local music store or harp store know you're accepting new students. You can even advertise online. Online teaching is great fun, and you don't have to travel to teach in cities and countries all over the world.

Do podcasts or Instagram demonstrations online. You can cultivate a following and have people subscribe to your shows.

Work on your arrangements or try writing some original pieces. Then you can offer them as digital downloads on websites like the Harp Column Music.

—*Felice Pomeranz is professor of harp at Berklee College and Boston Conservatory at Berklee, director of The Gilded Harps, and American Harp Society Northeast Regional Director.*

*Boston, Massachusetts*

**D**uring these unprecedented times, it has been exciting to watch musicians find creative ways to connect with their audiences. Maybe you finally wrote down some arrangements and published them, but those projects may take some time to pay off financially. One simple way that I have generated more income was to apply to become a substitute teacher. While going into a classroom may not be appealing to many people right now, I chose to do this knowing that there would be a need in my community, and I am much less vulnerable than many substitutes who are retired teachers. Music teachers have an especially hard time finding qualified substitutes, and I have been able to specialize in that area. I have subbed for orchestra at multiple

schools and have brought my harp into the classroom, performing for students remotely and in person. They

were delighted and had lots of questions as well as ideas for new pieces I should learn! Maybe this will generate some new students down the line, but even if it doesn't, I am happy to share my love of harp with a new audience.

Looking for other ways to share music and serve the community, I contacted some music directors at churches I had played for in the past. I offered to record some music for them for free as a gift for their services. Although this was meant to be a service project, many churches still insisted on paying me. I believe as you try to pay it forward opportunities will continue to arrive.

—*Erin Wood received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Indiana University, and teaches privately and at University of Kansas.*

*Lawrence, Kansas*

**I** am very grateful for the new students that have come my way during the pandemic, whom I teach virtually through Zoom or Facetime. Students have found me through a variety of sources including word of mouth, recommendations from fellow teachers whose studios are full, direct requests through my website, Instagram, and virtual events. Many students who found me through Instagram mentioned they searched the hashtags #harp and #harpteacher and came across me that way. I made sure to put a link to the teaching section of my website directly in my Instagram bio so it is easy to contact me. In addition, offering group harp classes can be a big boost to income. I find that many adults are wanting to take up the harp during this time, and group offerings can be a great way to provide extra instruction for them and extra income as a teacher.

Equipping my home studio for recording has also proven to be useful; that way I can accept opportunities to record for a variety of different sessions or to play live for virtual events. This can easily be done through a simple mic setup, simple backdrop, and a ring light. I use a blank white wall, a \$20 ring light I found on Amazon, and the Shure MV 88 mic which plugs right into my phone. ●

—*Elizabeth Steiner enjoys an active career as a freelancer in the Philadelphia area and serves as a teaching artist for the Lyra Society.*

*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**Coming up:** How much slack should I leave on nylon, gut, wound nylon, and wire strings? I know they aren't all the same, but I'm not sure how much to allow.



Felice Pomeranz



Erin Wood



Elizabeth Steiner





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That's sweetly played in tune..."  
—Robert Burns*



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*—Bob Dylan*

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# summer harp camp roundup

We've got the lowdown on nearly 40 summer harp experiences awaiting harpists eager to connect and grow in 2021

by Danielle Kuntz



**W**hat a difference a year makes. Last January we were all mapping out our summer plans to attend camps, festivals, and conferences, blissfully unaware of the brewing pandemic that would wipe out all of our usual gatherings in 2020. But harpists are an adaptable bunch, and some summer programs quickly pivoted to a virtual model, giving harpists an option to stretch their harp horizons, even from home.

This year, harp camps are ready for anything. Online, hybrid, in-person—nearly 40 summer programs have come up with ways to help harpists get the most out of this summer.

### AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Houston, Texas; June 7–June 18 (Grades 3–9); June 21–July 10 (Grades 9–12)

Instructors: Emily Klein, Paula Page, Megan Conley

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: AFA is an orchestra and chamber music program at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston, at which Emily Klein is the instructor. Klein is joined by Paula Page, former Houston Symphony principal harpist and associate professor of harp at Rice University, and Megan Conley, Houston Symphony principal harpist, for masterclass instruction. Students participate in orchestra, harp ensemble, master and studio classes, and classes such as music in film and music theory.

[afatexas.org](http://afatexas.org)

### AMERICAN HARP ACADEMY

VIRTUAL; June 13–19

Instructors: Maria Luisa Rayan, Jacquelyn Bartlett

Format: Online only

Description: The Virtual American Harp Academy is hosted by the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) and led by master harp teachers Maria Luisa Rayan and Jacquelyn Bartlett. Meet and hear harpist peers from around the world while participating in daily masterclasses and interactive seminars.

[americanharpacademy.com](http://americanharpacademy.com)

### AMERICAN YOUTH HARP ENSEMBLE SUMMER INSTITUTES

Richmond, Va.; June 21–25, July 5–9, 12–16, 19–23, 26–30

Instructors: Rebecca Anstine Smith, Lynnelle Ediger, Claire Jones, Amber Koeppen, Chris Marshall, Alison Read

Format: In-person and online (hybrid)

Description: The 2021 Summer Harp Institutes are tailored to all levels of harpists who live anywhere in the world. In addition to in-person youth programming for

students ages 8–18, the program offers online programming for harpists of all ages. Enjoy meeting new friends while growing to the next level of musical artistry.  
[greenspringmusic.org](http://greenspringmusic.org)

### BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC SUMMER PROGRAMS

Boston, Mass.; June 21–25 (one week), July 10–Aug. 13 (five week), or June 1–Aug. 13 (12 week)

Instructors: Felice Pomeranz and Màiri Chaimbeul

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Berklee hosts three programs: One-week String Intensive, Five Week Intensive, and the Summer Semester for College Credit (dates TBA). It is an immersion in many styles: classical, Celtic, blues, jazz, and all improvisation styles.

[berklee.edu/summer](http://berklee.edu/summer)

### BLUE LAKE FINE ARTS CAMP

Twin Lake, Mich.; June 23–July 4 (session 1); Aug. 4–Aug. 15 (session 4)

Instructors: Jacqueline Pollauf, Molly O’Roark, Stephanie Gustafson, and Amy Ley

Format: In-person only

Description: Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp offers harpists of all levels the opportunity for intensive summer study in a traditional camp environment. Daily classes include private lessons, ensemble skills, theory, history, and practice time, and the session concludes with a performance for friends and family. Enrollment is limited, and pedal harps are provided. Blue Lake is committed to COVID-Careful planning in preparation for the summer season.

[bluelake.org](http://bluelake.org)

### BOB JONES UNIVERSITY HARP CAMP

Greenville, S.C.; July 12–16 (junior high), July 18–23 (senior high)

Instructor: Emily Waggoner

Format: In-person only

Description: Harp camp at Bob Jones University isn’t your typical cabin-insect-lake experience. BJU camps are designed around campers’ particular interests. The mission of BJU summer camps is to help you grow Christlike character as you learn about a specific field. In addition to the daily ensemble rehearsals, solo masterclasses, private lessons, and performances, all camps include chapel, personal Bible study, nightly group devotions in the residence halls, and recreation.

[educamp.bju.edu](http://educamp.bju.edu)

### BOSTON UNIVERSITY TANGLEWOOD INSTITUTE YOUNG ARTISTS HARP PROGRAM

Boston, Mass.; 2021 dates TBA

Instructors: Ann Hobson Pilot and Franziska Huhn

### EDITOR’S NOTE

You can learn more about these summer programs and see status updates at *Harp Column’s* summer harp camp directory: [harpcolumn.com/summercamproundup](http://harpcolumn.com/summercamproundup)

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Boston University Tanglewood Institute is a summer training program for young musicians and is the only program of its kind associated with a major symphony orchestra. Under the guidance of distinguished professionals, and in the presence of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, students are immersed in an atmosphere of music-making fueled by high artistic standards, rigorous programming, and a legacy of learning and performance.

[bu.edu/cfa/tanglewood](http://bu.edu/cfa/tanglewood)

### **BOWDOIN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL**

Brunswick, Maine; June 26–July 17 (Session 1); July 17–Aug. 7 (Session 2)

Instructor: June Han

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: The Bowdoin International Music Festival provides an intensive and in-depth exploration of chamber and solo music. Students are defined by their dedication, creativity, curiosity, and passion for excellence in music. Harpists study with June Han, who has been described as “mesmerizing” by *The New York Times* and “devoted, passionate, and inspirational” by her festival students. Participants may apply to attend the program for three or six weeks.

[bowdoinfestival.org/institute](http://bowdoinfestival.org/institute)

### **BREVARD MUSIC CENTER, SUMMER INSTITUTE AND FESTIVAL**

Brevard, N.C.; June 24–July 24 (high school); June 21–Aug. 8 (college)

Instructor: Allegra Lilly

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Brevard provides an intensive summer community for young musicians of exceptional talent. Over 500 students, ages 14–29, enroll each year and represent nearly every state in the U.S. and several other countries. Brevard presents 80 public concerts throughout its seven-week festival including major orchestral, chamber, and operatic repertoire.

[brevardmusic.org/institute](http://brevardmusic.org/institute)

### **CRANE YOUTH MUSIC**

Potsdam, N.Y.; June 27–July 10

Instructor: Jessica Suchy-Pilalis

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: A two-week solo/ensemble program for all instruments. Harpists perform in two orchestra/wind ensemble concerts and have daily masterclasses, orchestra sectionals, rehearsals, and harp ensemble.

[potsdam.edu/academics/crane-school-music/camps-community-programs/crane-youth-music](http://potsdam.edu/academics/crane-school-music/camps-community-programs/crane-youth-music)

### **CRESTED BUTTE MUSIC FESTIVAL CHAMBER MUSIC INTENSIVE**

Crested Butte, Colo.; 2021 dates TBA

Instructor: Anastasia Pike

Format: In-person only

Description: Harpists are invited to join the Crested Butte Music Festival’s annual Crested Butte Chamber Music Intensive in beautiful Crested Butte, Colorado. Small ensembles of serious musicians will be coached by world-class artists in a supportive, inviting atmosphere. The Intensive is unique in its intimate atmosphere and access to coaches; the participant-to-coach ratio is capped at 3:1. Additionally, coaches will perform with participants and lead hikes and other outdoor activities.

[crestedbuttemusicfestival.org](http://crestedbuttemusicfestival.org)

### **CURTIS SUMMERFEST HARP COLONY**

Philadelphia, Pa.; 2021 dates TBA

Instructor: Elizabeth Hainen

Format: In-person and online

Description: In-person program as well as online options for developing artistry wherever you are in the world. Faculty includes Elizabeth Hainen conducting an intensive week of orchestral training through mock auditions and masterclasses, culminating in a performance in the final concert.

[curtis.edu/summerfest/harp-colony/about](http://curtis.edu/summerfest/harp-colony/about)

### **EASTERN MUSIC FESTIVAL**

Greensboro, N.C.; June 26–July 31

Instructor: Anna Kate Mackle

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Eastern Music Festival (EMF) is an educational experience for talented, dedicated young artists ages 14–23. Faculty teaching artists guide an annual student population of 250-plus in a program known for its orchestral studies.

[easternmusicfestival.org](http://easternmusicfestival.org)

### **ELYRICA SUMMER MUSIC PROGRAM**

Fairfield County, Conn.; Aug. 9–13

Instructors: Wendy Kerner, Brandee Younger, Robbin Gordon-Cartier, and more

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: In its 23rd year, Elyrica is open to students of all levels ages 8 through adult, lever and pedal harp. Focused on ensembles, classical, folk, Latin, and popular music is included in a non-competitive, supportive environment.

[elyricacom](http://elyricacom)

### **GUTENSTEIN MASTERCLASSES**

Gutenstein, Austria; Aug. 23–29

Instructor: Elisabeth Plank

Format: In-person only

Description: Music and nature, study and enjoy. The renowned Gutenstein Masterclasses offer a unique musical experience in the beautiful Castle of Gutenstein in the Austrian alps. For the first time since their founding in 1995, there will be a harp masterclass, led by harpist and pedagogue Elisabeth Plank (University of Music Vienna, Vienna Harp Days). This intensive masterclass provides a focused learning experience for the students, as well as concerts to attend and perform in.

[meisterklassen-gutenstein.com](http://meisterklassen-gutenstein.com)

### **HARP CAMP VIRGINIA**

Nellysford, Va.; July 2021 (dates TBA)

Instructors: Virginia Schweninger, Eve Watters, Howard Bryan, Kate Tamarkin, and more

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Harp Camp Virginia takes place at the Acorn Inn, a self-contained 10-room inn in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. We have a wonderful large space for classes, rehearsals, and performance. All meals are provided. Begin each day with floor barre exercise followed by ensemble rehearsals, workshops, and activities to enrich your skills and confidence. There is a lake for swimming, canoeing, and a picnicking.

[harpcampva.com](http://harpcampva.com)

### **HARPMASTERS ACADEMY**

Muenchenbuchsee, Switzerland; July 10–18 (Future); July 21–30 (Pro)

Instructors: Milda Agazarian, Marcella

continued on pg. 16



## FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VIRTUAL HARP CAMP

by Hannah Palmquist

If there is one thing we know for certain right now, it is that everything is uncertain. While we all hope for the best in-person experiences at harp camp this summer, we can also plan for contingencies. Should summer camp have to be online this summer, what will it be like, how can I get the most out of it, and which one is right for me? We caught up with several harp camp faculty members and students to discuss five things you should know about online summer camp and how to get the most out of the online experience.

### HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMMING

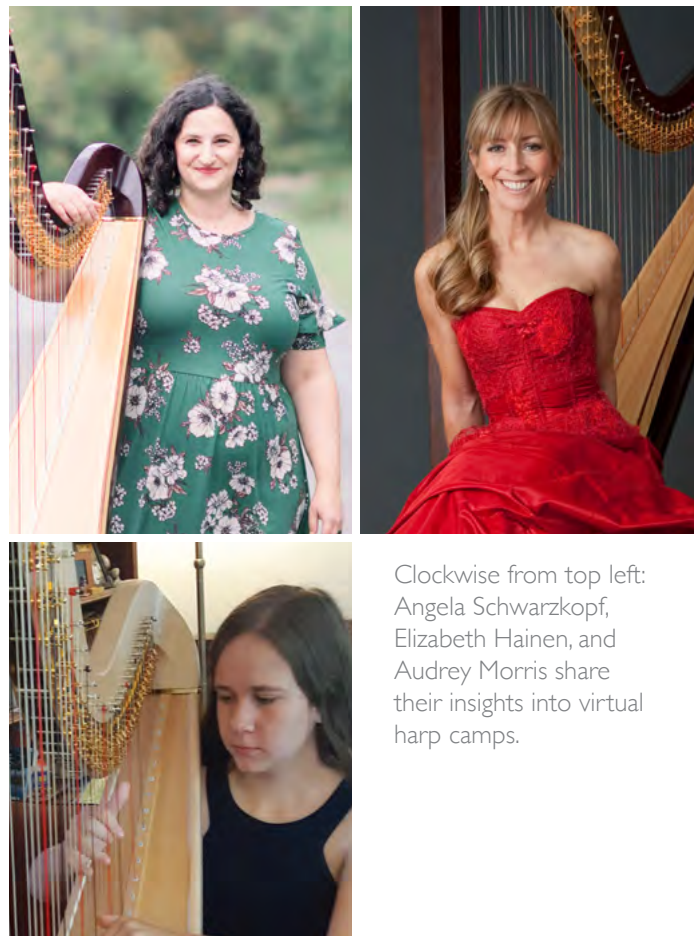
Some camps quickly moved their summer program online in 2020 because of the pandemic. Trying to simulate the in-person experience as much as possible, online campers were given opportunities to study with the same faculty, participate in the same workshops and masterclasses, and even perform—all of the components of an in-person camp. After moving its camp online last summer, Angela Schwarzkopf of Young Artist's Harp Seminar (YAHS) says their online students can expect to work closely with the faculty, learn new skills and techniques, and of course to have some fun. "Whether in person or online, our goal remains the same: to educate, inspire, and grow today's harpists."

### REAL RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships built at summer camp are just as important as harp lessons learned. In fact, the close bonds created at camp can be a camper's biggest takeaway from their summer experience. Camps have gotten creative with their online social programming. "When developing our online program, we really wanted to ensure [building friendships] was still a part of the experience, so our program alternated between learning days and social days," Schwarzkopf says. Social days include games, skits, and other interactive group activities. YAHS student Audrey Morris, who attended camp online last summer, says her days were packed full of workshops, masterclasses, and social events like game night and skit night. "It was a wonderful experience, and I learned so much from the faculty and met many new people," she says.

### PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Just because your audience is separated by a screen doesn't mean performance opportunities aren't plentiful at online camps. Elizabeth Hainen of Curtis Summerfest says her program culminated in performance opportunities for participants. "At the end of the program, we featured the harpists in a live recital via private Zoom, then a week later a pre-recorded recital was posted publicly via social media." Similarly, YAHS hosted an online concert series during its program. These public concerts give campers the opportunity to share their performances with an even larger audience than they could have in-person.



Clockwise from top left: Angela Schwarzkopf, Elizabeth Hainen, and Audrey Morris share their insights into virtual harp camps.

### AUDITING IS POSSIBLE

Some online camps allow auditors to participate in programs. Auditing allows students and professionals alike to get a taste for the program without having to fully commit to the entire experience. This is a good option for students who may be participating in a camp for the first time or for those who simply want to see how camp works online.

### OPEN MINDEDNESS IS KEY

To get the most out of the experience, keep an open mind. Don't expect an online camp to provide the exact same experience as being in-person. While the experience may be different, and some things can't be replicated online, there are advantages to online camp that don't exist in person. Online camp allows you to try a camp you might not have been able to travel to in person. They might also allow you to study with teachers who would have been inaccessible in person. Online camps can provide a safe way for students to receive high quality harp training in an unprecedented time. ●

continued from pg. 14

Carboni, Mara Galassi, Francesco Guarneri, Luisa Prandina, and Irina Zingg

Format: In-person only

Description: International Summer Harp Academy "HarpMasters" is an international summer harp camp based in Switzerland where harpists from all over the world come to join a unique group of dedicated professionals to learn, inspire, and establish friendships. We build a community of exchange between the world's leading masters and young artists in a supportive and friendly atmosphere. HarpMasters Academy offers a life-changing experience, and an opportunity for learning, for sharing, and for inspiration.

[harpmasters.com](http://harpmasters.com)

### HARPS IN THE GLEN

West Bend, Wis.; July 29–Aug. 1

Instructors: Kim Robertson and Sunita Staneslow

Format: In-person and online

Description: An intimate three-day harp retreat with Kim Robertson and Sunita Staneslow, located in scenic rural Wisconsin close to Milwaukee. Five to six hours of activities daily with workshops and master-

classes and an add-on Special Focus class on Thursday. The evening activities include harp circles and a concert by Kim and Sunita. The focus is on musicality, creativity, and inspiration combined with practical tools for arranging, improving technique, and overcoming performance nerves. (Limited to 25 students.)

[sunitaharp.com/2000/01/harps-in-glen-with-sunita-kim.html](http://sunitaharp.com/2000/01/harps-in-glen-with-sunita-kim.html)

### HOUSTON SUMMER HARP FESTIVAL

Houston, Texas; July 12–17

Instructors: Kimberly DeRosa, Therese Honey, Susanna Campbell, and Hope Cowan

Format: In-person only

Description: A non-competitive week of comprehensive studies for 6th through 12th graders on the many aspects of the harp and its music, history, and ensemble playing. Ensemble rehearsals culminate in a recital at the end of the week. Other classes and activities include "Famous Harpists," "Wedding Workshop," masterclasses, and private lessons with faculty.

[houstonsummerharpfestival.com](http://houstonsummerharpfestival.com)

### ILLINOIS SUMMER HARP CLASS

Urbana, Ill.; June 10–12 (tentative)

Instructor: Ann Yeung and others

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: The 18th ISHC is an intensive and creative class with Ann Yeung and associates for all ages and levels through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. Plans for 2021 include workshops, distinguished teachers and performers, and a new ensemble work by Julia Kay Jamieson for the ISHC Harp Jam. Private lessons and harp usage available (additional fees). Participants and auditors welcomed.

[music.illinois.edu/illinois-summer-harp-class](http://music.illinois.edu/illinois-summer-harp-class)

### INTERLOCHEN ARTS CAMP HIGH SCHOOL HARP PROGRAM

Interlochen, Mich.; June 26–Aug. 8

Instructors: Joan Raeburn Holland and Sylvia Norris

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: The six-week harp summer program is an opportunity for the motivated student to develop as a musician and as an artist. Students work with faculty conductors, teachers, and guest artists, in a curriculum that emphasizes musicianship, growth, and the joy of playing with fellow musicians.

[camp.interlochen.org/program/music/hs/harp](http://camp.interlochen.org/program/music/hs/harp)

### INTERLOCHEN ARTS CAMP INTERMEDIATE HARP PROGRAM

Interlochen, Mich.; June 26–July 17 (session A), July 18–Aug. 8 (session B)

Instructors: Joan Raeburn Holland and Sylvia Norris

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Further individual study of the harp and develop ensemble skills at the intermediate harp summer program through solo repertoire study, private lessons, and ample ensemble experiences.

[camp.interlochen.org/program/music/int/harp](http://camp.interlochen.org/program/music/int/harp)

### MASTERWORKS FESTIVAL

Spartanburg, S.C.; June 20–July 18 (tentative)

Instructor: Heaven Fan

Format: In-person, transition to online if

## 22nd Annual Midwest Harp Festival

July 18th-24th	Chicagoland Location	Solo Competition
Ensembles	Four Concerts	Workshops
Music Store	Youths and Adults Welcome	Housing Available

### 2021 Faculty



Elizabeth Richter



Faye Seeman



Dr. Charles W. Lynch III



Janelle Lake



Midwest Harp Festival

[MidwestHarpFestival@gmail.com](mailto:MidwestHarpFestival@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/MidwestHarpFestival](http://www.facebook.com/MidwestHarpFestival)

[www.MidwestHarpFestival.org](http://www.MidwestHarpFestival.org)



in-person is not possible

Description: MasterWorks Festival is an intensive, four-week festival for advanced and passionate students of the classical performing arts. Together with harp faculty Heaven Fan, MasterWorks harp students study and perform in a supportive Christian environment. Performance opportunities include concerto competition, honors recitals, chamber music, runout concerts, and Sunday worship. Harpists make life-long friendships and have life-changing experiences at MasterWorks Festival.

[masterworksfestival.org](http://masterworksfestival.org)

### MIDWEST HARP FESTIVAL

Wheaton, Ill.; July 18–24

Instructors: Janelle Lake, Charles W. Lynch III, Elizabeth Richter, and Faye Seeman

Format: In-person

Description: The 22nd annual Midwest Harp Festival will be on the Wheaton College campus. Charles W. Lynch III, Elizabeth Richter, and Faye Seeman lead a week of ensemble rehearsals, workshops, concerts, and an optional solo competition. New for 2021: Janelle Lake teaches Meet the Harp class for beginners.

[midwestharpfestival.org](http://midwestharpfestival.org)

### MOSTLY MODERN FESTIVAL

Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; June 6–26

Instructor: Joseph Rebman

Format: In-person only

Description: The Mostly Modern Festival is a three-week orchestral and chamber music festival focused on music of the 20th and 21st century, with lots of harp. Housed at Skidmore College, students perform in orchestra, chamber, opera, and composition readings. Students receive three private lessons with harp faculty Joseph Rebman. The festival also features a concerto competition, professional development lectures, and masterclasses with guest artists.

[mostlymodernfestival.org](http://mostlymodernfestival.org)

### MPULSE

Ann Arbor, Mich.; July 18–July 24

Instructor: Joan Raeburn Holland

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Focused on individual instruction for high school harpists, the Harp Institute will provide a one-week intensive

continued on pg. 20



# EXPERIENCE

## emf

eastern music festival

### 60TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

### JUNE 26-JULY 31, 2021

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

2 YOUNG ARTIST ORCHESTRAS | MASTER CLASSES  
CONCERTO COMPETITION | CHAMBER MUSIC

APPLICATION DEADLINE  
FEBRUARY 21, 2021

APPLY NOW: [EASTERNMUSICFESTIVAL.ORG](http://EASTERNMUSICFESTIVAL.ORG)



## RMS HARP PROGRAM

[rmsHarp.org](http://rmsHarp.org) Steamboat Springs Colorado

Anticipating Summer '21

Broaden Your Horizons

# summer harp programs at a glance

Program	Dates	Location	Age limit
American Festival of the Arts Summer Music Festival	June 7–18 (grades 3–9); June 21–July 10 (grades 9–12)	Houston, Texas	up to 18
American Harp Academy	June 13–19	VIRTUAL	11–adult
American Youth Harp Ensemble Summer Institutes	various June 21–July 30	Richmond, Va.	all ages
Berklee College of Music Summer Programs	various June 1–Aug. 13	Boston, Mass.	14–adult
Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp	June 23–July 4 (session 1); Aug. 4–15 (session 4)	Twin Lake, Mich.	11–18
Bob Jones University Harp Camp	July 12–16 (jr. high), July 18–23 (senior high)	Greenville, S.C.	11–18
Boston University Tanglewood Institute	dates TBA	Boston, Mass.	14–18
Bowdoin International Music Festival	June 26–July 17 (session 1); July 17–Aug. 7 (session 2)	Brunswick, Maine	14–adult
Brevard Music Center, Summer Institute and Festival	June 24–July 24 (high school), June 21–Aug. 8 (college)	Brevard, N.C.	14–college
Crane Youth Music	June 27–July 10	Potsdam, N.Y.	11–18
Crested Butte Music Festival Chamber Music Intensive	dates TBA	Crested Butte, Colo.	all ages
Curtis Summerfest Harp Colony Online	dates TBA	Philadelphia, Pa.	14–college
Eastern Music Festival	June 26–July 31	Greensboro, N.C.	14–adult
Elyrica Summer Harp Program	Aug. 9–13	Fairfield County, Conn.	all ages
Gutenstein Masterclasses	Aug. 23–29	Gutenstein, Austria	11–18
Harp Camp Virginia	July 2021 (dates TBA)	Nellysford, Va.	all ages
HarpMasters Academy	July 10–18 (Future); July 21–30 (Pro)	Muenchenbuchsee, Switzerland	adult
Harps in the Glen	July 29–Aug. 1	West Bend, Wis.	11–18
Houston Summer Harp Festival	July 12–17	Houston, Texas	all ages
Illinois Summer Harp Class	June 10–12 (tentative)	Urbana, Ill.	14–18
Interlochen Arts Camp High School Harp Program	June 26–Aug. 8	Interlochen, Mich.	11–13
Interlochen Arts Camp Intermediate Harp Program	June 26–July 17 (session A); July 18–Aug. 8 (session B)	Interlochen, Mich.	14–adult
MasterWorks Festival	June 20–July 18	Spartanburg, S.C.	all ages
Midwest Harp Festival	July 18–24	Wheaton, Ill.	18–adult
Mostly Modern Festival	June 6–26	Saratoga Springs, N.Y.	14–18
MPULSE	July 18–July 24	Ann Arbor, Mich.	18–adult
National Music Festival	Aug. 1–14	Chestertown, Md.	all ages
New Millennium International Chamber Music Festival	Aug. 26–31	Budapest, Hungary	all ages
New Orleans Jazz and Pop Harp Weekend	May 27–30	New Orleans, La.	all ages
NYU Summer Intensive	June 25–28	VIRTUAL	16–college
Ohio Scottish Arts School	June 26–July 2	Oberlin, Ohio	all ages
Orford Music Academy	Aug. 8–14	Orford, Québec	14–adult
Redwood Music Camps	June 14–19	Santa Cruz, Calif.	11–18
Rocky Mountain Springs Harp Program	various June 20–July 17	Steamboat Springs, Colo.	11–adult
Scottish Harp Experience with Sunita	May 27–June 8 (first tour), June 8–20 (second tour)	Scotland	adult
Sewanee Summer Music Festival	June 19–July 18	Sewanee, Tenn.	14–college
The Summer Harp Academy	July 18–25	Lake Junaluska, N.C.	11–adult
TCU Summer Harp Workshop	June 7–9	Fort Worth, Texas	14–college
Vienna Harp Days 2021	July 17–22	Vienna, Austria	11–adult
Young Artist's Harp Seminar	July 6–16	VIRTUAL	8–26

Emphasis	Type of harp	Cost	Financial Aid	Application Deadline
orchestra, harp ensemble, masterclasses, music in film, music theory	lever; pedal	\$635 (M.S.); \$935 (H.S.)	yes	rolling
private lessons, masterclasses, harp ensemble, concerts	lever; pedal	see website	N/A	May 1
artistic development, ensemble	lever; pedal	\$350 (half); \$695 (full); \$895 (full + board)	yes	see website
programming for many styles: classical, Celtic, blues, jazz, improv	lever; pedal	see website	yes	none
harp ensemble, lessons, music theory, history, electives	lever; pedal	\$1,570 (total)	yes	first come first served
ensemble, masterclasses, private lessons, chapel, Bible study	lever; pedal	\$160–\$325	yes	July 1
lessons, chamber; harp ensemble, orchestra	pedal	see website	yes	Jan. 15
chamber music and solo rep	pedal	\$3,900 (3-wk); \$7,000 (6-wk)	yes	Jan. 15 (priority)
orchestra, chamber, opera	pedal	\$7,400 (total)	yes	Feb. 15
orchestra, wind ensemble, harp ensemble	pedal	\$1,000 (commuter); \$1,500 (boarder)	yes	June 1
chamber music	pedal	see website	no	N/A
personal development, performance	pedal	see website	no	see website
orchestra studies, performance, private lessons, guest artists	pedal	\$5,786 (total)	yes	Feb. 21
harp ensemble, classical, folk, Latin, pop music	lever; pedal	\$525 (early bird)	yes	May 1 (early bird)
masterclasses, concerts	pedal	€380	no	May 1
ensemble, workshops, enrichment, barre, outdoor rec	lever; pedal	\$850 (total)	yes	May
community, guest teachers, workshops, pedagogy	pedal	see website	no	see website
arranging, improvisation, harp circles, sacred music	lever; pedal	\$310 (tuition)	no	rolling
harp ensemble, masterclasses, studies in harp music, history	lever; pedal	\$425 (tuition); \$350 (board)	yes	June 6
workshops, premieres, harp jam, recitals	pedal	\$300	yes	Mar. 15 (priority)
musicianship, ensemble, artistry, collaboration	pedal	\$9,750	yes	Jan. 14 (priority)
ensemble, lessons, solo repertoire	pedal	\$6,250	yes	Jan. 14 (priority)
orchestra, Christianity, chamber, recitals, worship music	pedal	\$3,350 (commuter); \$4,200 (boarder)	yes	see website
ensemble, workshops, concerts, solo competition	lever; pedal	see website	yes	Mar. 31 (early bird)
orchestra, chamber, 20th and 21st century, private lessons	pedal	\$2,950 (tuition); \$2,550 (board)	yes	Mar. 1
lessons, guided practice, studio, performance, harp ensemble	pedal	\$1,575 (in-person); \$950 (online)	yes	Feb. 1 (priority)
recitals, orchestra, chamber choral, harp ensemble	pedal	free to qualified musicians	yes	rolling
performance, concerto competition	lever; pedal	€250	yes	July 15
jazz and pop instruction	lever; pedal	\$150–\$240	yes	May 16 (early bird)
technique, masterclasses, classical, world music, improv	pedal	\$450	N/A	N/A
Scottish music instruction, sessions, activities	lever	see website	yes	see website
masterclasses, private lessons, group class	pedal	\$493 CAD (tuition)	yes	Feb. 4
folk and Celtic music, singing, dancing, redwoods	lever	\$895 (total)	yes	see website
technique, musicianship, performance training	pedal	\$2,300 (ses. A); \$3,850 (ses. B and C)	yes	Mar. 15 (early bird)
Scottish and folk music, travel, history, workshops	lever	\$4,595	no	rolling
private lessons, chamber music, orchestra	pedal	\$4,924 (total)	yes	rolling
performance/professional skills, masterclasses, harp ensemble	pedal	\$1,500 (total)	yes	April 1
masterclasses, ensemble, harp sessions, recital	pedal	\$170 (commuter); \$285 (boarder)	no	June 24
daily lessons, performance training, musical intention	pedal	€320	no	May 15
performance skills, practice habits, solo, orchestral, comp. prep	lever; pedal	see website	yes	Mar. 15



continued from pg. 17

program designed to enhance the musical and technical skills of the dedicated harpist. The Institute provides the harpist with daily private lessons, individual and guided practice time, studio classes, performance opportunities, and harp ensemble. The studio class will focus on several topics such as college preparation, performance concentration, and peer-to-peer observation.

[smt.d.umich.edu/programs-degrees/youth-adult-programs/youth-programs/mpulse/harp-institute/](http://smt.d.umich.edu/programs-degrees/youth-adult-programs/youth-programs/mpulse/harp-institute/)

### NATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Chestertown, Md.; Aug. 1–14

Instructor: Susan Bennett Brady

Format: In-person only

Description: All NMF apprentices attend tuition free. For two weeks each June, musicians live and work together, presenting over 35 concerts—from solo recitals to large symphony orchestra performances with chorus.

[nationalmusic.us](http://nationalmusic.us)

### NEW MILLENNIUM INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Budapest, Hungary; Aug. 26–31

Instructor: Klára Bábel

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: Performance opportunities, study with faculty, and attend concerts by the festival's artists. Participants may participate in a concerto competition to solo with a professional chamber orchestra.

[nmicmf.com](http://nmicmf.com)

### NEW ORLEANS JAZZ AND POP HARP WEEKEND

New Orleans, La.; May 27–30

Instructors: Ben Creighton Griffiths, Patrice Fisher, Rachel Van Voorhees, Rebecca Babin, Luke Brechtelsbauer

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: This Harp Weekend is designed to improve the jazz and pop musical skills of our student harpists and also to generate interest among music students to study jazz harp on a more regular basis.

[neworleansjazzharp.com](http://neworleansjazzharp.com)

### NYU HARP INTENSIVE

VIRTUAL; June 25–28

Instructors: Bridget Kibbey and Brandee Younger

Format: Online only

Description: A virtual intensive workshop and masterclass series, led by NYU harp department faculty Bridget Kibbey and Brandee Younger. Hone technique and develop your artistic voice via the lens of standard masterworks to world music and improvisation.

Email: [MPAP-String-Studies@nyu.edu](mailto:MPAP-String-Studies@nyu.edu)

### OHIO SCOTTISH ARTS SCHOOL

Oberlin, Ohio; June 26–July 2

Instructors: Sue Richards, Rachel Hair, Rachel Clemente, Jen Narkevicius

Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible

Description: A week-long harp camp for ages 12 and up held on the campus of Oberlin College. Learn Scottish music on lever and wire harps. Classes include singing, morning and afternoon harp classes on four levels, lectures, mixed instrument classes, and nightly sessions for adults, with activities for the teens. The week begins with the optional Ohio Scottish Games harp competition on



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Saturday, and runs through Friday noon.  
[ohioscottishartschool.com](http://ohioscottishartschool.com)

### ORFORD MUSIC ACADEMY

Orford, Québec; Aug. 8–14  
Instructor: Jennifer Swartz  
Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible  
Description: Takes place alongside an International Festival, where students can perform and participate in the Orford Music Award. Harp faculty Jennifer Swartz is principal harp of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and head of the harp program at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University.  
[orford.mu/en/academy](http://orford.mu/en/academy)

### REDWOOD MUSIC CAMPS

Santa Cruz, Calif.; June 14–19  
Instructor: Jesse Autumn  
Format: In-person only  
Description: Learn and perform the folk music of Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, and more, all in the redwoods along the Monterey Bay. For players of fiddle, flute, penny-whistle, recorder, lever harp, guitar, mandolin, dulcimer, accordion, keyboards, percussion, Irish tenor banjo, and cello. Other activities include dancing and singing. Participants must be proficient on their instrument and have played for at least two years.  
[communitymusicschool.org](http://communitymusicschool.org)

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPRINGS HARP PROGRAM

Steamboat Springs, Colo.; June 20–July 17 (Full Session A); June 20–July 3 (Half Session B); July 4–July 17 (Half Session C)  
Instructors: Rachel Browne, Kathryn Harms, and Carly Nelson  
Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible  
Description: The Rocky Mountain Springs Harp Program strives to supplement the education of young harpists through intensive summer programs which treat each harpist as a whole person, with teachers who act as mentors and friends. Training in harp technique, musicianship, and performance is enhanced by program elements designed to improve mental attitudes and abilities, physical health and conditioning, aesthetic appreciation, and connections between music and other disciplines.  
[rmsharp.org](http://rmsharp.org)

### SCOTTISH HARP EXPERIENCE WITH SUNITA

Tour through Scotland; May 27–June 8 (First Tour), June 8–June 20 (Second Tour)  
Instructors: Sunita Staneslow, Isobel Mieras, Alison Kinnaird, Patsy Seddon, Heather Yule, and Cheyenne Brown  
Format: In-person only  
Description: A harp-infused tour. Scottish harp and folk music every day. Harps will be hired from the clarsach society for the workshops.  
[sunitaharp.com/1970/01/roots-of-harp-scottish-journey-with.html](http://sunitaharp.com/1970/01/roots-of-harp-scottish-journey-with.html)

### SEWANEE SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sewanee, Tenn.; June 19–July 18  
Instructors: Paula Bressman, Rachel Miller  
Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible  
Description: Four-week orchestra, chamber music, and piano training program for talented young musicians ages 14 through graduate school, held each summer at the University of the South. Harpists have weekly lessons and chamber music assignments in addition to playing in the orchestra.  
[ssmf.sewanee.edu](http://ssmf.sewanee.edu)

### THE SUMMER HARP ACADEMY

Lake Junaluska, N.C.; July 18–25  
Instructors: Elzbieta Szmyt and Jan Jennings  
Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible  
Description: The Summer Harp Academy is a comprehensive program designed to develop the versatile harpist. Harpists will be able to hone their performance and professional skills under the instruction of Elzbieta Szmyt and Jan Jennings. The SHA includes a faculty recital, daily masterclasses, lectures, and ensemble rehearsals; and concludes with a student recital. Practice time and private instruction are also available throughout the week.  
[summerharpacademy.org](http://summerharpacademy.org)

### TCU SUMMER HARP WORKSHOP

Fort Worth, Texas; June 7–9  
Instructor: Laura Brandenburg  
Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible  
Description: Three days of solo masterclasses and ensemble rehearsals as well as

interactive and informative sessions about the harp. Festival recital performance at the conclusion of the workshop. The workshop is open to young pedal harpists 8th grade and above, intermediate to advanced level. Overnight accommodations and recreation activities available.

[finearts.tcu.edu/music/events-and-programs/summer-camps/tcu-harp-workshop](http://finearts.tcu.edu/music/events-and-programs/summer-camps/tcu-harp-workshop)

### VIENNA HARP DAYS 2021

Vienna, Austria; July 17–22  
Instructors: Manja Smits and Elisabeth Plank  
Format: In-person, transition to online if in-person is not possible  
Description: Vienna Harp Days offers daily individual lessons, as well as group sessions on specific subjects. Concerts and an on-site exhibition included. In 2021, Vienna Harp Days founder Elisabeth Plank will be joined by Manja Smits (Netherlands) and Veronika Lemishenko (Ukraine) as invited artists for a lecture recital.  
[facebook.com/viennaharpdays](https://facebook.com/viennaharpdays)

### YOUNG ARTIST'S HARP SEMINAR

VIRTUAL; July 6–16  
Instructors: Susan Bennett Brady, Kimberly Rowe, Judy Loman, Kristi Shade, Kathryn Andrews, Angela Schwarzkopf, Emily Levin, Katherine Siochi, and Ellie Kirk  
Format: Online only  
Description: The YAHS program is for serious pedal harpists who want to improve performance skills and practice habits and intensify preparation for solo performances, orchestral auditions, and competitions. The YAHS Prep program is open to pedal or lever harpists who want similar training in a less intensive atmosphere.  
[harpseminar.com](http://harpseminar.com) •

### EDITOR'S NOTE

You can learn more about these summer programs and see the latest updates at *Harp Column's* summer harp camp directory:  
[harpcolumn.com/summercamproundup](http://harpcolumn.com/summercamproundup)

Also check out our other directories for college harp programs and harp teachers at [harpcolumn.com](http://harpcolumn.com).



interview

# Being Brandee

How one harpist made  
2020 a year of creation  
and realization

by Alison Reese







Kyle Pompey, photographer  
Keayra Pompey, creative assistant

**W**hat do you do when you're a musician and all of your gigs are canceled because of a global pandemic? Brandee Younger's answer: "You create." Even when she didn't feel like it, she and her partner bassist Dezron Douglas would pull out their instruments every Friday morning throughout lockdown and play "brunch" for a loyal and growing audience online. Those brunches turned into an album, released just last month, that is receiving widespread praise. *Force Majeure* is an unapologetic musical snapshot of lockdown life in 2020. The album is on brand for Younger. She's always been Brandee, and proud of it. She has written her own story, and includes the hustle and the pop music and missed notes alongside the record deals and legend stories and... Oprah. During a year many musicians would declare a total loss, Younger has signed a major record deal, received two major jazz awards, been appointed to new teaching posts at major universities, and released a new album. Not bad for 2020. We caught up with Younger where else but on Zoom from her parents' house, where she was getting ready to make her famous mac and cheese for Thanksgiving dinner.

**HARP COLUMN:** You've had quite a year in 2020.

**BRANDEE YOUNGER:** We've *all* had quite a year [Laughs]. There were things that were already in the works long before this year.

**HC:** Let's start with your record deal that was recently announced with Impulse! Records. It's the first time you've signed with a major label.

**BY:** I've been hardcore independent and self-managed my entire career. So for me to make this leap at this age and stage [in my career] was a big decision. During my undergrad, I studied harp performance and music business, where a lot of our time in business courses was spent combing through record contracts. So part of it scared me. I had also interned at record labels and had seen the process. I didn't want that for myself, so I was purposely independent despite having been offered some other deals in the past. I think what it all came down to this time was finding the right fit, and also thinking beyond myself in terms of the instrument and its place in our culture beyond classical music. I had one of what I call my "Oprah aha moments." Obviously, I didn't know I was going to have this career. It's not like I was 8 years old with dreams of this. I realized it was just something that was happening to me, so it's more important than just *me* and what *I* want. I think the harp doesn't always get the respect it deserves outside of the classical context, so I felt that this record deal was an opportunity to push the harp to the forefront in ways that it's not already.

**HC:** Tell us about what you hope to do in this recording project.

**BY:** Well, it's not just a project, it is a relationship, several albums. I always think of this as a marriage. It feels like I'm married to my producer. That's also another reason I had to think carefully about this. Impulse! is the label that John Coltrane made famous. They call it the house that Coltrane built. So many legends recorded on this label, including John and Alice Coltrane. So it has this rich legacy and history, which was important to me. Since I look to both Alice Coltrane and Dorothy Ashby as my influences, this felt like the right fit. My vision for this first record is to strip it down. All of my records thus far have been very horn heavy. This album will be less horn heavy and more harp-centered. This first album will be released probably this spring or summer.

**HC:** You were also recently appointed to teach at NYU and at The New School, where you're leading an Alice Coltrane ensemble in addition to teaching.

**BY:** I'm thrilled about leading the Alice Coltrane ensemble, and I'm an alum of NYU where I studied with Emily Mitchell for my master's, so it's really special to be back there. My teaching duties will be shared with Bridget Kibbey, and we'll be running a summer intensive program there this June, which will be formally announced in January. I'm looking forward to that. At The New School, it's a special position, because I'll be able to teach across the Mannes School of Music and the School of Jazz and Contemporary Studies. With my own career spanning across genres, it feels like the position has been customized for me. I've always



been that conservatory student who is like, “Hey, can I take that jazz ensemble? Can I study with that teacher?” A lot of the conservatories are not set up to allow for that kind of customization. I remember as an undergrad, I made an independent study, which was actually lessons with the jazz bass professor at [the Hartt School at the University of Hartford]. In the classical conservatories, we’re learning theory, solos, orchestra rep, and I noticed that the jazz majors are learning how to compose; they’re learning how to apply their theory directly to their music; they’re learning how to improvise. I thought, “Why aren’t we learning that? They’re learning to play by ear *and* read, why aren’t we? Aren’t these skills we’re going to need when we get out of school?” So the fact that The New School is allowing this “co-mingling” is incredible. If a clarinet student wants to take a lesson with me, they can, whether they want to just learn how the harp works or learn how to improve their writing for the harp or

just open their ears in a different way. I’m really excited about that. And with both of the schools, I think it’s a real bonus that you have the opportunity to learn from multiple teachers. These are not schools where there’s one harp instructor, so you can learn different things from different teachers.

**HC:** Knowing what you know now, would you have done your college schooling differently?

**BY:** No, I wouldn’t have done school differently. If there was one thing that I would do differently, it would have been to start learning to play by ear before puberty. So I can’t blame college for that. Learning to play by ear is like learning a language. It’s much easier to pick up when you’re younger. Early jazz came from spirituals that were sung on slave ships coming over here, no one was writing this down on sheet music. I probably did a huge disservice to myself and slowed my learning process down tremendously by learning to read music before I developed my ear. I made it a point to not learn other styles of music the same way I learned classical music. So, I often struggle with my ear. I’m a lifelong student of this music, and I know it. I don’t try to act like I know what I don’t know. This is a lifelong uphill journey. Reading off the paper is something that I chose to do even though it hurts me all the time.

**HC:** Do you feel like there could have been an easier path for you in music?

**BY:** Absolutely.

**HC:** Why did you pick it?

**BY:** I think because I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I was younger. I did what I was told—study these excerpts, study these solos, learn these parts, show up in all black, shut up, and play your part. I did as I was told. I was a good kid, middle child here. [Laughs]

**HC:** So you were on the well-trodden path in classical music. We all know how that path goes. Where did jazz enter the picture?

**BY:** Well, do you notice I don’t ever say I’m a *jazz* harpist; I always say I’m a *harpist*. There are a few reasons for this. One, I didn’t formally study jazz. Also, I do straddle the fence between classical and other genres. I haven’t thrown away what I’ve learned. I just did a concerto last year with an orchestra. I still do what I was taught to do, but I break the rules, and I turn in different directions with it.

A few things stick out to me. When I was young, I always wanted to play what I heard on the radio. I grew up in New York, so I was listening to Hot 97—hip hop and R&B, and then the oldies that my parents listened to. So I would come to lessons with my first teacher Karen Strauss with cassette tapes, asking, “Can I play this?” And as long as I learned what was in my *Fun from the First* or whatever standard book I was in, she would, bless her heart, transcribe whatever song I wanted to learn. She allowed me to do both things. My parents always say, “You know, if Karen had not done that for you, you wouldn’t be



photo by Erin Patrice O'Brien

able to do what you do today.” And you know, parents are always right.

So this desire to do something else was always there, but I always knew to do what I’m told. I knew I had to go to school if I was going to get better at this instrument. I knew I had to study it. And then right at the end of college, several things cemented my path forward. I got to work with the great saxophonist Kenny Garrett, and I also did my first Top 40 session for Bad Boy (back when Bad Boy was a thing). Those things were the launch pad for the directions I was going.

**HC:** Right, it’s not just classical and jazz that you do, either.

**BY:** I do lots of recording—it’s about half of my career. A big portion of what I do is pop, and I was never ashamed of it. Most classical and jazz musicians think they’re too sophisticated to play pop music, but I am not ashamed.

When I was in high school, what I wanted to do was go to college for marching band. I played the flute, but my teacher switched me to trombone. I had wonderful high school jazz band and marching band teachers. We had an instrumental instructor who gave us lessons and also directed the jazz band.

**HC:** This was a public high school?

**BY:** Yes. I entered public school in fifth grade kicking and screaming, but it was the best thing I ever did. Public school offers so much for free. I was able to synchronize swim and run track.

**HC:** Wait, you did synchronized swimming?

**BY:** I was able to do anything I wanted in public school, and the teaching was great too. My marching band instructor taught us basically the same style of marching band music as historically black college marching bands do.

**HC:** No kidding, at a public high school?

**BY:** Oh, yeah. That’s what we did. We were playing Earth, Wind and Fire...it was so much fun and so rewarding. Of course, we were complaining in the moment when we’re marching on a field at 7 a.m., and we’re tired, and it’s cold outside, and we’re swinging trombones, and there are worms coming out of the ground, but you have to get ready for the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. But those were experiences that I’ll never forget. So that is what I wanted to do—I wanted to go down South and do marching band. And do you know what my parents said to me?



photo by Deneka Peniston

**BRUNCH** Brandee Younger and Dezron Douglas are still livestreaming their brunch concerts—you can find them on Patreon.

“What are you gonna do? Get a bachelor’s degree in marching band?” And they shut this girl down again. But that’s okay.

**HC:** What did your parents do for a living?

**BY:** My mom is a retired school teacher, and my father is a retired pharmaceutical salesman.

**HC:** So neither is a musician.

**BY:** No, neither is a musician. My grandmother was a part of the Great Migration. My parents knew they had to get a job if they were going to do anything. Now in their retired life, they help me at shows. It’s the reason I’ve been able to be independent for so long. They physically make themselves available to help me out.

**HC:** That’s really neat that your parents have been so supportive of your music.

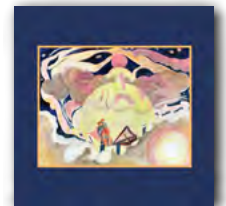
**BY:** Yeah, when I was in high school, my parents bought me an Alice Coltrane CD, and I thought, “This is cool. I don’t know what she’s doing, but I want to do that.” So even in high school I was curious beyond what I was learning. I wasn’t pulled toward a specific genre, but I knew I wanted to do more than the standard classical rep. This Handel concerto was fun, but I got nervous playing in front of the orchestra. I don’t like being singled out. I’m a middle child. And I’m awkward. And I’m shy. I still get nervous. Nerves are real, and people don’t like to really talk about it. But it’s a real thing. Why do you think I have a band? [Laughs]

**HC:** So is the collaborative nature of jazz something that appealed to you?

**BY:** When I was in college we had practice cells, you know. [My future partner] Dezron’s [Douglas] practice cell was directly across from me. So I remember learning two pieces—Grandjany’s *Children’s Hour Suite* and Ravel’s *Introduction and Allegro*—and one day Dezron knocked on the door and he was like, “Why are you playing it like that?” I said “What do you mean *like that*?” He said, “You’re playing it too fast. That’s a beautiful melody.” Then he just started to sing it the way he wanted to hear it. He’s like, “If you slow it down, you can actually *hear* the melody and the beautiful harmonies. There’s so much music in there, and it’s going so fast.” I’m like, “But Grandjany plays it so fast on his recording.” Dezron says, “But you can’t hear it.” I held on to that after college. I started to develop a different perspective on phrasing and how I want to hear things. For my senior recital, I did all the required rep, and I also put a jazz standard and a Luther Vandross tune on the program. And my teacher, Rebecca Flannery, was supportive of that.

**HC:** It sounds like you had good teachers throughout your education.

**BY:** In college, I would audit classes in our incredible jazz department. I would sit in the masterclasses and in the ensemble class-



Force Majeure, 2020



es. The director of the program (the department's actually named after him, the Jackson McLean School of African American Music) embraced me with open arms the day I got there. He really opened up a door for me to just sit and absorb.

**HC:** In December, you and Dezron released an album you created during the early lockdown in New York, *Force Majeure*, what a perfect album title. Tell our readers how this album came to be.

**BY:** In short, Dezron and I were scheduled to do a concert at Columbia in March. Like everything else in the world, it got canceled. We were joking that every time we got a call for a cancellation last spring everyone's citing that freaking term in the contract. So when our Columbia concert was canceled we thought, why don't we just do the concert anyway. We could just do it here in the living room. We could stream it on Facebook. We didn't plan on doing it more than once. But we realized what people were going through during that first livestream and the feedback from people. They were saying stuff like, "You just gave me this music during my lunch hour, and it fixed my whole day because I've been so depressed." People were struggling. They needed this. The concerts sort of became an obligation. We would continue to do it at 11

a.m. on Friday mornings. We called it brunch, and we'd have coffee, and we'd play stuff we had never practiced or rehearsed. It was just like, "Let's try this. I love this tune. My mom likes this one. Let's do this for someone's birthday." It was really raw, really natural. Sometimes in the background, you could hear the sirens of the ambulances going to Mount Sinai [Hospital], which we live near. As the year progressed, it turned into these civil rights protests coming down our street. There were these super dark moments where the music became healing for our listeners and for us. We didn't even know what else to do. There were times that we did not feel like doing the Friday brunch, but people were asking, "Hey, are you coming on today?" And we're like, "Oh, gosh, alright, I'll get dressed." It was a struggle.

**HC:** So how did these weekly livestream brunches turn into an album?

**BY:** I had recorded all of these Friday brunches on my iPad or my phone, whichever we streamed on. I recorded it directly. There's an indie label in Chicago called International Records that we had both worked with before. They asked if we wanted to release these brunch recordings. My answer was an enthusiastic yes, because I want to leave this pandemic was something tangible. I had no idea

that it would get the reach that it's getting or else I would have maybe at least tuned my harp. [Laughs] It is raw. It is real. You can hear Dezron shouting a chord because I don't know where to go, or us bickering, or the ambulances going by.

**HC:** So you recorded this album with one mic, on your iPad?

**BY:** Yes, that's it. We did it to memorialize that moment between March and June, and we decided to release it in December.

**HC:** It's like a time capsule of this incredible moment that would be hard to fathom if you didn't live through it. Was it a hard decision to release this recording?

**BY:** No. They approached us about doing it early on, and we knew it was so special that we needed to capture this. Over time, *Forbes* covered it, the *Wall Street Journal*, NPR. So many publications jumped on board, and it had such a wide reach that people started to tune into even the old livestreams. I didn't know how to record these; there was a learning curve, both visually and with the sound, but people weren't there for that. They were there for the experience. We weren't just playing; we were talking—talking about what's happening and how we're feeling and interacting in real time with people in the chat box. Dezron would just run his mouth, and I would respond to what I was seeing. Actually, you hear me in the first track yelling, "Hey, Natasha! Hi, Eleanor," in the recording. I'm just talking to my friends I see watching the live feed. I didn't think twice. But it's real and it isn't a lie.

**HC:** Where can folks get a hold of this recording?

**BY:** Bandcamp, iTunes, Apple Music, anywhere you buy your music, you can get it.

**HC:** We haven't even talked about a few other things that you've had going on this year. You had a commission from the Jazz Coalition. You were named a rising star by *DownBeat* magazine. You were named player of the year of instruments rare in jazz (I love that category) by the Jazz Journalists of America. You've received these awards, you've had commissions, you've got these albums and new teaching appointments. You've had more going in a year of a pandemic, it seems, than most people do in a normal year.

**BY:** The Jazz Coalition commission, like our quarantine album, was something that was born in response to the pandemic. We're

## BONUS TIME WITH BRANDEE

**Uber or Lyft?** Uber.

**Mets or Yankees?** Yankees.

**Giants or Jets?** Jets.

**Nets or Knicks?** Knicks.

**Best slice of pizza in New York?** Ben's.

**If you weren't a harpist, what would you do?** I'd be a nutritionist.

**Your most used emoji?** That shrugging "I don't know" emoji.

**What's the last album you bought?** Cassie Watson's album *This Appears to Disappear*. I was her first teacher, and I bought her album that came out in August. I also bought Maeve Gilchrist's new album.

**What's your secret talent?** My macaroni and cheese.



photo by Erin Patrice O'Brien

**Heels or flats?** Flats.

**Favorite app?** Patreon.

**What's the best borough?** I'm gonna have to say Manhattan. I mean, I'm in Harlem, which is not a borough, but I'm happy in Harlem.

**Where's your favorite place to play?** Electric Lady Studios.

*Pictured above: Brandee Younger performs with saxophonist Ravi Coltrane at one of her album release shows at the Blue Note in New York City.*

so fortunate for the board of jazz presenters and jazz lovers who put this initiative together. It awards musicians with the resources we need to produce and create during the pandemic.

With *DownBeat*, I had been nominated a number of times before, so that wasn't out of the blue, but the Jazz Journalists' Award is one that I did not expect at all. I was really humbled to receive both of these awards.

**HC:** With everything that's happened this year, have you had a chance to stop and realize, "Hey, I made it. Look where I am."

**BY:** Maybe before the pandemic... [Laughs] As we all know, it's hard being a full-time artist. You're always working; you're always hustling to get to the next thing, and the next thing, and the next thing. The measuring stick that you use to determine success is really up to what you consider success to be. With the pandemic, people ask me, "How are you doing?" I'm like, "Well, I'm not evicted. I'm not in a hospital. My parents are cool. So I'm cool. Right?" It does make you sit and think about what matters right now. No one's getting dressed, so clothes don't matter. Nail polish doesn't matter. The only other thing that matters is those blue light blocking glasses. [Laughs] So the pandemic really puts things into perspective.

**HC:** Let's talk about being a freelancer in New York. There's no class you take to learn how to make it as a freelance harpist there.

**BY:** The freelancing scene in New York definitely seems to have changed, starting with my generation. All of the musicians of my teachers' generation and older played on long-running Broadway shows and then had fabulous recording careers. They're still surviving off the residual recording sessions. When I was studying with Susan Jolles, she told me that [her teacher] Grandjany placed her on a show right after she finished school. Then my generation comes looking for those same opportunities, but they're just not there anymore. Gone are the days when your teacher put you in these spots. Thank God, I got the hustle in me, and I was never that finicky about the type of work that I took.

**HC:** That's so important, right?

**BY:** Whether it was an orchestra job, or playing in a coffee shop, or playing some genre I had no business trying to play, I tried everything.

**HC:** What have been your biggest struggles, your moments where you thought to

yourself, what am I doing?

**BY:** I think I can speak for almost any harpist in the New York City area—it's physical. You're always hustling, physically. It's the physical act of getting the harp to and from your gig, especially when the gig is in Midtown. You can't just pull up and unload your harp into a building and set it up and then go park. You have to unload, maybe beg the cop to just not look at you for 60 seconds while you wheel the harp inside and beg the doorman to watch your harp for a minute so you can go put the car in a parking lot. What I've done for the past two years is Uber, which makes life easier since you don't have to worry about parking, but you still have to do the loading. Needless to say, you have to travel very light. I have a backpack and a harp. That is what I've had to downsize in terms of gigging.

**HC:** You've played a lot of cool gigs. Can you talk about some of your favorite musical experiences thus far in your career?

**BY:** Well, when I played Alice Coltrane's memorial in 2007, the *New York Times* described it as my introduction to the music scene in New York, which is funny because I was born here. I'm from here. But whatever. That was a turning point for my career, though. It was at St. John the Divine Cathedral—a breathtaking place. It was a musical memorial. Everyone who had ever played with her was there performing. I was there, totally out of my league, the first time I had ever tried to play her music, playing it with these masters.

**HC:** Wait, at Alice Coltrane's memorial was the first time you played her music? I didn't know that. Wow, talk about getting thrown into the deep end.

**BY:** I was so nervous, I thought my dress was gonna explode. Then last year I played at the grand opening for the Shed, this new, weird looking venue in the city. The event was called the Soundtrack of America, and it was created and curated by Quincy Jones and Steve McQueen. You always hear big names attached to things, but they're never hands-on. Well, I went to the after party of opening night, and guess who rolls up? Quincy Jones. Now, I see famous people all the time, and I go the other way. I'm not about that. I don't need a photo. I don't like that. But I had to shoot my shot. It was unreal that someone like that was making himself that accessible. There were five or six weeks of shows, and I wasn't playing until the next week. So the

## WATCH

You can watch a recording of Brandee Younger's performance (and Oprah Winfrey's speech) at Toni Morrison's 2019 memorial service on YouTube.

night I performed, there was a meet and greet with Q just for the performers. We sat there and talked and talked. He talked about studying with Nadia Boulanger, and about how he refers to the *Introduction and Allegro* as "the bible." He gave me some of his own tips and tricks. One of the things I'm always preaching to college classes is mentorship and how important it is. But it's dying because kids want to work straight out of school, and older folks don't always make themselves accessible. Mentorship is losing on both ends. So for Q to make himself available to all of us like that was priceless.

**HC:** That's wild.

**BY:** Then last November I played at Toni Morrison's memorial. I had no idea that I was going to be a part of the program. This was a program with all of these famous writers, and Oprah, and *me*. My name is on the same program as Oprah! And I didn't know all of this until I got there...talk about nerves.

**HC:** It might have been better that way, though.

**BY:** It was very special. I played *The Lord's Prayer*—it's kind of mash up of Salzedo's arrangement and some changes I made to it years ago. It wasn't perfect, but that's okay.

**HC:** You mentioned earlier that you didn't know you were going to be doing this when you were a little girl. It's always interesting to look back and see that path your life has taken. For young people who might be reading this interview and be inspired to do what you do, what advice do you have for them?

**BY:** Make sure you form a relationship with a mentor. Sneak into a jazz club or get those standing tickets at the Met—do what you have to do to get close to your heroes. I can't say it enough. We learn things in school, but we learn the good stuff by knowing these people. I'm not saying stalk these people, but do what you have to do to get next to your hero. I think mentorship is huge. Also, don't be afraid to be yourself. If you feel like you don't fit into a box, that's probably a good thing. I wish that I had figured that out sooner. •





# Together. We Create!

## How to build authentic and fruitful relationships with composers

by Rosanna  
Moore

**P**icture the scene: an eager composer comes up to you with their new masterpiece for harp. Despite this being the composer's first foray into writing for the instrument, they poured their heart and soul into it. However, when you look through the part, you find sections that are awkward, notes that have you using your pinky, double sharps and flats everywhere, and passages that are downright unplayable. What on earth is a harpist to do? How do you address potential issues with a composer who has written something that may not be particularly idiomatic? It starts with the harpist-composer relationship—a healthy give and take being the key to fostering a fruitful collaboration.

### RESEARCH IS YOUR FRIEND

Where to begin? I have developed a specific way of introducing composers to the harp if they haven't written for our instrument or have limited experience composing for it. I have honed this approach over the last decade I've spent working through academic degrees, talking with friends, teaching orchestration classes and workshops, and working with professionals.

The first step is to get a copy of Stanley Chaloupka's book *Harp Scoring*. You probably have seen it before. It's a small, bright yellow harp composition bible and can be purchased pretty inexpensively from your favorite retail outlet. I suggest this book to every composer, as a jumping off point to start them on their journey. A newer resource is Yolanda Kondonassis' *The Composer's Guide to Writing Well for the Modern Harp*, recommended to me by

Midwest harpist and composer Amy Nam. I'm definitely going to recommend it to composers. It's quite good and does several things other books don't do (like provide extensive examples of idiomatic patterns, chord shapes that are good and bad ideas, etc). Another resource is the website [harpnotation.com](http://harpnotation.com). Along with these resources, it's important to look at appropriate repertoire that you know works on the instrument and be able to explain to a composer why it works.

London-based harpist and composer Alexander Thomas says, "My advice to budding harp composers—research, research, research. Listen and watch. If you don't know where to start...research." Thomas goes on to point out, "The crux of the difficulty that composers face is that a lot of the music featuring harp that composers are immediately going to be exposed to (i.e. orchestral or chamber works) is written in a way that doesn't always adhere to modern, textbook 'good writing.' How many orchestral parts do we ourselves edit, for example? Lots. Also, in the modern age of logic and electronic composition it's not assumed that composers need the player's consent to sign off the music. The computer will effortlessly demonstrate music that is physically impossible for a real human instrumentalist to play."

### ADOPT A HARPIST

Once you've done your research, you're ready for step two—start an "Adopt a Harpist" program. If I am living in the same area as a composer, I like to give composers not one, but two harp lessons. The first is similar to how I'd give any first lesson—explaining the mechanics



of the instrument, showing ranges, explaining technique, and most importantly sitting the composer behind the instrument so that they can experience the instrument for themselves. Show them which shoulder the harp goes on, show the span of your hand compared to their hands (especially if they have larger hands than you), teach them how the pedals or levers work, and challenge them to change them as quickly as possible so they see how much work and time is exerted changing them. At the end of this session, I always send the composer away with a list of “good” writing, as well as a couple of “bad” examples. (*Flying Dutchman*, I’m looking at you!) Giving composers the opportunity to experience the physical demands of the instrument helps drive home the point that the harp is a unique beast.

This sentiment was echoed by Ore-

gon-based composer Evan Henry. “When you’re first starting off, there is a very strong temptation to treat the [pedal harp] like a piano,” he says. “I think that’s a really easy mistake to make, not just because harpists use four fingers instead of five, but because the registration works totally differently. The

middle-lower register of the piano—that range from middle C down about two octaves—tends to sound pretty clear, whereas on the harp the notes are more likely to bleed together and it can easily become very muddy. I regularly bring things to a harpist to hear them, because I’m still never quite sure if something is going to work in that register or not. If you don’t already have a friend who is a harpist, you should go get one because it really helps to be able to hear things. I guess that’s the axiom of learning to write for any instrument: you need to be able to play it (or at least have somebody nearby who can) in order to write for it.”

After my adopted composer’s first draft is complete, I give them their second harp lesson. Again, I will sit them behind the instrument and show them why something doesn’t work. Take, for example, fast, repetitive notes in the bass of the harp akin to the piano part of Schubert’s *Erlkönig*. Not only is that a re-

petitive strain injury waiting to happen, but it just won’t sound particularly good given the register. Or perhaps they’ve asked you to change 100 pedals in the space of two beats. By sitting the composer behind the instrument, they gain a hands-on perspective. Having the composer change the pedals or having them create a certain extended technique with the sound they want illustrates why something won’t work. By the same token, if the composer can move the pedals or create the sound that you’ve said is impossible, maybe give it a go. An example of this was with composer and conductor Duncan Ward, who I collaborated with when we were both students in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. What made this youth orchestra unique was the addition of a composer’s course for young writers. These young composers had been challenged to write harp en-

semble pieces, and Ward brought in a work with a particular style of knock notated in the part. Our instructor claimed that the technique couldn’t be done, but allowed Ward to see if he could recreate the sound. Lo and behold he did, and the knock stayed in the piece. Moral of this story? Be open minded, so long as it won’t damage

either our bodies or our instruments.

Arizona composer Kincaid Rabb offers some advice to his peers. “Yield to the performer. They’re right. Don’t make your performers do uncomfortable things, and less is more when it comes to writing for harp, especially in solo or exposed contexts.” This is comforting for harpists to hear. By a similar token, British composer Paul Patterson says communication between composer and performer can go a long way. “My harp pieces are quite challenging, and players often need advice about the overall effect I’m trying to achieve,” he says. “So in rehearsals, explaining the sound or color or rhythmic direction is very helpful, and receiving thoughts from the players will improve the practical element for the harpist.”

#### THE COLLABORATIVE MINDSET

Collaboration is a two-way street. Everyone is different, and I’ve found that my pref-

“ Giving composers the opportunity to experience the physical demands of the instrument helps drive home the point that the harp is a unique beast. ”



harpist and composer Alexander Thomas



composer Evan Henry



composer Kincaid Rabb

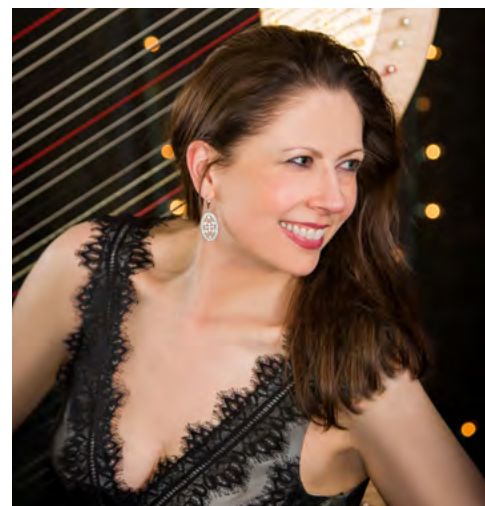




composer Paul Patterson



harpist Eira Lynn Jones



harpist and author Yolanda Kondonassis

erence of having a truly collaborative relationship does not work for everyone. Both parties must be upfront about their expectations for their working relationship at the beginning of the process so that there are no surprises (a contract is also useful for this, which we'll discuss later). Eira Lynn Jones, head of harp at the Royal Northern College of Music, notes that the amount of collaboration varies depending on the situation. "It can be empowering, for both parties, to let the composer have free rein," she says. "On other occasions, I want to be involved, and the close dialogue can lead in directions that neither of us would have thought of. So being open is essential." Yolanda Kondonassis, who literally wrote the book on harpist-composer collaborations (*The Composer's Guide to Writing Well for the Modern Harp*, 2019,) echoes these points, giving thought to what happens to the piece after the premiere. "How collaborative should the process be? In a word—very," she says. "If a composer is working directly with a specific artist, it is so important to get to know the artist and their particular strengths and to utilize every strong suit they have. That first premiere outing is critical in launching a new work, and if the delivery really makes an impact, everybody wins."

The common goal of harpist and composer is important to keep in mind, says Rochester, New York-based composer Michael Frazier. "Keeping in constant communication with a commissioner is crucial to a smooth and understanding commissioning process. As with anything else, communication helps both parties realize their goal so that both end up satisfied with the result. For me, it would feel weird to not be regularly communicating with a commissioner." An experienced composer for harp, Sean William Calhoun says the collaboration

process varies, depending on the performer and also on how ambitious or unconventional the piece is technically. "If it's a pretty straightforward piece, communication may just be occasional progress updates and after it's delivered, answering questions if they come up," he says. "If it's more unconventional or demanding, that requires frequent checks on notation or playability."

Not everyone is as collaborative though, and everyone has different ways of working. Evan Henry says his comfort level for communication depends on how fast he's working on a project. "Sometimes I spend two months writing something, during which time I won't say any-

thing. Other times I send it out bit by bit for feedback, or I might send out a big chunk or movement every week for a month and then retreat under my rock to finish the last 20 minutes for a year. Truth-

fully, I have no consistent answer to this question. Normally it's after I 'finish' a piece that I begin to speak extensively with the performers about it, and even then it's important to leave some time for them to work on the piece alone. After that period we can both begin to make changes as necessary, and that might even be after an initial performance. Composition, for me, is a bit like the foundation of a house. The composer lays the foundation, then the musical collaboration with the performer becomes the house that everybody sees."

#### WHO TO WORK WITH

Composition collaborations can come about in many ways. Maybe you have a project in mind and are looking for a composer. How do you find the right fit? "I will choose composers whose music I've been inspired by or whom I've already worked with," says Eira Lynn Jones.

“How collaborative should the process be? In a word—very.”  
—Yolanda Kondonassis

“I need to have complete trust in them if I am commissioning. I asked [harpist and composer] Esther Swift to write a piece for solo harp for me to premiere at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival. It ended up being a tribute to the Scottish harpist Helen MacLeod: a former student, friend, and duo partner who sadly died in a car accident just as we started the project. Esther knew and admired Helen and managed to capture Helen’s soul and zest for life.”

Fellow harpist-composers Amy Nam and Alexander Thomas add that they are often gratified, honored, and excited to work with harpists on a project. Nam notes, “Having anyone show an interest in my work is gratifying, but especially other harpists, because I very much want to contribute meaningful work to the harp repertoire. And, when other harpists play my works, it means they find value in them—they aren’t doing it out of ‘pity’ because I couldn’t find a harpist.” Thomas adds, “It is the biggest joy when your music to speaks to other people—the fact that they want to explore it is also reassuring that it makes sense and says something meaningful. As a creator, it is probably the ultimate thrill to hear something you’ve written take on a life of its own and be interpreted in performance. You set it free and can finally observe it rather than being stuck inside it.”

Harpist and composer Hannah Lash, who teaches at Yale, was also enthusiastic about other harpists playing her works, though she did add, “Of course I have very decisive ideas about how my music should be played, so I

“Composition, for me, is a bit like the foundation of a house. The composer lays the foundation, then the musical collaboration with the performer becomes the house everybody sees. —Evan Henry”

like to have a recording of myself available for people. I believe very fully in the poetry of music...the dance of it, the obligation of the performer to understand beyond the page’s surface how the piece works, and to bring all their musicality and imagination to bear. I think oftentimes when musicians play for living composers, the impulse is to be almost slavishly literal to what they see notated. You would never want to play Bach or Schumann that way.”

Interestingly, I am always more nervous before a first meeting with a harpist-composer than I am with a composer who doesn’t play the harp. But they truly do understand our instrument, even if something is tricky, right? Not so. They too can fall into traps when trying to express what is in their mind. Amy Nam says of her concerto *Somewhere to Elsewhere*, “In the past, I’ve pushed myself to do the things I wanted compositionally despite their being problematic for the instrument. For instance, the cadenza of *Somewhere to Elsewhere* spends significant time in the low register of the harp. Consequently, I got back pain if I practiced it very long. This is something I now try to avoid.” It is humbling to know that the harpist-composer is not immune to some of the same writing pitfalls that other composers face.

## COLD CALLING?

Now that we have talked about the collaborative process with those that we know, what about cold calls? This doesn’t necessarily mean someone contacting you out of the blue (though that has happened on a number of occasions). But it could be someone who isn’t already a close colleague. “When I’m interested in working with a new performer, I try to approach them with an interest in knowing more about them both as a person and a musician,” says Michael Frazier. “Having some sort of connection with them makes the entire process of putting music together much more rewarding, especially when introducing performers to my own music. Knowing about the musical interests and philosophies of someone new can inform and curate the overall music-making process, and my personal experiences have always been so much better in the end because of it.”

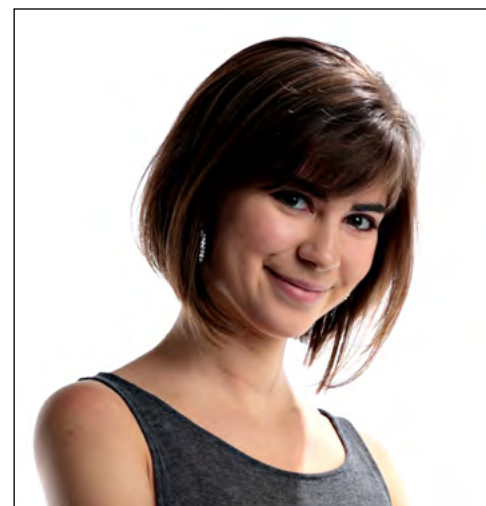
Most composers like to know a person in some way before they write a piece for them, in the same way that we may approach a composer because of the way they have written another work, even if it isn’t for the harp. However, Eira Lynn Jones adds, “I am delighted to receive requests and consider it a real treat to explore new works. I am always honest and explain what my interests are. I



composer Michael Frazier



composer Sean William Calhoun



harpist and composer Amy Nam



“...when musicians play for living composers, the impulse is to be almost slavishly literal to what they see notated. You would never want to play Bach or Schumann that way.

—Hannah Lash

”



harpist and composer Hannah Lash



harpist Olivia Jageurs

ask to have a session with them too so that I am clear about their musical intentions, and then they can answer my questions...I always have a lot.” Yolanda Kondonassis echoed similar sentiments when working with new composers: “I don’t have a composer ‘type,’ but I need to like their sound world, and I do a bit of research on their working style.” This is a true sentiment that harpists must also adhere to. If you are not sold on a composer’s work, make suggestions of a colleague who may be more attuned to working with them.

### SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Now that you have found your composer and decided to work together, what’s next? A contract! Yes, even if this is something as simple as an email between the two of you outlining the agreed-upon work, timeline, and performance commitment, you need a contract. Contracts should include details such as fees, performance dates and rights, and dates of delivery. Even if you are agreeing to work with a friend in college, it is vital that all parties are on the same page with what is expected—especially payment. Harpist Olivia Jageurs is the founder of the innovative project 15 Second Harp—where she performs and posts to social media 15-second clips of original compositions for the harp. She says that this is key to finding the right composer for a project. “The main thing here is money, and you need to be straight up with each other about this.” Whether you are a student or a professional, respecting your colleagues and their work is vitally important. Paying them appropriately is part of that, at all levels. Appropriate payment can look very different for different situations. A college harpist might pay a fellow student in pizza and coffee, while a professional might be paying another professional for a commission a fair fee through a grant or out of pocket. Jageurs says that with 15 Second Harp, the composers know it is an unpaid opportunity, but does come with free feedback from a real harpist in real time for a very short work. This is a great option as a check-in.

What else is important? Deadlines! When a piece doesn’t arrive on time, it is stressful for all involved. Eira Lynn Jones says missed deadlines are a big source of stress for everyone. “When commissioning, I set very clear deadlines, and of course make sure it has some leeway in case problems occur. I make the point that I want to give the piece

my best, so having plenty of time to learn it well is essential. Being clear and direct from the start usually works. If not, and the piece doesn’t arrive on schedule, I have already made clear that the piece will not be included in the program.” Yolanda Kondonassis has similar sentiments. “I think everyone has to be responsible for their own approach, and if it isn’t working, we can’t always fix things for others. The result is that the product suffers. Most great composers that I know are very accountable and know the importance of good practices, especially these days. We no longer live in a time where big allowances are made for the ‘artistic’ temperament.”

### DISASTER STRIKES AND DROPPING THE BALL

We hope for the best in a collaboration, but what if disaster strikes and the piece that has been delivered just doesn’t work or is not what you were looking for? What if something is just uncomfortable and needs to be changed? Sean William Calhoun advises, “If it’s uncomfortable, that’s probably something that needs to be fixed on [the composer’s] end of the piece, unless it’s a hand size issue, in which case we’d figure out the best way to preserve the effect while making it comfortable for that performer (without necessarily changing the piece).” Eira Lynn Jones offers, “It’s always an awkward moment, but my experience over many years has proven the importance of being honest, but kind. Have a good conversation at the start so they know what you want. At the end of the day, you have commissioned this piece, and it’s important that you are also happy. Years ago I asked a well-known composer if he would change the ending of a piece, since in my opinion it didn’t work. He didn’t change it but added two more glorious pages which really gives the piece a fantastic finale. His words were, ‘I was waiting for you to tell me that, as I felt the same.’ Sometimes composers need some honest feedback and that little push from the player. I always smile when I play those last two pages.” Kindness—this is always the key in any collaboration and relationship.

Let’s say the worst happens, and someone drops the ball—either you have a bad day and don’t perform a new work to the standard you had wanted, or the composer hasn’t delivered a part that is workable. One of the heartening things that all composers intimated was that there were rarely bad performances. “I don’t

like to consider any recordings to be bad,” says composer Michael Frazier, “but rather a different take than what I would’ve originally expected. In my experience, I find that recordings that aren’t what I expected are typically the result of some sort of minor error or lapse in focus, and this is more true in the later years of my career.”

Trust between collaborators is key when creating new art. Evan Henry talked extensively on his philosophy of building relationships. “I think this question gets to the heart of dealing with the often impersonal nature of our careers in the classical music biz. Composers and performers are told early on that the music world is highly insular, and that strong connections are an important key to one’s own (often explicitly stated: financial) success. The problem with this is that it en-

courages us to divide our musical lives into a series of worthy and unworthy events. Meritocratic structures quickly become tautological; the rationale of your music business professor becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: to get into the best institutions (read: to be successful), one needs to participate within the best institutions, and to do that, one must know individuals who are in those very institutions.

“I’m not going to claim that fruitful collaborations cannot arise this way—they certainly can, and I can name many—but I think it’s important to remind ourselves of the importance of physical presence and community. Meaning, if you’re in any sort of music community or university—unless you’re really new to the scene or have just been living under a rock—you probably already know and

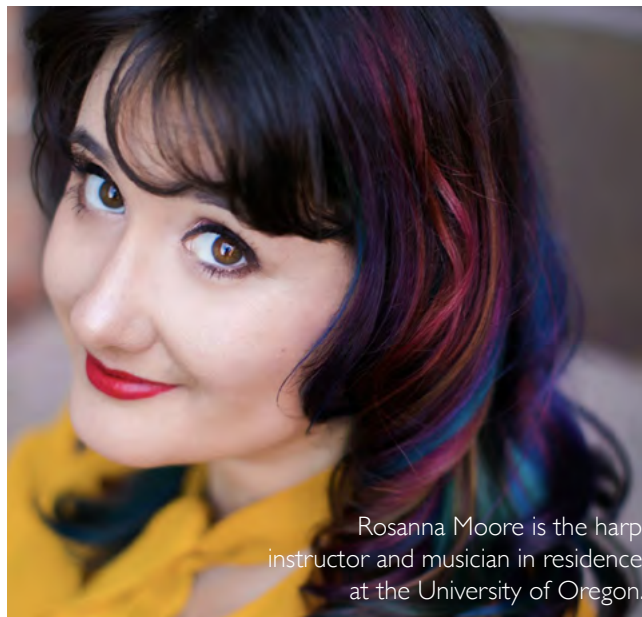
can name at least 10 other performers or composers who are, literally, around the corner from you. I think that if composers spent more time writing pieces for the performers they already know, rather than the ones they think they want to know, we’d get a lot more music of better quality out there faster. So, to directly answer the question: ironically, if you want to build relationships with people that you don’t know, build great relationships with the people that you *do* know, and this attitude will ultimately attract to you the people that you want to know.”

In writing this article, it was interesting to hear just how much composers are bitten by the harp-writing bug. Many of them come back time and time again to write for us. They want to write for us—all we have to do is set up the structures to let them in and explore. •

## A PASSIONATE PROPONENT OF COMPOSERS

Why did I write this article? Well, I often joke that I am a “professional composer collector.” Seriously, I have asked every single composer that I have met since I was 13 years old a) whether they had ever written for harp and b) when were they going to write me a harp concerto? As a result of these years of pestering, I have gained extensive experience with composers, a library of new works (including a few of those pesky concertos), and access to the new music realm in general all the way through to the present day. Additionally, my long-suffering roommate is also a composer and has begrudgingly learned how to write for harp over the years that we’ve known each other. Because of this, I know the benefits of a successful collaboration, and also how to avoid many of the common pitfalls that can occur.

The days of the overbearing composer who will demand anything from an instrumentalist, regardless of if it is feasible on our instrument, are largely history. My belief is that this older mentality led to countless harpists dismissing new music and refusing to collaborate with composers for fear that they would be chastised for not being able to play impossible music, and composers feeling like a harpist would never play anything that they tried to write for them. The time for this type of interaction has long passed. Times have changed and continue to change as more student composers are introduced to the harp earlier in their schooling. British composer Paul Patterson notes, “Most college students know virtually nothing about writing for the harp, so it is very important that students should be given the basics of how to write well for the instrument. When I was head of composition at the Royal Academy of Music, I created a four-

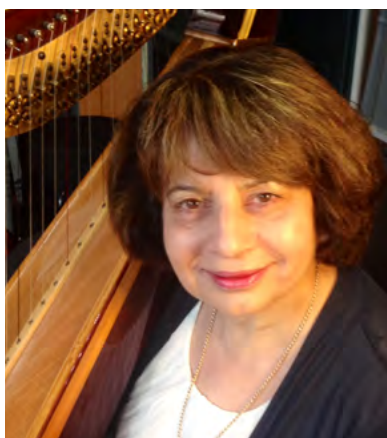


Rosanna Moore is the harp instructor and musician in residence at the University of Oregon.

year schedule to introduce each instrument of the orchestra and solo instruments to the students from a leading player of each instrument. I also set up writing-for-the-harp masterclasses at several composer summer schools and at the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.” Patterson’s music is probably familiar to many readers as he has written extensively for our instrument, including *Spiders* and many other beloved pieces of our repertoire.

It’s my hope that this article will help harpists learn how to foster relationships with composers in an authentic manner that could lead to future collaborations.





# make it happen

Where there is a will, we will find a way

by Skaila Kanga

**A**s we sit at the dawn of a new year, I sit back for a moment to reflect on what the last year has brought to us all.

Time feels as though it is moving a little bit slower. I have a chance to breathe and look back on five decades of crazy work schedules slotted around the logistics of looking after a large family, husband, kids, grand-kids, household, you name it, while striving to improve my musical skills, trying to be the perfect professional at work, creating new compositions, and managing a huge teaching responsibility to generations of young aspiring performers.

“How did I fit it all in?” I ask myself. The answer is simple. I just decided I wanted to do it. We somehow find a way of making things happen.

This brings me to 2020, a year of extreme enforced change for the vast majority of us. The adjustment for the artistic community has been deeply felt far and wide, especially for those of us who rely on live performances, recitals, a wide variety of concerts, orchestras, gigs, and, of course, teaching. One by one, the dates were postponed, then huge seasons of work were canceled without an end in sight. Organizations whose security we took for granted suddenly pulled the plug, many for a year at least. This situation was unprecedented and affected all of us, from the legendary soloists at the top of the profession to the newly graduating students and everyone in between. Concert halls, opera houses, theaters, and cinemas closed. Travel was impossible. Different countries reacted at varying speeds, but the results have generally been the same. For me, the studio life I’d always known was curtailed for two months. Filming stopped, productions halted in their tracks. Planned recording was postponed and often canceled. Studios were closed. No one could see any light at the end of the tunnel.

However, the human race is incredibly resourceful,

and little by little things began to change. The virtual meeting platforms suddenly became a lifeline to continue our work in some altered form of communication. Whole groups of musicians and singers started to work on remotely recorded projects, classical concerts, operas, musical theatre, and pop song releases. Streaming was in!

Gradually as governments started to work out COVID-secure guidelines for businesses, a few venues tentatively opened to a drastic new regime of working practices. In London, two of our main studios reopened in early June. We have always recorded with huge orchestras in intensive long days, often recording a major film in one week. Now things took a lot longer, as the string sections and booth people (harp being one of those) were recorded first, then woodwind another day, brass the following day, and lastly percussion and choir, all vastly reduced in numbers. Suddenly the string

players who always sat in pairs were seated on their own, two or three meters apart from any colleague and playing in masks, spaced out far and wide over the huge studio floor. Being the brilliant musicians they are, they all adapted quickly to this new life, grateful to be playing

“Our passion and initial desire to play music is what will always carry us through life and its challenges.”

once again. Studios adopted strict cleaning and distancing regimes, and fortunately they have remained open. Film companies and television productions have geared up to fill the huge appetite for home entertainment as everyone has been ordered to stay at home for long periods of time. Technology has stepped up to enable this to happen, as our recording sessions are controlled by composers and orchestrators often in Los Angeles, New York, and all over Europe. They run the session and talk to us as if they were next door in our control room. It is a truly remarkable situation. On one project I worked on, there were 30 different locations, all signed in to listen to the recording and comment.

As dawn breaks on 2021, there is a much brighter hope

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In our new article series, *This Much I Know*, we ask masters of their craft to distill the universal truths they have come to understand through a career spent with the harp.

for live music just on the horizon. There has been in the UK a nominal amount of support for musicians and organizations, but of course time will tell whether this has been enough, as many have fallen through the cracks. Artists have always had to struggle through many obstacles and setbacks in their careers, and I'm certain we'll find a way. After all, our world cannot survive without live music.

Music teachers and students deserve a shout out for adapting to the circumstances. Despite lessons moving online, the sound of the harp just doesn't seem to transmit well, with poor tone quality and drop outs in sound badly affecting communication. (The invention of a proper music teaching app will surely result in a vast fortune for some creative IT programmer!)

The resilience of our teaching community has been extraordinary, doing whatever it takes to sustain the morale and dedication of our future young stars. Gradually the music schools and conservatories have reopened with rigorous social distancing, but it's so hard to teach a musical instrument from a long distance away in a big room. In spite of this, our classes have gone ahead with a combination of live and Zoom attendance. The students' morale has slowly returned to us here in London, and with news of vaccine advancement, they will surely have a path ahead for their talents and ambitions.

At the start of the year, I was asked by the Royal Academy of Music to write a piece for solo harp to commemorate the school's 200th anniversary in 2022. I wanted to send a message through the harp about something really important that affects the whole world, so I chose climate change. Last December I recorded the music for Sir David Attenborough's film *A Life on our Planet*, to which he came to Abbey Road and spoke to us all very movingly. In a spare moment on a session that month, I started to write some text which I hoped would inspire me to write the music. I completed the whole task by the end of February, and then suddenly in March we were completely locked down. At first it felt like a holiday for me, but then what? My instinct was to reach out to many friends and former students across the world to check they were all okay. Suddenly the idea that we could all collaborate in lockdown on this composition project was exciting. Over the next few weeks, harpists from around the world translated the narration for the piece—*Beyond the Clouds*—

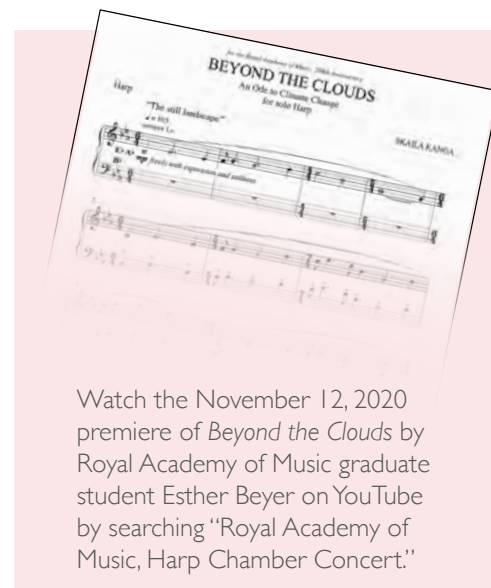
into 12 languages and the book was ready. On Jana Bouskova's Facebook Harp Channel interview in June, the narration was read out by harpists in all the different languages. It felt as if we were holding hands across the world, totally moving and surreal.

Our passion and initial desire to play music is what will always carry us through life and its challenges. The healing power of music for us and for others is something irreplaceable. Stringent COVID restrictions and major setbacks for all artistic performances and education have been a huge challenge financially and mentally for the entire global musical community. But in time this will pass, albeit slowly, and the need for our contribution to people's well-being will only grow. We have to be ready for that day with our practice, our projects, our creative ideas, and our artistry.

The world will need us more than ever. This much I know. •

*Skaila Kanga is professor emerita of harp at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She has enjoyed a prolific studio career, including her most recent film projects in 2020: No Time to Die, Wonder Woman 1984, The King's Man, Black Widow, The Little Mermaid, The Prom,*

*News of the World, For Olivia, Broken Keys, Jingle Jangle, The Witches, Hotel Transylvania—Monster Pets, The Croods—A New Age, The Underground Railroad and a limited run of Sleepless, the musical at London's Troubadour Theatre. You can read our cover interview with Kanga in the May/June 2009 issue of Harp Column.*



Watch the November 12, 2020 premiere of *Beyond the Clouds* by Royal Academy of Music graduate student Esther Beyer on YouTube by searching "Royal Academy of Music, Harp Chamber Concert."



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## passion projects

From Chopin to Piazzolla, new albums ambitiously take on music written for others

by Alison Young

**G**eorge Sand, Chopin's lover, played the harp. And Chopin himself was noted for playing the piano as if his fingers were touching air, rather than depressing keys. While he is credited with inventing an entirely novel pianistic environment, knowing these two facts motivates an artist to investigate the suitability of Chopin's beloved intimate miniatures played on the harp.

In Swiss-Russian harpist Alexander Boldachev's ambitious new album, simply titled *Frédéric*, he answers the question of whether harp adaptations of Chopin can be successful in their own right with a resounding, "Yes!" Boldachev turns to heroes of the past for inspiration—Michelangeli, Pollini, and Horowitz—virtuosi who brought a patrician air to their performances. They were efforts that were filled with atmospheric subtlety and an almost guarded emotion, yet struck the listener as revelations, as though the music was being heard for the first time.

Boldachev admits he knew going in the risks of turning his love of playing Chopin for the sheer joy of it into a recording project. His aim was to create more than a set of "transcriptions," but rather a rethinking of the unique mood of this poetic genius. Was Chopin's style animated, for instance, by the piano of his childhood, the so-called "giraffe" or "harp" piano with exposed strings that vibrated overtones much like the harp itself?

Holding this theory in mind, Boldachev's playing of *Nocturne in E Minor, Op. 72*, takes on a new life, the haunt-

ing melody floating on a languid sea of broken chords, all of one piece as if the tones were touching hands as they passed from one to the next. Playing Boldachev side-by-side with Pollini, the brighter and more expansive timbre of the harp is compelling. Adding to this is the freedom of the notes to ring, requiring no sustain pedal that might distort the sound. Instead, it glows from within, of which

Chopin surely would have approved.

Equally captivating is Boldachev's ease of grand phrase, particularly in the *Aeolian Harp Etude* in which his clean technique deceives the listener that the strings are not plucked but somehow depressed. This is critically important in the mazurkas, seven of which he's chosen for the recording. The risk is that the stressed notes and dance quality become fuzzy in an

attempt to sound "pianistic." Instead, Boldachev maintains a tactile and present quality in his touch, emphasizing the character to great effect.

My favorites include *Prelude Op. 28, no. 6*, in which, for just a moment, I find myself preferring the fragility of the harp, its exposed strings setting the air between soloist and listener vibrating. Likewise, the *Fantasia-impromptu in C-sharp minor* offers challenges on every level, to perform stunning athletic feats of musical prowess while at the same time creating one long, perfect exhale of beauty. Boldachev makes it sound easy.

Long after Chopin died at such a young age, Sand kept her harp in her home, writing Flaubert, "The wind plays my old harp as it pleases. It has its ups and downs,



### FRÉDÉRIC

Alexander Boldachev, harp.  
Calliope, 2020.

Rating: **9/10**



### TANGO DEL CIELO

Anna Maria Mendieta, harp,  
and orchestra. Self-released,  
2020.

Rating: **9/10**

its strong notes, and its faltering notes; in the end, it is all the same to me as long as emotion comes..."

Allowing Chopin to speak *through* his harp, Alexander Boldachev reimagines this familiar music, making it fresh and vivid for our ears.

California native Anna Maria Mendieta was raised on music and dance, playing for years as a featured soloist with Theatre Flamenco of San Francisco. It wasn't until 2004, that she discovered the thrilling world of tango, her gateway drug to the complex and feverish music of Astor Piazzolla. But to make this music her own would require not just arranging music for the harp, but acquiring some new techniques like *chicchara* to mimic the sizzling and aggressive technique of authentic tango orchestras.

In her latest release *Tango del Cielo*, Mendieta, along with a superb lineup of musicians, serves up all the fiery passion of this exceptional culture in superb form. Designed as a multi-media stage show with live dancers, the music arranged by multi-Grammy-award-winning composers Jorge Calandrelli, Pablo Ziegler, and Daniel Binelli transports the listener to the dimly-lit, smoke-filled chambers of mid-century Buenos Aires and the Old World, where the roots of this music can be found.

So it makes sense to include *Asturias* by Isaac Albéniz, where Mendieta displays her natural ensemble gifts, as if dancing with the orchestra. She leads as soloist, always coaxing a close, cheek-to-cheek partnership. Particularly stunning is the addition of castanets and Flamenco stamps and taps to the mix. You'll be afforded a special opportunity to hear Mendieta shine in Ziegler's mesmerizing *Milonga en el Viento*, a work he initially explained would be practically impossible on the harp because of its never-ending chromaticism. It would seem Mendieta never met a challenge she couldn't conquer; she manages 200 pedal changes in order to share this richly elegiac work with us, a centerpiece of the album.

The album opens with *Libertango*, one of Piazzolla's most famous tangos, and one that signaled his break from "music for the feet" and ushered in an era of Argentine concert music. That being said, it will be hard to sit still while listening to this arrangement by the exceptionally talented violinist and leader of Quartet San Francisco, Jeremy Cohen. Cohen's violin styling also shines with raw flamboyance in *Bordel 1900* as well as the dramatic *Jalousie* by Jacob Gade, a work from the silent film era in which Cohen plays a violin owned by the concertmaster of the MGM Orchestra and played in dozens of films during the Golden Age of cinema.

A work almost out of character, as though a palette cleanser, is the stunningly simple yet heartbreaking *Ave Maria* by Piazzolla. Arranged as a harp solo, Mendieta's tender interpretation is dedicated to her deceased father. She's joined midway through by cellist Joseph Hébert, improvising as if answering her prayers for peace. It is one of the most stunning moments of the recording.

Rounding out the album is sheer genius, beginning with a short work *Tientos*, a short work by Raoul Laparra originally written for chromatic harp, an instrument invented in Spain in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The solo arrangement for pedal harp affords Mendieta the chance to contrast the simplicity of the chords with the raucous, needing-to-bust-out quality of Latin music. She uses this short work to lead directly into the finale, an original *Malagueña-Milonga* that brilliantly fuses flamenco and tango for an explosive finish.

A sensational journey of rhythm and sound, Anna Maria Mendieta's *Tango del Cielo* will continue to intrigue over many listenings. ●

*For the past 10 years, Alison Young has turned her highly trained ear towards the latest and greatest releases as Harp Column's recordings reviewer. A professional flutist and radio host, she enjoys discovering new music as well as familiar music played in new ways and sharing with readers her points of view in colorful and exacting descriptions.*

## ALSO OF NOTE:

### *Flowers for Your Heart*

Elisa Thorn, harp and vibraphone; Justin Decries, drums, James Meger, bass. Self-released, 2019.

Elisa Thorn tells us that her two artistic objectives are to "create music that is both abstract and accessible" and to "lead a band with harp in a way that does not compromise sensitivity with its boldness, or aesthetic beauty with its curiosity." Her second album in the Hue series, *Flowers for Your Heart*, presses all those buttons.

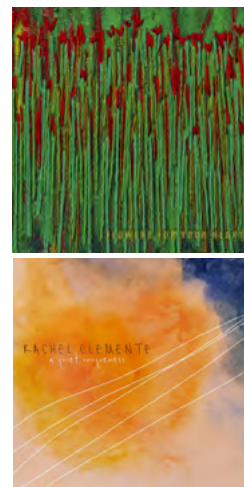
Perhaps learning from her first foray, this time she's less rebellious, showing a maturity and acceptance that the harp can still be ethereal, lovely, even feminine while maintaining an edginess that can't be pigeon-holed. This is especially evident in *Brother* where all of her skills as a rock, indie, and even classical musician meld together. Joined by the responsive, yet unafraid-to-lead drummer Justin Devries and bassist James Meger's grooving grit and natural improvisatory style, this album takes us into new worlds without us even being aware. This is most effectively done in *Mountains*, which engenders a feeling of a journey well worth taking.

A bit of a bonus is *Magnolia* with Laura Swankey's husky and savory mezzo joining the trio, starting with words that soon evolve into pure golden sound.

### *A Quiet Uniqueness*

Rachel Clemente, harp. Self-released, 2018.

Always taking my breath away is New England-based lever harpist Rachel Clemente, her unrestrained joy conspicuous in every note she plays, as if a gift given freely. In *A Quiet Uniqueness*, Clemente offers up a scintillating collection of new works in the traditional Celtic style guaranteed to sweep away the blues. Clemente's natural buoyancy is demonstrated at the outset with *Cavers of Kirkcudbright* by Mike Vass, a bright light on the Scottish music scene. In the original tune *Countryside Quiet*, Clemente invites fiddlers Chloe Bryce and Madeleine Stewart to provide a jaunty accompaniment, finally breaking out into surprise vocals like a sun shower. Exceptionally rendered is Brian Finnegan's *Morna* for two harps, Becky Hill as if a twin sister in their ensemble. The short album ends with Eyler Coates' lovely work of fusion, *The Old Bard of Stilligarry*, written for the Scottish Harp Society, wraps up the CD with a bow. ●







# valuable editing

New transcriptions put some classic repertoire within reach for more harpists

by Jan Jennings

Carl Fischer has published a new collection, *Marcel Tournier, 10 Pieces for Solo Harp*, edited by Carl Swanson. Tournier's greatest contribution to the harp world was the vast number of gorgeous compositions he wrote for the instrument. But as Swanson points out, many of Tournier's pieces are problematic because they require considerable arranging and marking before you can play them. The result is that some of this music is not played frequently today or played mostly by harpists taught in the French tradition.

Swanson has selected 10 of Tournier's most beautiful pieces and edited them so that they are more readily playable. The pieces are "Au Matin," "Offrande," "Vers la source dans le bois," "Berceuse russe," "La volière magique," "L'éternel rêveur," "Clair de lune sur l'étang du parc," "Lolita la danseuse," "Cloches sous la neige," and "Jazz Band." There is a preface that explains the goal of this publication, a little history, and some information about interpreting the music of Tournier.

Why should you get this book? Aside from the fact that Swanson has assembled several of Tournier's most interesting pieces in a variety of styles and levels of difficulty into one convenient book, he includes all enharmonic spellings so that the music is printed the way it is actually played. He clearly indicates which hand is used to play each passage as well as some suggested fingering. Unlike most of the original publications of this music, pedal changes are included as well as pedal diagrams and pedal shorthand to make practice and memorizing easier. He includes a glossary with translations of all the French words that help the player to interpret the music correctly. There are also descriptions of each piece explaining what the music

depicts and additional notes for performing and understanding the music.

In short, using this book to learn these pieces is as valuable as having a lesson with a teacher familiar with Tournier's works. This book represents only about one-tenth of Tournier's music, so let's hope it is also only the first of several volumes that Carl Swanson will edit for us.

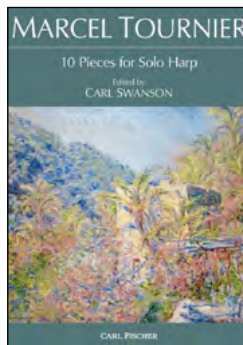
Josh Layne has a new, self-published book of seven pieces he transcribed for intermediate to advanced lever harp. The first four selections in *Transcriptions for Lever Harp, Volume 1* are Baroque pieces written for keyboard instruments. The last three were originally for pedal harp. You will need at least 34 strings and a full set of levers, with the harp to E-flat. Fingering suggestions are included throughout.

The book begins with an explanation of signs. There are also notes on each piece just before or after each transcription. Lever changes are indicated by extremely tiny diamond-shaped notes, most of which likely would be missed were it not for the letter name and accidental

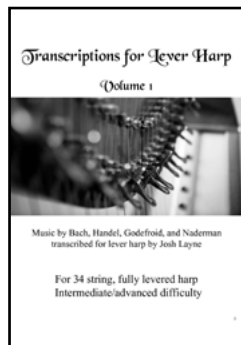
with a line drawn to the diamond. Keep a highlighter pen handy, especially if you have less than perfect vision!

Two of the pieces, the "Aria" from Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Naderman's second sonata, require tricky lever changes with the right hand.

Layne uses some creative accommodations for lever harp. He moves the left hand up an octave (e.g., in m. 28 of the "Aria") to make it easier and for clarity of sound. He omits some left hand notes or sometimes substitutes a chord for what was an arpeggio in the original (e.g., in m. 21 of the first Naderman sonata) to allow the left



Left: Swanson has selected and edited "10 of Tournier's most beautiful pieces...so that they are more readily playable." Right: Josh Layne's "inventive arrangements introduce some beautiful and previously unplayable music to the lever harp."



hand to move levers. Occasionally he omits notes to avoid an accidental altogether. There is even a spot on pages five and six of the first sonata where all the necessary lever changes would have been impossible, so Layne eliminated the lower lever change, but left the note in. The result was an octave where the upper F is sharp and the one below it is natural, all in the same beat. He suggests that if you don't emphasize it, it sounds fine. He's right—it goes by so fast it's barely noticeable.

Layne moved the opening inversions in the prelude of the first sonata down by one inversion to accommodate lever harps that don't go as high as a first octave B. Layne also includes only the first five of the 10 variations of Handel's "Chaconne" from the *Suite in D Minor* HWV 448, and further takes the liberty of changing the order of variations four and five.

The audience isn't likely to know the difference as a result of these resourceful remedies or changes, and none of these adjustments are objectionable unless you are a purist.

The rest of the selections not previously mentioned include J.S. Bach's "Tocatta in D Minor," "Prelude no. 1" from the *Well-Tem-*

*pered Clavier* (also Bach), and "The Last Rose of Summer," by Godefroid. As a bonus, Layne includes the accompaniment to "Ave Maria" at the end, which is the same as the "Prelude" with a few minor differences. He clarifies that it does not include Charles Gounod's lovely melody to "Ave Maria."

The book is only available as a PDF at this time. If there is anything missing, it would be the suggested tempo for each of the pieces.

Layne's inventive arrangements introduce some beautiful and previously unplayable music to the lever harp. •

*Jan Jennings has been the music review editor for Harp Column since 1993. She is an active freelancer and teacher, and is the author of The Harpist's Complete Wedding Guidebook and Effortless Glissing. Email her at mail@harpbiz.com.*

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Photo: Rebecca Finch



## learning on the job

**M**y first gig was a birthday party on Long Island, three hours away from my home in rural New Jersey. I had never moved the harp by myself before, but I was brimming with all the eager confidence of the young and inexperienced.

It was pouring rain the day of the gig, but I was dressed and ready half an hour early and feeling great until the light failed to come on when I opened the car door. Sure enough, the battery was dead. Trying not to panic, I grabbed the phone to call my parents, who were traveling out of state. "Hi, Dad. How do you jump-start a car?"

My dad walked me through the process over the phone while my mom hid in the next room, trying not to listen as he warned me not to spray battery acid in my face. She urged me to ask our neighbor for help, but considering he had gotten stuck in a tree for four hours earlier that summer until we got him down, I suspected I was better off on my own.

Trotting between my family's two cars in my gown and high heels, I succeeded in re-viving the harpmobile. Next, I got the harp safely down the steps and into the car despite the torrential rain. Now half an hour late, I was ready to go.

After three hours of driving through the ceaseless downpour, I arrived at the venue. Due to the rain, the party had been moved under a banquet tent with hardly room enough for the tables, let alone the harp. I found the only available corner, set up, and began to play.

Ten minutes in, I felt a small stream of water pour down onto my head. I looked up to discover that I was sitting under a weak point where the tarps met. They gradually filled with water, which would unload on me at regular intervals. It wasn't long before I had a black puddle on my skirt from the mascara now running down my face. I was beginning to feel seriously underpaid.

When it was over, the birthday girl thanked

me profusely for my performance, although she admitted hearing almost nothing over the rain pounding on the top of the tent.

Since that first gig, I have learned the importance of contracts, how to load my own harp, and how to value my own services. Still, I have never returned to Long Island. ●

—Heather Hills

Raleigh, North Carolina

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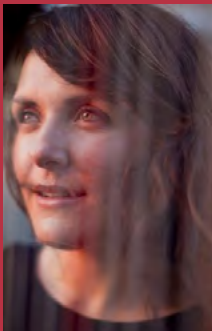
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**Camac Athena EX**, \$14,000. Mahogany finish. 7-8 years old. Excellent condition. Strung and regulated with Premier gut up to 00G. Regulation kit, 3 piece transport set, dust cover, American Harp Cart, spare strings for octaves 0-3 included. \$18.9k new. Located in northern VA. Contact: Roger, [rgclarinet@gmail.com](mailto:rgclarinet@gmail.com)

**Camac Clio 44 EX**, \$10,500. Maple finish. Built in 2000. Early Clio in VG+ condition. Regulated and restrung in 2020, clean bill of health. This model is lighter than the current models, voice is richer. Cover and dolly included. Contact Randall, [randall@musicallyyoursnc.com](mailto:randall@musicallyyoursnc.com)

**Camac Vendome**, \$17,950. #K112, mahogany finish. 47 string concert grand. New in 2012, 10 yr warranty from Camac with 2 yrs remaining. Is in excellent condition with rich buttery sound in the lower register and clean bright sound in the top. Wood is Sipo Mahogany. Included dust, transport, dolly. Location: Southern California. Contact: Cyn-dee, [iloveharpn@me.com](mailto:iloveharpn@me.com)

**Lyon & Healy Chicago 40**, \$9,500. Mahogany finish. Built in 2009. This 40-string harp packs a surprising amount of sound in a small package; video available on request. Kept carefully maintained and regulated, no issues. Dust cover and two-piece transport covers included. Located in PA. Contact: Sarah, [thekingsmusician@gmail.com](mailto:thekingsmusician@gmail.com)

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**Lyon & Healy Style 22**, \$27,000. 2003 Lyon and Healy Limited Edition Style 22 for sale. Includes matching bench and music stand, strings and even music! One owner. Excellent condition. Contact Jen Robertson via email: [jennifer.robertson1980@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.robertson1980@gmail.com).

**Lyon & Healy Style 23 Bronze**, \$27,000. Purchased new in 2012. Exceptionally beautiful, rich sound. Transport cover set and matching walnut L&H bench included. Gently used, great condition. Located in Minnesota. Contact: Haley, [haleyebelden@gmail.com](mailto:haleyebelden@gmail.com)

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**Salvi Arianna**, \$22,000. #5840, built in 1987 (purchased in 1990). It is the property of the retired Principal Harpist in the San Diego Symphony. It was always transported with a base and column protector and is a rich sounding instrument. Contact: Sheila, [arickmeier@yahoo.com](mailto:arickmeier@yahoo.com)

**Salvi Daphne 47EX**, \$15,500. Natural finish. Original owner since 2004. Hardly played but plays so easily. Big, even tone. Strings in great condition. No structural or cosmetic damage. Includes 3-piece transport cover system, dust cover, ergonomic tuning key, harp dolly, adjustable antique stool. Contact: Lorelei Barton, [lkbe2014@gmail.com](mailto:lkbe2014@gmail.com)

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Org Price: \$2685, Orig owner. Pristine condition - lightly played @ home no transport, strings A-plus condition.

Incl: Case, Stand w/ 8' legs, Tuning key, Chronometer, Incidental Caps -C&F. Located in California. Contact: Victoria, [tortor0116@comcast.net](mailto:tortor0116@comcast.net).

**Lorien Elisha 26**, \$1,750. This "Elisha" 26 string harp, in cherry, by Harps of Lorien was designed for use as a therapy harp. It has a warm tone. Excellent condition. The range is 3&1/2 octaves C to G. 8 pounds. Full Truitt levers and padded case. Located in Buffalo, NY. Contact: Karen, [kharmsRx@gmail.com](mailto:kharmsRx@gmail.com)

**Lyon & Healy Prelude 38**, \$3,000. Built in 2000. Regulated and some strings replaced by Rachael Galbraith of L&H in October (she said it's in excellent condition). Natural finish, Bronze Crown and Claw Feet. Original dust cover included. Smoke free home. Contact Laura, [laura.b.rohauer@gmail.com](mailto:laura.b.rohauer@gmail.com)

**Lyon & Healy Prelude 40**, \$4,400. Ebony finish. Beautiful Lyon and Healy Prelude 40 harp. Excellent condition with rich sound. Kept in home by original owner. Cover included. Contact: Alicia, [awedertz@gmail.com](mailto:awedertz@gmail.com).

**Stoney End Braunwen 29**, \$2,500. Stoney End "Braunwen" lever harp. 29 strings - G to G, cherry, full Truitt levers, Schaller pick up with two contact points, high quality bag, tuning key. One owner, purchased in 2015. Higher string tension. Location: NW Pennsylvania. Contact: Ellen, [elleninavalon@hotmail.com](mailto:elleninavalon@hotmail.com)

## Harps for Rent

**Budget Harp Rentals**, Troubadour harps starting at \$40 a month, pedal harps \$100. Located in Jacksonville, FL. [BudgetHarpRentals.com](http://BudgetHarpRentals.com). Contact: Dickie Fleisher, 305-724-4081 or [dickiesan46@aol.com](mailto:dickiesan46@aol.com)

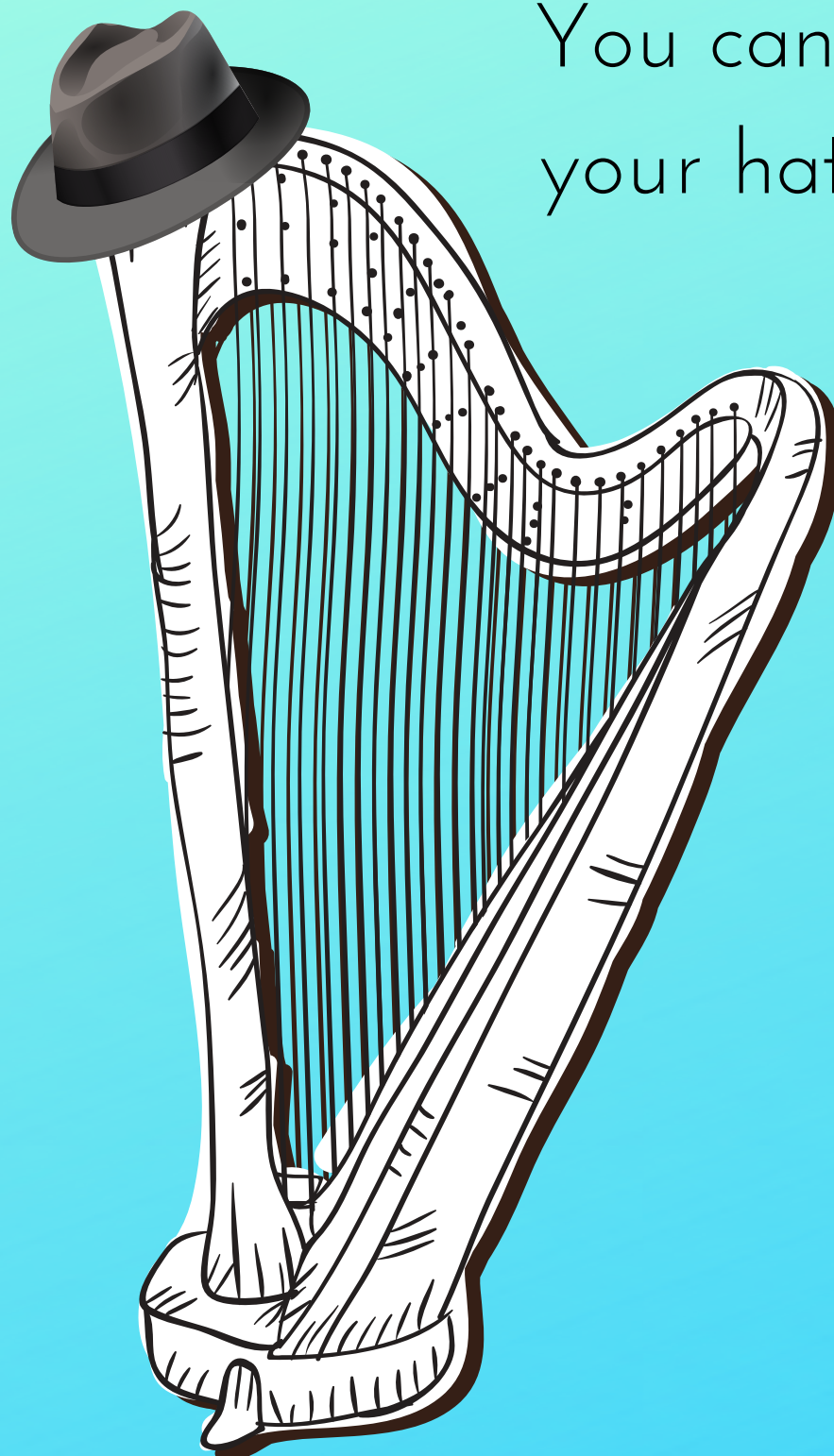
## In Search of

**ISO Harp Dolly**, want to purchase a rare model, please see listing for pictures (<https://harpcolumn.com/harp-column-classifieds/show-ad/?id=251983>). Contact: Judy, [elljudy@aol.com](mailto:elljudy@aol.com)

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