

Harp Column

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practical news for practical harpists

Judith
Liber

plus

breaking bad harp
habits

and

new concertos take
the stage



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from the editor



by Kimberly Rowe

a star is not born

With no winner, we all lose.

We waited to go to print with this issue of *Harp Column* so that we could bring you results of the International Harp Contest in Israel, held at the end of October. “History will be made” touted the competition’s Web site, promoting the much-celebrated 50th anniversary of the prestigious triennial event, which included appearances by past first prize winners such as Isabelle Moretti, Marie-Pierre Langlamet, Alice Giles, Naoko Yoshino, and others too numerous to mention.

Sadly, history was not made, and no first prize was awarded. No one will present New York, London, and Chicago debut recitals. No one will take home the 50th Anniversary Lyon & Healy gold harp specially made for this event. And saddest of all, no-one will be crowned “champion” in what has been one of the most prestigious events in the harp community since 1959.

Following on the heels of the 2008 Lily Laskine Harp Competition, where first prize was also not awarded, this comes as quite a blow to harpists. Caveat: I wasn’t there. I didn’t hear the competition, and I don’t know most of the competitors. But I’m sure I’m like many people in having to ask, “What is going on?” At a time when harp teachers continually tell us that the level of playing has never been higher, is it really possible that we can’t find *anyone* to represent our instrument to the public in the way only a crowned competition winner can do?

“There are a lot of bells and whistles attached to the first prize: debut concerts, concerto performances with orchestras, perhaps recording contracts, and sometimes concert management. The jury has to feel that the first prize winner is up to the challenge and is ready for a career as a solo artist,” commented Carl Swanson on harpcolumn.com, offering some insight into how or why this might have happened. “When no first prize is awarded, it’s because they feel that none of the finalists are ready for that very big step.” Were none of the Israel competitors up for the challenge? Despite spending two years in preparation and mastering a list of repertoire that required four

separate stages and two weeks to present, clearly the jury felt that they were not.

It is far from my place to second guess the decision of this particular jury, comprised of soloists whose playing I can only aspire to. (Visit harpcontest-israel.org.il to read about the jury along with the competitors, repertoire, and prizes.) But I must ask, how does this kind of outcome help satisfy a competition’s goal of promoting the harp, and in the end, is it really fair to competitors? Is it fair to the rest of us?

I feel cheated. The three finalists—along with the 17 competitors who didn’t make it to the finals—all thought they were competing for the prize of a lifetime. And those of us following the competition all thought we were watching the next big harp star emerge.

We’ll never know the exact reasons why this jury didn’t award a first prize. Was it because of notes missed? Was it because a level of artistry was not achieved? Was it because they simply couldn’t agree? We’ll just never know. All we know is that no competitor got the coveted prize, and the rest of us did not get our “star.” We did not get our champion.

The harp world needs its stars. We need fresh, new, young soloists to get out there and promote the harp. We need record contracts, we need debut recitals in major cities, and we even need that specially designed new gold harp! Is there really no-one out there that is capable of doing that for us? I refuse to believe it, and I would like to challenge all the Israel and Laskine competitors, who no doubt feel even more distraught about this outcome than anyone, to refuse to believe it as well.

The good news is that we have another chance in 2010 as we shift our focus to the upcoming USA International Harp Competition this summer in Bloomington. Note to jury: please pick a winner. ●

In addition to editing Harp Column, Kimberly Rowe performs and teaches throughout the mid-Atlantic region and is co-director of the Young Artist’s Harp Seminar. E-mail her at krowe@harpcolumn.com.

talk to us

Do you like something you saw in *Harp Column*? Do you wish we had done a better job? Is there a topic you’d like us to write about? We want to know what you think. Send your letters and comments to krowe@harpcolumn.com. Letters intended for publication should be addressed “To the Editor” and include a contact name and phone number.

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Awards handed out in international competitions



The finalists of the 17th International Harp Competition in Israel are (from l. to r.) Emily Levin, second-place winner Ina Zdorovetchi, and third place winner Remy van Kesteren

Ina Zdorovetchi of Moldova was awarded second prize and Remy van Kesteren received third prize. Emily Levin of the United States was the third finalist. They each performed the Ginastera Concerto for Harp with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and a free choice piece in the final round. This is only the second time in the competition's 50 year history first prize was withheld. There was also no first prize winner in the 1994 competition.

Zdorovetchi received the chamber music prize in the semi-final stage and the Aharon Zvi and Mara Propes Prize in stage one; van Kesteren won the Mario Falcao prize in stage two; and Emily Levin won the Irena Kaganovsky prize in stage two.

CEYSSON WINS MUNICH COMPETITION

French harpist **EMMANUEL CEYSSON** took first prize in the harp division of the 58th ARD International Music Competition held in Munich, Germany, in September. Ruriko Yamamiya of Japan won second prize and Belgian harpist Anneleen Lenaerts received both third prize.

Fifty-two harpists auditioned by tape for the competition, and 34 were invited to Munich to perform. Ten harpists made it to the second round, and the jury chose six to move on to the semi-finals, including Emilie Gastaud of France, Cheryl Losey of the United States, and Ronith Mues of Germany. Ceysson, Yamamiya, and Lenaerts were the three finalists. Four others received special prizes: Lenaerts received the audience prize; Yamamiya received the Busch Brothers Prize and a special prize for the best interpretation of the commissioned com-

NO TOP PRIZE GIVEN IN ISRAEL COMPETITION

Though three harpists made it to the final round of competition, the jury did not award a first prize in the **17TH INTERNATIONAL HARP CONTEST IN ISRAEL** following four rounds of competition over two weeks in October.

position, Losey received the Alice Rosner Prize for the best interpretation of the Carter Sonata op. 11, no. 4; and Gastaud received a Barenreiter Original Text Prize.

The competition is open to different instruments each year. This year's contest included voice, violin, double bass, and harp. The competition's harp jury included Lutz Kohler of Germany, Cristina Bianchi of Italy, Catherine Eisenhoffer of Switzerland, Han-An Liu of Austria, Xavier de Maistre of France, Isabelle Moretti of France, and Naoko Yoshino of Japan.

YING WINS FIRST RUSSIAN COMPETITION

CHEN YU YING of China won the top prize at the first International Harp Competition in St. Petersburg, Russia. Sofia Kiprskaya and Alexander Boldachiov, both of Russia, tied for second prize. No third prize was awarded. Other final round participants included Madeline Blood of the United States, Felicita Marockinaite of Lithuania, and Ren Zilin of China. The week-long contest drew harpists from all over the world.

The competition included three rounds of playing. During the final round, contestants performed the Handel Concerto and the Debussy *Danses* with an orchestra. A jury of world-renowned harpists and musicians, including Jana Bouskova, Anna Makarova, and Natalia Shameeva, selected the winners.

ANDREWS WINS RECORDING AWARD

Jazz harpist **LORI ANDREWS** won an award from the 2009 Just Plain Folks Awards—the largest independent music awards in the world. The song "After Hours," from her latest CD of the same title, won Best Smooth Jazz Song at the awards held in Nashville, Tenn., in August. Andrews played electric harp on the winning track and bass player Bart Samolis is credited with writing the song.

"We were stunned when we heard our names while watching the show streaming live because the competition in that category was pretty steep," Andrews said in a press release.

The competition screened more than 560,000 songs and 42,000 albums in more than 90 genres. A panel of industry professional, peers, and music fans judged the awards. For more information, visit www.jazzharprecords.com

WESTMINSTER APPOINTS HARP INSTRUCTOR

Westminster College recently appointed **LOUISE VICKERMAN** to its faculty beginning with the 2009–2010 academic year. Located in Salt Lake City, Westminster College is the only private comprehensive liberal arts college in Utah. It offers a music minor, and auditions are required for entry into the program.

“I am excited to be part of a growing department with the superb facilities of the Jewett Center for the Performing Arts and Emma Eccles Jones Conservatory available to the students,” Vickerman said. For more information, visit www.westminstercollege.edu.

HARP GATHERING SET FOR MAY

The third annual **HARP GATHERING** will be held May 14–16, 2010 at the Sauder Heritage Inn in Archbold, Ohio. Performers and presenters will include Pamela Bruner, Timother Harper, Frank Voltz, Sue Richards, and Gathering directors Denise and Michael Grupp-Verbon in their duo Tapestry. The event will include concerts, workshops, jam session, harp

ensemble, and an exhibit hall. For more information visit www.harpgathering.com

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In our July/August 2009 news, we incorrectly stated that Nuiko Wadden followed Lucy Scandrett as Principal Harpist of the Pittsburgh Opera Orchestra. Mindy Ball served as the Orchestra’s Principal Harpist between Scandrett and Wadden.

In the Somerset Folk Harp Festival report in the September/October 2009 issue, the photos were incorrectly attributed to John Sheridan. Steve Johnson was the photographer who contributed the photos for the article.

In our July/August 2009 interview with Alfredo Rolando Ortiz, several facts were “lost in translation” and need to be clarified. Ortiz recorded his first 28 albums for Codiscos, not Nicole Records. He received the Codiscos recording contract offer months after starting medical school. The article incorrectly read that the offer was received months after starting his professional career. Ortiz was born in the South American country of Colombia, incorrectly spelled “Columbia” in the article. ●



Top: Emmanuel Ceysson won first prize in the ARD Competition in Munich. Bottom: Lori Andrews won the Best Smooth Jazz Song at the 2009 Just Plain Folks Awards.

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the harsh reality

How to survive a reality TV wedding

by Maryanne Meyer

As we harpists are well aware, all weddings are not created equal. Some take place in beautiful churches, while others require us to brave the elements in outdoor venues. Some rely on tried-and-true wedding traditions; still others push the envelope with a more modern sensibility. And then there are those that are filmed for a nationwide audience through the modern phenomenon known as reality television. My friend and fellow harpist Nadia Pessoa and I recently filmed an episode of *My Fair Wedding* for the WE Channel (Women's Entertainment). Here's what I learned.

1. *Respect The Vision (or at least accept that fact that the Vision is much, much, more important than you are.)*

The premise of *My Fair Wedding* is that at the 11th hour of planning what would potentially be a disastrously tacky, inappropriate, or just plain ugly event, celebrity party planner David Tutera swoops in with his team of professionals to save the day. (This also ensures that everything happens at the last moment and is very stressful, thus making for excellent television.) But the most important thing that Mr. Tutera brings with him is his vision for a particular wedding. For this particular wedding, his vision was a ceremony in—wait for it—heaven. The main components used to create heaven in the Doubletree Hotel in Wilmington, Del., were thousands of roses, an ivory and gold color scheme, and two gold harps, shining above the assembled friends and family. Which brings me to rule number two.

2. *Always, always ask if they are going to put you on a platform.*

We did not do this. Thus, about 30 minutes before the prelude was to begin, Platformgate erupted. Two small platforms had been erected on either side of the aisle. They were big enough to support a harp

and a bench, but too small for a harpist to actually pull the harp back and play it. Scrapping the platforms altogether was out of the question, as it would interfere with *The Vision* (see rule #1). Platformgate sent several wedding planners into a complete tailspin, caused a heated argument between the planners and the harpists (which is the only part of the day I can guarantee you won't see on television, as the cameramen were politely instructed to turn off their cameras), and ultimately was a major reason that the ceremony started an hour late. In the end, the crew was able to scrounge up extra platform-making materials, the platforms were extended, and peace was restored. But perhaps you are wondering why we didn't see Platformgate coming more than half an hour in advance?

3. *Get there early, but don't expect to be at liberty to do anything or go anywhere.*

Not knowing exactly what to expect and needing to rehearse duo music for the ceremony, Nadia and I arrived a solid two hours before the prelude music was to begin. What followed was an afternoon of "Oh! I'm sorry, you can't play right now, we're doing an interview!" and "You can't walk through there; we're filming!" and most importantly, "You can't go into the ceremony room until we're done photographing it!" which was a half-hour before it was to begin. I was literally trapped in a doorway at one point and not allowed to move until an interview was wrapped. Highly insulting.

4. *Rely on professional skills that have nothing to do with what you played on your senior recital.*

Once we were installed in the ceremony room on newly lengthened platforms came the not-so-simple task of playing with someone who is halfway across the room. Nothing I learned in eight years of music

Talk to us

Sounding Board is a place for your opinions and commentaries about any harp-related issue. (Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Harp Column* editorial staff.) If you have an opinion about something affecting today's harpists, tell us in 800 words or less. We'll pay you \$100. Send submissions for Sounding Board to: krowe@harpcolumn.com.

school taught me how to remain synchronized with another harpist across an aisle, on a platform, whom I could basically see but not hear at all through the applause at the end of the ceremony, as we played Bach's Prelude in C Major in unison for the recessional. However, through 10 years of on-the-job experience, I've learned to be flexible and adapt quickly when things don't go as planned. So, when the bridesmaids started down the aisle early, we calmly segued into "Canon in D." And when we played the final chord of the Bach at precisely the same time, still each completely inaudible to the other, I wanted to stand up and cheer!

5. *Negotiate.*

But how do you ensure that you are properly rewarded for your brilliant, professional performance? Television networks, unlike the brides who usually hire harpists, are well versed in negotiating contracts with vendors. Don't just sign whatever they send you. First decide what you want to get out of the gig and work with them to get it. Reality shows like *My Fair Wedding* contract on the agreement that vendors will participate for a reduced pay rate in return for exposure to a nationwide audience. This means you may not get your usual fee, but you shouldn't play for nothing! Nadia negotiated on our behalf and made sure that in addition to the guarantee of at least a "fleeting glimpse" of the harps on air and due credit at the end of the show and on the Web site, we each left with a wad of cash under the category of travel/cartage.

6. *If at all possible, work with good people!*

Obviously, if you take a job like this one, you will have no control over the production company and their relative competence. It's a fair bet to say that they will be experienced and capable at their job but have no idea how yours functions and why it's important. So, being able to work with another musician who is capable, cooperative, and commiserative is a big plus! Not only was Nadia the contact and negotiator for this gig and a strong

voice of reason during Platformgate, she's a wonderful harpist who has amazing sight-reading and improvisational skills, which certainly came in handy due to the last-minute nature of our performance. Also, the long day of filming would have seemed much longer without having a friend and colleague suffering through with me!

7. *Remember, this is television—it's all visual.*

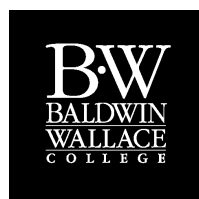
My decisions to wear a less-than-camera-worthy outfit for the first part of the day and to do my makeup later turned out to be not such good ones, as the cameras were on from the moment we arrived, filming such exciting moments as the wheeling of the harps into the ceremony room. (That moment, in fact, was so exciting that we were required to repeat it and be filmed twice.) Of course, our main concern was preparing music to play together and verifying the order of the ceremony, so that we would sound good. The television crew was much more concerned with the way things looked. When the

cameras were rolling during the prelude, I chided myself—why hadn't I bothered to curl my hair? I knew I was going to be on television, after all!

8. *See the big picture.*

At the end of the (very long) day, it was just another gig. Platformgate was resolved, David Tutera was thrilled that his minions had procured two gold harps to complete his Vision, another couple was happily married, friends and family were dancing the night away, and I headed home with a good story, a few lessons learned, and a wallet full of cash. And if my 15 minutes of fame consist of a single shot of me, sans makeup, awkwardly hefting a harp onto a platform and consequently tripping over the row of roses lining the aisle, at least I know it was all in the name of doing what I love. ●

Maryanne Meyer is Principal Harpist with Symphony in C in Camden, New Jersey, and is an active freelance harpist in the Philadelphia area as well as her native Indiana. Season Two of My Fair Wedding airs Sundays at 10 p.m. on WE TV.



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a first

What is the first piece you performed on the harp?



Katherine Newman

"I had only been studying for about eight months, and because I forgot to check where my pedals were set, I began playing with B-flat and E-flat. Bach's Minuet in G thus started out as the Minuet in G-minor! (You should try it; it's really funny!) But I changed the pedals really fast and no one seemed to notice—and that day my learning curve went exponential!"

—Katherine Newman; Huntsville, Ala.



Heidi Tims Hernandez

"The first pieces I performed on harp were 'Twinkle, Twinkle' and 'Soaring' from Betty Paret's First Harp Book at my second-year piano recital. As I'd only had a harp for two weeks and hadn't had any lessons yet, I didn't realize that the lines were glisses in 'Soaring,' so I just played the top and bottom notes! Except for that, it was a perfect performance. I cherish the memory and the video of it!"

—Heidi Tims Hernandez; Tuscon, Ariz.



Lillian Lau

"Some of the first pieces I performed were from the Milligan and Salzedo books. The first important performance was playing *A Ceremony of Carols* with a church choir in middle school. I had no idea I would end up playing that same piece every year. What I remember most is learning what it takes to perform on the harp—moving the instrument, the audience's reaction to the harp, and my mom tying knots to each backup string...just in case."

—Lillian Lau; Chicago, Ill.



Bonnie Mohr



Sivan Magen



Alexander Rider



Ellie Choate



Beth Kolle

"The first piece I performed for a recital was 'Rouet' by Grandjany. I don't remember too much about the recital, so I guess it was ok. What I do remember was a short time later being asked to play for a banquet. It was a cold, rainy night and the harp was placed near a drafty door on a red oriental carpet. All the strings disappeared into the carpet, and the ones I could find were out of tune. I learned a lot that night!"

—Bonnie Mohr; Monrovia, Calif.

"One of my first performances, though not the very first, was playing 'The Swan' by Saint-Saens with my father (who's a cellist) at a memorial ceremony. We were accompanying a former Prima Ballerina of the Bolshoi Ballet who had come to teach in Israel and was dancing her last 'Death of the Swan'—it was extremely moving."

—Sivan Magen; New York, N.Y.

"I clearly remember my first public performance. The piece was a Sylvia Woods' medley, featuring the 'Arabian Dance' from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and the carol 'We Three Kings.' It was a school carol service, and I suppose I had been playing the harp for under a year. I was to open the program, and I was very, very nervous. As any British reader will know, this fair Isle abounds with many ancient, beautiful, and freezing churches. And there's nothing we like better than to hold concerts in freezing churches, par-

ticularly at Christmas time! Is this merely a British phenomenon? I don't know, but the cold totally numbed my poor fledgling fingers, and increased my anxiety—it was like playing under anesthetic! However, I also remember the candlelight, the hush that fell over the audience and my classmates, the beautiful church, and my own sense of pride—a gift to my own spirit at Christmas!

—Alexander Rider; Canterbury, U.K.

“If it wasn't ‘Silent Night’ for the church Christmas pageant, it was ‘The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls’ from Mildred Dilling's *Old Tunes for New Harpists* book, also at church. To this day my father occasionally asks for ‘The Harp That Once Through’ (his idea of an abbreviation), and I actually had a request for it years ago at the Century Plaza Hotel in Century City from a dinner guest who owned an enormous chain of tire stores here in Southern California. One never knows when these tunes will come in handy!”

—Ellie Choate; Lakewood, Calif.

“The first piece I performed was a Celtic melody called ‘The Fair-Haired Child,’ which I had first heard played by a Norwegian band called Bukkene Bruse.

The tune went through a few changes in Viking hands before it came to me, and I put it through more changes—that's the nature of folk music! I love the way the simple arpeggios in the introduction and interlude flow easily from my fingers—it's still one of my favorite tunes to play.”

—Beth Kolle; Seattle, Wash.

“The first piece I performed in front of an audience for harp was a piece called ‘Stars’ by Susann McDonald. I played it for the Wisconsin State Music Association juries. I was 12 years old and I remember dressing up, as if it were for church on Sunday, being particularly nervous, and practicing the whole morning before playing for the judge. I did just fine.”

—Lorna Govier; Tucson, Ariz.

“Oh wow! It was ‘Rock Me Mommy’ from the Salzedo's *Tiny Tales*. I remember Miss Chalifoux watching me play it and saying, ‘Dear, don't rock the harp!’” ●

—Ardis Billey; Cleveland, Ohio



Lorna Govier



Ardis Billey

Got a question?

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What's your favorite opera? Do you have a favorite orchestral work?

Manon Lescaut and *Tannhauser* are both wonderful to play because they have such demanding and emotionally satisfying harp parts. One of my very favorite operas actually has no harp at all: *Rigoletto!* I can't say that I have a favorite orchestral work. How can one choose among Beethoven, Mahler, Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, and so many others?

What's your favorite hall to play in?

I love playing at the Met, which has great acoustics and feels like home to me.

What has been your most memorable performance?

All of the performances with Carlos Kleiber were memorable. His *Otello*, *Rosenkavalier*, and *Boheme* performances are the highlights of my career thus far.

Who is your favorite conductor?

Let me say that my top three favorites under whom I've performed are Carlos Kleiber, James Levine, and Claudio Abbado.

What funny stories do you have from your years as a Principal Harpist?

This is actually a terrifying story: In *Siegfried*, there is a famous moment when Siegfried has finally arrived on the top of the mountain, after bravely coming through the Ring of Fire (the "Magic Fire Music" from the end of *Walkure*) and sees Brunnhilde. He falls in love at first sight and goes to kiss her. At this moment, the six harps alone begin to play alternating arpeggios up to the top of the harp. I was the only harpist in the pit at that moment, the other five had taken a break and lost track of the time. I began to play, trying to manage all the notes myself as best I could. As I was playing, the door to the pit flew

open and the other harpists rushed in, grabbed their harps and joined in. You can imagine my relief at being rescued in the nick of time!

How do you pass the down time in rehearsal?

Often I sit and listen and observe the rehearsals even when I'm not playing, especially when there is a conductor that I find inspiring. Of course, sometimes I read. If there is a long period of time without playing I can sneak away out of the pit. We have a great cafeteria at the Met, and everyone from set designers to stagehands to superstar singers hang out there.

What do you think is the main difference between being successful as an opera harpist versus an orchestral player?

I think as an opera harpist I've felt more freedom to be expressive and soloistic. You have to have a sense of the voice, of breathing and rubato to accompany well. Of course you must have this in solo playing also.

In addition to playing with the Met, you're a soloist with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, you teach at the Manhattan School of Music and the Aspen Music Festival, and you recently finished a CD of Chopin transcriptions. How do you juggle everything?

It's funny to be asked that question. I actually feel that I'm very lazy! I'm always thinking that I should be practicing more, or going to the gym, or cooking instead of going for take-out.

Harp seems to play such an integral role in opera—when you play you really play because often the harp takes center stage, second only to the diva onstage. Is that stressful? Has it prepared you to be a better soloist?

What I find most stressful is sitting for long periods of time and then playing a huge solo (like *Lucia* or *Rusalka*). You must develop nerves of steel! Of course the orchestra and ballet repertoire have these terrifying moments, too. I think playing opera has been so important in my development as a soloist in

that you must be so completely generous and extroverted in expression in opera. The communication of the human voice has had a profound effect on my playing, even though the sound world of the harp is so completely different from that of grand opera. ●

Deborah Hoffman has been Principal Harpist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since 1986. She is also solo harpist with the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York City and a former member of the Pittsburgh Symphony. She pursues an active international career as both soloist and chamber musician. She records for Arabesque Records and recently completed a recording of original transcriptions of Chopin works. Hoffman is chairperson of the harp department at Manhattan School of Music and has been a faculty member since 1997.

Editor's Note

Principal Harp Profile highlights the Principal Harpist of one of the world's great orchestras in each issue. Is there a principal harpist you want to know more about? E-mail rowe@harpcolumn.com.

Louise Trotter



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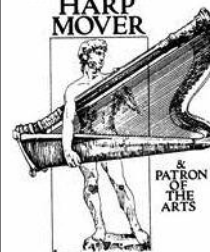
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question: Can you suggest a small, lightweight, affordable amp?



Adrienne Bridgewater

Weighing in at nine pounds and in the shape of a laptop with a flat panel speaker that literally flips up, the Traveler FlipTone v.25 is an excellent choice for a small, lightweight, adequate amplifier. The \$500 price tag may or may not qualify it as affordable.

The FlipTone has two channel inputs, one for your harp and the other for a vocal mic or other instrument. Channel two also accepts a stereo input for your CD or MP3 player. Each input jack accepts either an XLR or quarter-inch input and each has its own volume control.

There are three equalization knobs (bass, midrange, and treble) which control both inputs.

This amp has an effects dial with eight preset digital effects: two reverb effects, two delay effects, two chorus effects, and two flange effects. One caveat—these are very subtle effects. The really nice feature of the FlipTone is that it has a built-in rechargeable battery that lasts five hours. I have used mine at many a golf course wedding ceremony.

The amp comes with a carrying case, so you can literally sling it over your shoulder—no separate trip to the minivan needed! The FlipTone also has a jack that allows the user to connect an extension speaker, as well as a jack to connect to other amplifiers or mixing consoles. It's perfect for a small to medium size room or outdoor event when a bit of a volume boost is all that's needed.

—Adrienne Bridgewater, freelance harpist
Scottsdale, Ariz.



Anne Roos

I use a Crate Limo battery-operated amp, along with an equalizer. This amp is lightweight and small, but it's not inexpensive for a battery-operated amp. However, I've found it to be the best value for the money. It runs for hours on a single charge and has never died on me. It is also efficient for large audiences and for playing outdoors, as long as I get the amp off the ground. I place it on top of an Ultimate Support

Telelock speaker stand. The key to using a small amp is to raise it above the ground so that the sound carries.

As for amps that run on electricity, I have yet to find a great one that is lightweight. They tend to be much too heavy for a woman to lift and require a cart for rolling to its destination once out of the car. I could not begin to lift one of those up to place on top

of a speaker stand by myself. My solution has been the Bose PA system. It is top-of-the-line, expensive, but worth every penny. It makes the harp sound fantastic! After performing for over twenty-five years, I prefer to put good money into equipment and never think about shopping again.

To get the best deal, do a lot of price comparison. Scour online customer reviews. Also, ask other harpists about their experiences with the equipment. You'll want equipment that handles the harp's wide range of notes (standard guitar equipment hasn't cut it for me). The goal is to make your harp sound as good—or better—than it sounds without amplification. Don't settle for less. Taking your time to diligently research what is out there will help you to find the best equipment for your needs at the best price possible.

—Anne Roos, author of *The Musician's Guide to Brides: How to Make Money Playing Weddings*
South Lake Tahoe, Calif.

Talk to us

Do you have a question about playing the harp you want to see here? Do you have an answer to a question we've posed? E-mail mail@harpbiz.com.

Coming Up:

How do you stay afloat and find work during this economic recession?

Although amps that plug directly into a wall outlet are the lightest amps on the market, I prefer amplifiers powered by a rechargeable battery. They weigh a bit more but are far more versatile for the gigging harpist. Being able to set up wherever you want regardless of AC power availability trumps every other consideration. Who likes being tethered to a wall or running long extension chords?

After a few years of using a Carvin Stagemate (34 pounds, 100 watts, 10-inch bass speaker, \$400), I tried downsizing to a Crate Taxi (20 pounds, 15 watts, eight-inch bass speaker, \$250). The Carvin had great sound but weighed a ton. The Crate Taxi was lightweight but the sound was not adequate for the bass range.

Finally I settled on the Crate Limo (32 pounds, 50 watts, 10-inch bass speaker, \$400). This is now my main amp and seems able to handle everything that my 34-string Camac Aziliz can generate. I play large venues and can fill them with those 50 watts of power. Whether or not the Limo would suffice for the bass range



Mike Nielsen

of a large pedal harp is anyone's guess.

I know the AER Compact 60 has a brilliant reputation, sounds great, and weighs only 18 pounds. But at \$1,000 and no battery power, I would still recommend the Limo (or the Carvin Stagemate) over the AER. Still, it might be worth it for anyone concerned about the sound quality of the amps mentioned in this response to actually take their harp to a dealer who sells both AER and Crate products and listen to them in action connected to your harp. ●

—Mike Nielsen, freelance harpist and keeper of the Harplust List, www.weddingharper.com/harplust

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interview

a league of her own



As the International Harp Contest in Israel turns 50, we catch up with its longtime music director, Judith Liber. A music legend in her own right, Liber shares tales from her remarkable career.

by Sunita Staneslow

Judith Liber is in a league of her own. The former Principal Harpist with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO) is a giant among harpists. Both Zubin Mehta and Leonard Bernstein have said that Judith Liber is one of the greatest orchestral harpists in the world. She has worked with the best musicians of our era including Bernstein, Mehta, Lorin Maazel, Itzhak Perlman, Georg Solti, Sergiu Celibidache, Daniel Barenboim, and Claudio Abbado. She has taught some of the world's finest harpists. A pillar of strength and a model of exacting and high standards, Liber has focus, determination, and talent.

I first met Judith Liber in 1985 when I studied with her in Tel Aviv. As soon as I finished my first lesson, I couldn't wait to get home to practice. To me, that is the mark of a great teacher—someone who inspires you to be your best. She is one of those people that can break her neck (literally) and still maintain the same grueling schedule—teaching, traveling, and organizing the International Harp Contest in Israel. I honestly don't know how she does it all. More than 20 years later, it is still hard to keep up with her. She now lives part of the year on Lake Como in northern Italy, but I tracked her down for this interview amid her arrival in Tel Aviv for the birth of her third grandchild, as she was working non-stop for the 50th anniversary of the competition and organizing the arrival of students from Italy for lessons. Oh, and hosting guests and getting a root canal. Up close, she is warm and charming and has a wonderful laugh. She is also a great cook and makes a perfect cup of coffee.

HARP COLUMN: Let's start from the beginning. How did a Lutheran girl from Ohio end up in Israel?

JUDITH LIBER: I had graduated from Oberlin in 1961 and was studying at the University of Illinois for a master's degree. During the summer of 1963, I attended the Salzedo Harp Colony in Camden, Maine. One day, Miss Chalifoux said, "I have something for you." It was a letter announcing an opening for the harp position with the Israel Philharmonic. "I would like to recommend you for the position." Well Israel, for me, was only a Bible story. It wasn't a place

I had ever considered living. I had very little orchestral experience, but I went and played for the world-renowned conductor, Pierre Monteux. I was given *Tristan and Isolde* to sight-read at the audition! At the end, Maestro Monteux said, "You know how to play the harp. The orchestral repertoire you will learn. I will see you in Tel Aviv." I was offered the job and then immediately turned it down! Israel was half way around the world and I was only 23 years old. The audition was in August, and in October I was to begin the fall season. But I looked at the program and it was a symphony of stars. The greatest musicians of the time were performing. My father told me, "Look, you have studied since you were age 5. Don't you think you should at least give this opportunity a try?" Ten days later I was in Tel Aviv.

I arrived on Yom Kippur Eve. I had no idea what that meant. I had read and studied the Bible, but knew little about Jewish culture. I went outside for a walk the next day, and there was a beautiful blue sky. It was the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting, the holiest day of the Hebrew calendar and there were no cars, no people out. Dead silence. It was like I was in some kind of strange film. I started to panic—where are the people? That was my introduction to the Jewish religion and the people of Israel. The next day was different. Everyone was out and the city was back to life.

HC: When did you realize that you had made the right decision to join the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra?

JL: I knew within two weeks that I had found my place in music. The first piece I played was the *Concerto for Orchestra* by Bartok. I realized that I was a soloist. The harp is heard. It is meaningful and significant. I was embraced by and became part of the magnificent sound of the orchestra.

The concert hall was filled beyond capacity for 12 performances of every program. People were literally standing in the rafters. This large, enthusiastic, and

Opposite page:
Judith Liber discusses a Mahler symphony with legendary conductor Leonard Bernstein. "I learned more about music from him than anyone or in any school," she says.

involved public was wonderful. I was so impressed and rapidly learned about the country and the people. The IPO is such an important expression of Zionism and the revival of the state. I adopted Israel and they adopted me. This became my life. I felt blessed and fortunate.

HC: It all sounds so exciting. But, you changed culture and language. What did you miss the most by leaving the United States?

JL: My family! I have three brothers. They all



Liber rehearses the Ginastera Concerto with Zubin Mehta conducting the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in 1985

remain in Ohio. Those were the days before e-mail. Intercontinental phone calls had to be reserved hours or days ahead of time. Contact with the other side of the world rested on letters! I made a promise to bring my children to the States every summer in order to maintain an active relationship with my family. But it still didn't make up for all the major milestones that I missed.

My father died in February 1964 of a massive heart attack, just months after I went to Israel. I went back to Ohio for 10 days. On the return flight back to Israel, I studied the parts of *La Mer* and *Prelude l'après midi d'un faun*, because I had a commitment that went far beyond my contract. The orchestra supported the musicians and we also gave in return. In those early years, known as the golden years of the IPO, we rehearsed long hours—until the concert was ready. And we had even longer tours. I played with a slipped disc, with a fever, and two weeks after giving birth. In the IPO, there was a dedication to the music, the orchestra, and the people. It was a way of life.

HC: The IPO is unusual in its type of management. Please give us a feel for the working dynamic of the orchestra.

JL: The IPO is a cooperative. It is a private orchestra that elects its own management from among its performing musicians. The orchestra decides the salaries, controls the auditions, and the musicians have direct input in running the orchestra, including tours and repertoire. In most orchestras you are just an employee. Not so in the IPO.

HC: Please share a personal example of how you were treated as more than just an employee in the IPO.

JL: One year after I arrived in Israel, I was in a car accident on the way to the first concert of the season. The tendon of my right hand index finger was severed. Before I left the hospital in October, the management of the orchestra invited me to perform the Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto in May with Zubin Mehta conducting. I told them that I might never play again. But the doctors had already explained to the orchestra that if I had enough determination and will, recovery was possible. Putting the Mozart Concerto on the program for the spring was presented to me as an incentive. This support and trust of me was so generous. In addition, the IPO continued to pay my full salary. They paid all the medical bills and brought in a harpist from France to sub for me while I recovered. After experiencing this great generosity and support, I knew that I was with a very special orchestra.

HC: Doesn't the IPO have one of the most grueling schedules in the world?

JL: We frequently have seven concerts a week. Even though there isn't a concert on the Sabbath, there is a Friday matinee and the Saturday evening concert. We had tours lasting up to seven weeks. They were intense tours with different venues every night. That means lots of planes, buses, elevators, and hotels. It was a very romantic job to play with the IPO. People envied the musicians and all this travel, the glamour, and applause. But, it was very, very hard work.

HC: The IPO molded your life as a person and as a musician. You have performed with a dream team of the greatest musicians and conductors of the past half-century. Tell us more about making music with the IPO. How did it change you as a musician?

JL: Leonard Bernstein was my main teacher. I learned more about music from him than anyone or in any school. Who I am as a musician today is greatly due to his concerts and rehearsals. His references to nature, placing style in a historical perspective as he rehearsed a work was both inspiring and enlightening. It was just the whole process of mak-

ing music with the rhythm, the timing, the breathing, and most of all the sound. He taught us to develop a concept of sound. He was able to lift the phrase and the direction of the music and take the musicians with him on this journey just through the intensity of his conducting. The whole process of making music with him kept me spellbound.

The IPO recorded, performed, and premiered his main compositions. We toured with him and played a lot of Mahler with him.

I played with Bernstein for over 20 years. He was a very personable conductor and knew everyone's name in all the orchestras he conducted. Bernstein, in his genius, was bigger than life.

On the day Lenny died, I got a phone call from the IPO personnel manager: "Bernstein died this morning. You must come to play Mahler's *Adagietto* conducted by Mehta at the opening of tonight's concert."

HC: You have performed under the baton of so many conductors. Some can inspire breath-taking performances and others can leave the orchestra sounding less brilliant. What exactly does the conductor do that can make such a difference in the performance?

JL: A great conductor inspires the individual musicians to reach beyond themselves and perform above their ability. These conductors know how to use the power of music through the power of their personality. Musicality is expressed in their body language. It is the combination of their energy, their involvement and their intention. It is also in the way they let you play. They don't impose their idea, but they inspire it to come forth through you. They inspire you to give your personal best and then they mold the sound. Only a conductor with self-confidence and vision is able to grant you the freedom to express your musicality. The best conductors believe in you because they believe in themselves, the score, and why they are there. The conductors who are dictators and who don't want to hear your ideas just don't inspire the musicians.

"A great conductor inspires the individual musicians to reach beyond themselves and perform above their ability...They inspire you to give you personal best and then mold the sound."

HC: Zubin Mehta is a legend. He was the principal conductor of the IPO for decades. You know him personally. Tell us something about this man.

JL: Zubin and I share a similar relationship with Israel and the IPO. Maestro Mehta adopted the country in the same way I did. He felt the importance of the music and that it goes far beyond the concert. The IPO is the flagship of the country carrying the dream for peace from the people of Israel. Often maestro Mehta commented that we want the IPO to make the front page of the foreign press rather than any recent violence! Zubin and I are very close personal friends. He regularly comes over for dinner after the concerts. During the Gulf War he sat with my family in the sealed room of our apartment, waiting for the missiles to fall from Iraq. Zubin is a flamboyant star on the musical scene. He commands the largest repertoire from memory of any conductor. He is a workaholic, loves chocolate and Indian and Italian food, loves people, and lives music. He is approachable and warm and has a sincere interest in the people around him. As Music Director of the IPO, he is a taskmaster, yes. But he is one of those marvelous, self-confident people who knows to give you space. He is proud to learn from musicians—his colleagues, as he calls orchestra musicians. He gave me, and others in the IPO, endless opportunities to perform as concerto soloist with the IPO. Zubin is unique and rare among men. Mehta couldn't believe that I was going to retire early. He still phones me. The last time he phoned, he asked me how I decided when to play the last note of the last arpeggio in Mahler 4, and how I made it ring, seemingly forever, in pianissimo.

HC: In addition to your performing career, you have spent thousands upon

thousands of hours organizing and working for the International Harp Contest in Israel. That is a tremendous commitment. Why is this competition so important?

JL: The competition, for me personally, has been a marvelous platform to try to make a difference. It has helped to move the harp beyond the stereotype of light and elegant music and put it front and center on the concert stage. In the early years I worked directly with the founder, A.Z. Propes, who was the director of special events in the ministry of tourism. I have volunteered for 44 years, since the third competition, to ensure the success and growth of the competition. I am very pleased with the accomplishments we have made. I have seen the competition develop from the days when the final stages were accompanied by piano, to the final stage of the concerto performance accompanied by an orchestra.

The competition has launched the successful careers of many concert soloists. The harp as an instrument has risen in stature. The standard of playing and the level of intonation have soared. Even the quality of the instruments themselves has improved. The Contest is responsible for commissioning new works written especially for each competition and has greatly enriched the contemporary harp repertoire.

Contests in general are not for everyone. But, it was the first international harp competition in the world and continues to be one of the most prestigious. The first competition was held in 1959 and this year, 2009, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary. In honor of this special anniversary, all of the past winners were invited to perform or be on the jury, [including] many of the legends in the harp world of the last half-century: Letizia

Belmondo, Alice Giles, Marie-Pierre Langlamet, Heidi Lehwalder, Sivan Magen, Suzanna Mildonian (winner of the first contest), Isabelle Moretti, Ivan Ion Roncea, Lynne Turner, Gwyneth Wentink, and Naoko Yoshino.

The true value of the competition, and the reason why I continue to invest so much of my time and energy in it, is that by preparing the extensive and well-balanced repertoire required, one becomes a better harpist. You are a winner because of this preparation. Learning a difficult program that spans several centuries and then bringing it all to memory (including chamber music and a concerto) is the best possible training for a professional harpist.

HC: You now live primarily in Italy. Tell us about your move.

JL: My husband and I decided that when we retire we would come to live on Lago di Como for part of



Liber, pictured here at the far right with a group of master-class students, has turned her attention to teaching after retiring from the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

the year. We have seen the world many times over and consider Lago di Como to be the most beautiful place in the world. Of course we spend several months in Israel with our children and grandchildren, but on the lago we are happy in the strength and beauty of the Alps, the charm of the ancient small villages, and the profound tranquility and peace of the lake.

We have a small motorboat named Arpa. I always take my students out for a ride on the lake. We look at the gorgeous villas on the shores and soak in the colors and beauty. I believe that nature has a direct connection to music.

HC: Over the years, hundreds of students have passed through your studio. You have molded some of the most successful harpists of this generation. You can teach in English, Hebrew, Italian, and in a pinch, German. Why do you find it a calling? When did you start teaching? And, please, talk about your new book.

JL: Teaching became my main focus, and a new phase in my career, after I retired from the IPO. I first started teaching when I was 16 years old and always taught throughout my orchestra career. But the years as a musician in the orchestra were perhaps the ulti-

mate preparation for becoming a teacher.

Teaching is a calling. Teaching is our greatest responsibility in life, as parents, as counselors, as coaches—from summer camp to the last years of medical school. Teachers assume the responsibility of future generations, and the world belongs to the young. The concept of teaching is important to define for oneself before one begins conveying the professional material at hand. Teaching is discipline, inspiration, conveying values, and listening. One need not teach to turn out technical geniuses. One must teach to develop character and self-esteem in young people.

I decided that when I retired, I would write a book. Music to me is sound—divided into time and space, color and shading. The performance on any instrument by any musician begins with creating a sound. To create a sound you have to have a concept of sound, and it is a very personal thing. Great musicians, who have a concept performing on the same instrument, will each produce a unique sound. Although sound is a musical quality, there is a technical basis for sound production and sound projection—articulation. In my book [*A Method for Harp: The Power of Music*], I tried to put forth how and why to articulate—how to make a sound. This, to my knowledge, has not been addressed in other harp books.

Once I started writing, this book took on a life of its own and went in many more directions than I had intended. It is a method book, but much more. It doesn't only speak about fingers and ideas related exclusively to the harp.

Final completion of the book was derailed because I had a great misfortune. I fell in the mountains and broke my neck. I survived it without paralysis, but the healing was quite painful and lasted more than a year. This gave me more time to consider what to include in the book so that it would be applicable to young harpists and teachers. In summary, my book is my take on many subjects all related to music and, of course, the harp. [You can read more about Liber's book in the article "What Is Your Method?" in the September/October 2009 issue of *Harp Column*.]

HC: Not many people walk away—literally, from a broken neck. How did you survive?

JL: I had three fractures on my second and third vertebrae, but the spinal chord was not severed. The neurologist was amazed and asked me if I rowed or lifted weights. What did I do that gave me such a strong muscle structure across the neck and shoul-

continued on pg. 26

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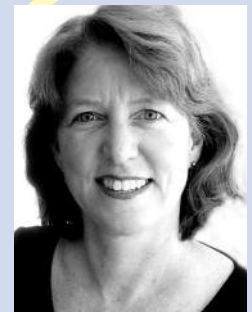
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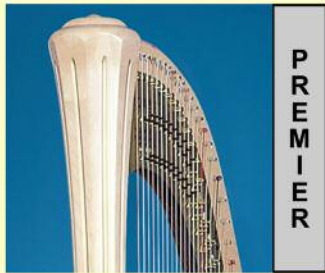


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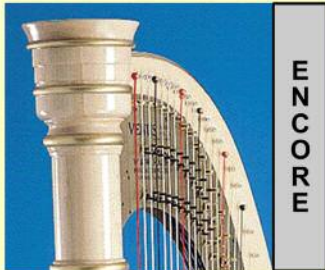
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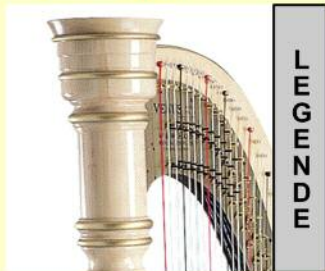
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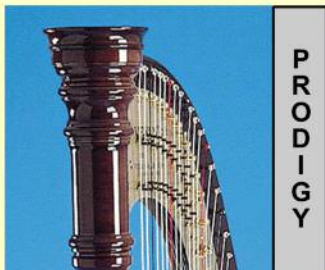
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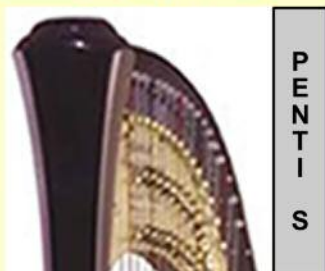
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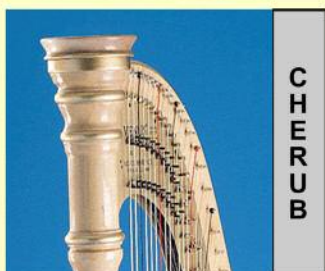
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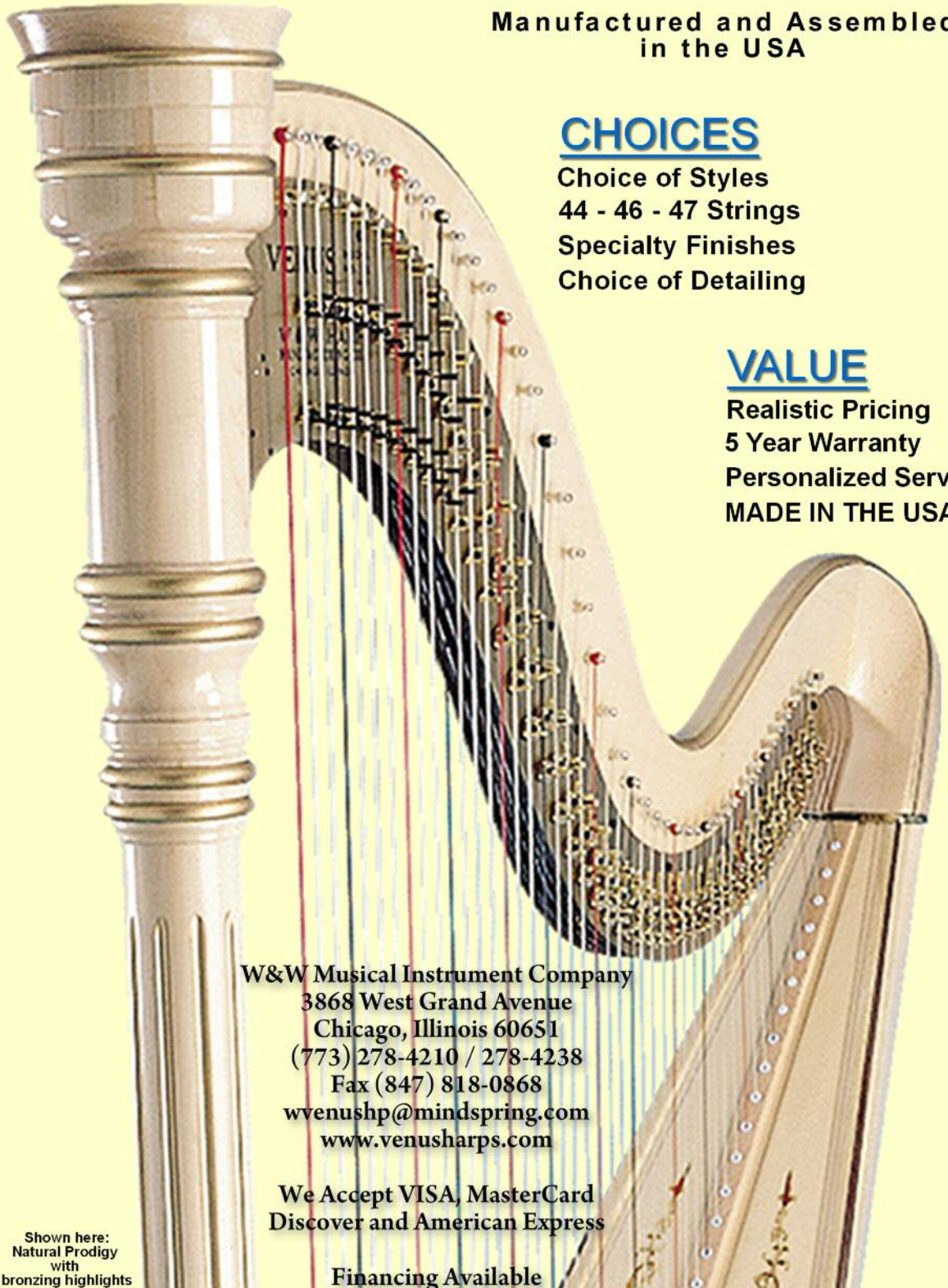
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The balance between harp and family is important for Liber. "There are always sacrifices. If you are convinced and clear that this is who you are, then you have a good chance to pull off having a career and a family."

ders? I explained that I've played the harp for 60 years. "Well, madame," the doctor said, "that explains why you survived. You can thank your harp!"

HC: Your daughter, Tali Glaser, performed second harp with you for many years and today continues to perform with the IPO. What was it like to teach and perform with your daughter?

JL: In 1984, at age 16, Tali played the Handel Concerto with the IPO under the baton of Zubin Mehta. Soon after, she began playing second harp with me in the IPO. I had already been in the IPO for 20 years and a number of accomplished university graduates of mine had experience playing beside me. In fact, I brought all of my university students to orchestral rehearsals with me to learn first-hand how to work with an orchestra. Tali took my position as Principal Harpist when I was on sabbatical and continues to perform as second harpist in the IPO. She has also toured as Principal Harpist with the IPO. Tali and I have also performed together as a harp duo. It is so exciting to perform with your child. You breathe together. It was instinctive and natural to play together.

It is not always a good thing to teach your children. My other daughter, Danna, studied cello with her father, and Tali insisted that she study with me. She developed a beautiful sound, and I am very proud of her accomplishments. Both children became professional musicians in their own right. Danna is now a beautiful dramatic soprano. My children could have turned away from music because it took both parents away so much. They understood from an early age that this was our career. This is who your mother and father are—orchestral musicians—and this was our way of life. I always knew that I'd perform and have children and a family. But, the balance between career and family was always a trick. There are always sacrifices. If you are convinced and clear that this is who you are, then you have a good chance to pull off having a career and a family.

HC: And now your daughters have children.

JL: Yes, Tali herself is the mother of a beautiful daughter, Lynn. She lives in the center of Israel. Danna moved back to Tel Aviv after living a number of years in Italy. She has a 6-year-old son, Daniel, and a newborn daughter, Maya. I am a proud grandmother of three!

HC: You retired from the IPO, but between teaching and working for the harp competition, you are one of the busiest people I know. Do you still perform? How long do you plan to teach?

JL: To arrive and remain on the concert stage is difficult. The burnout is high! You have to need the experience. The compensation is minimal. You must have an inner need to perform for the survival of your identity. It is what makes you whole. The singular commitment and devotion to your art is immense. Even if you are in an ensemble, or orchestra, there is the loneliness, because you are alone with your art. Acknowledging this is important to overcoming it. This loneliness is not a negative thing. It is an intimate personal thing—part of an artist's being.

I retired from the orchestra because it was time and it coincided with my husband's retirement. Nine years have passed and I still deeply miss being part of the sound of the orchestra. One can't create that sound solo. My plan was to write the book, do another recording, and it was all interrupted by the accident. At the same time, my teaching expanded 100-fold with masterclasses and private students from many different countries. I was determined to get myself back performing. Five years after the accident I performed a concert, and now I am fine with not playing. It was important for me to prove to myself that I can still play and perform making music. I will stop teaching when I can no longer play for my students. The young talents who come to me keep me young. I learn from them! As long as I have something to share and give, I will continue teaching. Letizia Belmondo, Alice Giles, Emanuela Degli Esposti, Irene Kaganovsky, and many other soloists, orchestra harpists and teachers have passed my studio. Almost without exception they came seeking a rich, full, and expressive sound. Sound production and projection may be my biggest legacy. I hope to be remembered for musical phrases that soar and reverberate. ●

Best known for her harp arrangements, Sunita Staneslow is a frequent performer and teacher at the international folk harp festivals. Staneslow moved from Minnesota to Israel with her husband and two kids in 2000.

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kick the habit

We've come up with the top 12 bad harp habits...and every excuse in the book for doing them. Now learn why and how to break these habits today.

by Lynne Abbey-Lee

Admit it, you do it. And you over there, you look kind of guilty, too! If we're being honest, almost everyone occasionally does those little things that may not be in the best interest of our harps or ourselves. We'll explore those bad habits, that little voice in our heads (we'll call her Tess the Terrible) that justifies them, and a few ideas on how to overcome them. Let those who have no bad habits cast the first tuning keys!

1. PLAYING WITHOUT WARMING UP

Tess: If you practice well, warming up is hardly necessary. I mean, you're going to play the pieces you're working on more than once, right? So you can kind of warm up as you go.

Not so fast there, Tess! Iowa city harpist Pam Weest-Carrasco, who teaches at the Preucil School of Music, says harpists are like any other athlete; we use smaller muscles. We still need to warm up those smaller muscles, just like any other athlete warms up! "I use the example of a soccer player," she says. "He doesn't sit around before the game, walk onto the field, and then expect his body to respond. He has to move around, do some slow jogs, passing, stretching, quick short sprints and cuts, and then he's ready to play."

A daily warm-up routine doesn't need to be complicated. A simple, well-designed program will do the trick in a matter of minutes. Longtime Phoenix, Ariz., freelancer David Ice says he adopted the warm-up exercises David Watkins uses. The warm-ups use a combination of scales, from the sixth octave to the second octave in C major, and a similar series of G7 arpeggios. Ice says he likes this routine because it gets all the fingers moving quickly, and the G7 arpeggios cover the various intervals. "I can do it in three minutes and I'm totally warmed up. I figure that I can 'spare' three minutes!"

2. NOT TUNING BEFORE PRACTICING

Tess: Tuning seems somewhat self-indulgent. Who cares if your sound is absolutely pitch perfect! While a perfectly tuned harp might be important for a concert or when playing in an orchestra, when you're practicing by yourself you know whether you're playing the right notes even if those Cs are a bit sharp. Tuning just takes valuable time away from really practicing.

Oh, contraire! If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times, one of the best ways to develop a sense of whether your instrument is in tune is to make sure that it always is! Then, when notes are out-of-tune, you'll hear them right away. It's easy to be sympathetic with beginners, because it can take such a long time to tune when you're starting out, especially when all you want to do is sit down and figure out how to play this crazy instrument. None of us want to take even a few minutes away from our precious practice time. Nevertheless, you *should* take the time, because the more often you tune, the faster you'll become at it, and you won't be distracted by any notes that are out.

3. LEAVING PEDALS DOWN OR LEVERS UP

Tess: Most songs start in a key a lot closer to C than C-flat! If you just leave your pedals in natural you can sit down and start playing with ease. And on the lever harp, if your big piece for the week is in D, well then that's five levers per octave you have to put up every time you start (assuming your harp is tuned in three flats). Plus, I am going to come back to the harp in a minute anyway, right after I check my e-mail, and make a couple phone calls, and grab some coffee...

Nice try, Tess. The few seconds you spend moving pedals and flipping levers are well worth the wear and tear you save on your harp. "I always think, 'park it' when I am done playing. You wouldn't exit your car and leave it in drive or in neutral!" declares Ice. A very good idea, concurs harp technician and

owner of Kolacny Music in Denver, David Kolacny. "The constant pressure of the lever or pedal twisting and crimping the string can shorten the life of the string, causing it to go false or fray much sooner. The nylon wrapped strings found on many lever harps are especially vulnerable." He also cautions against loading a harp into a vehicle with the levers or discs facing down, as this is a good way to damage them. "I'm amazed how often I see this," he says.

There's a corollary to this bad habit—tuning in naturals. This is a pet peeve of Diane Michaels, a freelance harpist and teacher in the New York City metro area, she reminds us that the mechanics of the disc or lever hold on to the string tightly, but once the pedal is disengaged from natural, the pressure on the string changes. "People can end up with a really out of tune harp when they tune in natural."

4. SLOPPY MARKINGS OR LACK THEREOF

Tess: Reading skills should be developed and honed. By not marking things clearly, or at all, you ensure that you are really paying attention to the music that you're playing. If you diagram everything out, it's just too easy.

Apparently Tess likes a challenge, but there are plenty of other opportunities to take on a challenge—this is not one of them. Clearly marking fingerings, pedals, and other musical indications will help you learn music faster and more accurately. David Ice agrees. "I think I'd rather play indoors wearing sunglasses than not mark fingerings, placings, and pedals. Why make your mind work that hard, remembering everything?"

5. NOT USING A METRONOME

Tess: By not using a metronome, you breathe life into a piece. You're allowed to sway and change with the music instead of concentrating on that stinky beat.

Being expressive is a wonderful and important goal, but if you're not completely sure of the correct rhythms in a piece, how can you expressively deviate from the beat? You have to learn how to crawl before you can walk, and if you never learn to crawl, your walking is going to be wobbly and uneven.

Are you sure that the relationship between those eighth notes, triplets, and sixteenth notes is correct? There's an easy way to find out says Omaha Symphony Principal Harpist Mary Bircher, "Make friends with your metronome! You're giving up a huge benefit if you don't use it." She advises to slowly increase your speed with the metronome, and be sure to keep using it when you reach your goal so that the tempo can settle in. "Otherwise," she warns,



BE MINDFUL

It's all about *how* you practice, not how *much* you practice, reminds Diane Michaels. Be mindful while you practice and you see how much progress you make!

OLD HABITS DON'T DIE HARD

Breaking that bad habit is a cinch with a few small steps and a lot of positive thinking.



THE THREE MINUTE WARM-UP

David Ice suggests a simple routine of C major scales and G7 arpeggios to get your fingers ready to roll.



YOUR FRIEND, THE METRONOME

A daily date with your metronome will do wonders for your evenness and help you to never feel rushed. says Mary Bircher.



THE PRACTICE HABIT

Ditch the cramming habit and replace it with a daily practice routine, says Pam Weest-Carasco.



SAVE YOUR STRINGS

Simply flipping your levers down or your pedals up when you are not playing can extend the life of your strings, says David Kolacny.

“you’ll always feel rushed like when you were trying to speed up.”

6. WEARING BAD SHOES OR NO SHOES

Tess: Wearing shoes in your house makes your floors dirty, and those uncomfortable concert shoes give you blisters.

Most harpists would probably rather play in no shoes than bad shoes. In fact, most of us would rather play barefoot all the time! However, a week or two before a performance, it’s critical to dutifully drag out those performance shoes so you become well acquainted with all the pedal changes. Ideal harp shoes should have thin soles and a moderate heel, although we’ve all heard amazing performances by harpists in mind-blowing three or four-inch heels. I think we all know that hiking boots or flip-flops don’t cut it on a pedal harp. While an unfamiliar shoe can wreak havoc with pedaling, lever harp players might want to practice in correct shoes as well. A different height heel than usual will put your legs at an altered angle and this could make you feel slightly off balance.

7. BAD POSTURE

Tess: Sitting with good posture requires an

inordinate amount of concentration without really adding anything to your musicianship. I mean, it’s not as if good posture improves your tone. If you can play brilliantly, who cares if you look like a hunch-back?

This is one of those habits that some youngsters may get away with, but sooner or later, it will catch up with you. Good posture means more than a straight back—it includes relaxed shoulders, feet on the floor, a comfortable seat height, the appropriate distance between you and the harp, and even stand position. Preventing injuries is the paramount reason for good posture, but when your body is comfortable and relaxed, a more fluid and relaxed sound is possible too.

8. CRAMMING

Tess: You call it cramming, I call it extremely focused practicing. There has to be something on the line for me to get my best work done. Besides, the last time I got an early start on my music for a big performance, I broke my shoulder and couldn’t do the concert anyway. What a waste of effort! [Editor’s note: For full disclosure purposes, we must reveal that this is actually the author’s voice, not “Tess.”]

Regardless of what we may try to get away with, consistent practice is just fun-

damental to learning a skill, and learning it well. A runner who trains hard twice a week and lollygags the rest of the time will have a tough time making her school track team, much less achieving greatness. The world’s great painters didn’t get there by only painting when there’s nothing better to do. Weest-Carrasco says, “If consistent practice is expected from the first lesson, then the habit is set up at the start.” She reminds her students that they only need to practice on the days that they eat, adding, “The all-nighter cram session might have worked for my biology final in college, but is almost a guarantee for failure in the study of an instrument! Although I was able to pass the final, I certainly didn’t retain anything past the end of finals week,” she says. Ice points out that we all wish that simply glancing at a piece of music would make it somehow ooze into our brains, but it doesn’t work that way. “Trust me,” he says. “Maybe once in a while you may be able to pull the rabbit out of the hat, but don’t count on it!”

9. MINDLESS PRACTICING

Tess: Any practice is good practice, right? If you’re tired, fiddling around on the harp is better than taking a nap, right? Practice is

practice. Maybe you haven't progressed at all, but at least your fingers aren't totally out of shape.

Mailing it in isn't going to get you anywhere. Michaels suggests you ask yourself this question: "Is your brain more or less engaged during a lesson than it is while you practice? If you answered more, you are probably guilty of mindless practicing. During the lesson, your teacher is the one evaluating, correcting, and motivating. These responsibilities need to become yours in the practice room." While practicing is all about repetition, Michaels points out that they should be countless repetitions but not mindless repetition. "They say that the definition of insanity is doing something the same way over and over again while expecting different results. So, to play a measure or phrase or piece ten times in a row without evaluating each repetition and attempting a specific correction is, in a nutshell, nuts. Each repetition should offer a chance to set and meet, a new, more challenging goal."

10. NOT CHANGING BASS WIRES EVERY YEAR (OR "OFTEN ENOUGH")

Tess: Changing strings is the most painful process in the world! Once changed they never stay in tune. Who wants to go through all that hassle?

Changing your harp's bass wires is on par with cleaning the toilet or dusting the mini-blinds—no one likes it. But you are always thrilled with your harp's sound when you finally break down and do it.

Changing wires (or other strings that need it, for that matter) isn't important only for performances. It should be at least as important for your own pleasure that your harp sounds its best even when you're playing warm-up scales. Says Kolacny, "Occasionally a player will have me replace one wire string, either because it breaks or as part of a repair. It is not uncommon for that person to be back in a week for the rest of the wire strings." If you

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kick this habit along with bad habit #2, you will be amazed how great you sound!

11. INCONSISTENT FINGERINGS

Tess: If you've practiced with various fingering combinations all along, then you'll never be stuck going for a note with the "wrong" finger—it's as simple as that!

Not so simple, actually. Granting that everyone's hands are unique, Bircher likens fingering to parenting: "It's not so important where you draw the line, but *that* you draw the line. Choose a fingering and stick with it! Random fingerings are bad for memorization and really hold you back from what you can do musically. You can't build in nice crescendos and subtleties of phrasing if you're connecting in different places."

12. POOR STAGE PRESENCE

Tess: It's all about the music, right?

Performances begin the moment you walk onto the stage and don't end until you've left it for the last time. Everything in between those two points should be as

carefully thought out as the music you're playing. That includes all your bows, any speaking you may do, your hair and clothing, the positioning of your harp, and how you start and end your piece. Many audience members will take all of that into consideration when evaluating your performance (sometimes, more so than the music, unfortunately). Just as there is no excuse for sloppiness in your playing, there is no excuse for it in your stage presence, either. A beautiful, rehearsed bow is the best way to say, "You're welcome," to an applauding audience. It's disrespectful to your audience to simply bob your head and hurry off stage.

MOVING TOWARD RECOVERY

As they say, the first step toward fixing a problem is admitting you have one. Fortunately, most of these bad harp habits aren't as hard to kick as biting your fingernails or smoking. With a little forethought, some deep breaths, and better time management, you can bring these harp habits under control. ●



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Performer and teacher

Marcia Dickstein
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Announcing
2010 Guest Artist
Julie Ann Smith

Announcing the 2010 Young Artist's Harp Competition

The 2010 Young Artist's Harp Competition will take place in Rabun Gap, Georgia, July 8–10, 2010. The competition, held every two years, is open to harpists ages 11–19 in two divisions with prizes up to \$1000. Visit www.harp-competition.com for complete details and repertoire. *Competitors are not required to attend the Young Artist's Harp Seminar.*

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harp concertos centerstage



Move over, Handel.
Make way, Mozart.

There are some exciting new concertos in town.

by Marguerite Lynn Williams

Harpists talk of broadening the instrument's repertoire and really showing audiences what the harp is capable of. Fortunately, in the last few years, some of the nation's best harpists, composers, and orchestras have turned talk into reality with a barrage of new concertos for harp and orchestra.

Why the sudden burst in newly composed harp concertos in the U.S.? Elizabeth Hainen, Principal Harpist of The Philadelphia Orchestra, suggests it follows a trend of musicians being more responsible in engaging composers whose work they like. "I believe that today's artists are more enterprising in regards to their creativity that affects their career paths. Harpists are following suit to their string-player and pianist colleagues who have served as pioneers in this area." Understanding the needs of the instrument, Hainen and The Philadelphia Orchestra are commissioning a harp concerto from composer Tan Dun, projected to be premiered in 2013. We don't have to wait until 2013 to enjoy a new harp concerto, though. Other prestigious ensembles and harpists in the

nation have also worked together with some of the most sought-after composers to bring five new concertos to life.

FOUR ANGELS

Mark Adamo, composer

Dotian Levalier, harpist

Leonard Slatkin, conductor, National Symphony Orchestra

Premiered June 7, 2007, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

Maestro Leonard Slatkin gave Dotian Levalier a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help create a new work for the harp. How did this commission happen? Levalier shared, "Leonard Slatkin, the National Symphony Orchestra's conductor at the time, asked if there was anything in my 40 years as Principal Harpist that I felt I had not accomplished. I responded that I wanted to leave the world a great concerto. His reply was, 'Pick your composer and I'll find the funding.'"

Levalier has been friends with Mark Adamo for many years. Having played many of his compositions, including his opera *Little Women*, she followed his career as a composer with great interest. Levalier feels that Adamo has a wonderful sense of the color and sound of the harp—this is what appealed to her most and resulted in her asking him to compose *Four Angels*.

The concerto took four years from conception to performance, including many tears and heated discussions. Like most other worthwhile projects, the uphill battle was well worth the “superb piece of music” that resulted, said Levalier.

This 25-minute concerto sets out to transform the image of the harp as only a delicate instrument. The work explores angels not only of the pious variety, but also powerful and emotional beings. The piece is full of emotion, power, and drive, which is exactly what Levalier hoped for.

Adamo and Levalier met to explore the range of possibility of the harp and to discuss ideas for the concerto. He came up with a four-movement work using different angels: Metatron, Sarosha, Regina Coeli, and Mik’hail. The third movement has been taken out of this context and reworked into a short piece for harp and strings that is set to be released this month on the CD “The Late Victorians” on the Naxos label.

Following its premiere in Washington, the reviews made it apparent that *Four Angels* was most certainly the great concerto Levalier hoped to give to the harp world. Tim Page of the Washington Post wrote, “...this is one of the best new pieces Music Director Leonard Slatkin has championed—an ambitious, eloquent, and often radiantly beautiful confection for an instrument that is notoriously difficult for a composer to work with.”

CONCERTO FOR HARP AND ORCHESTRA

Andre Previn, composer

Gretchen Van Hoesen, harpist

Andre Previn, conductor, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Premiered March 5, 2008, at Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts in Pittsburgh. Published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

Gretchen Van Hoesen has been asking the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra to commission a harp concerto for many years. The Pittsburgh Symphony, like many other orchestras, has an ongoing project to commission concertos for the principal players of the orchestra. The PSO has commissioned

concertos for oboe, horn, bassoon, violin, trombone, trumpet, timpani, and finally harp! Back in 2006 the orchestra, along with Van Hoesen, approached Andre Previn, former Music Director of the orchestra, to write the harp concerto. “Several subscription seasons ago, we performed the Violin Concerto by Andre Previn with violinist Anne Sophie Mutter. The Violin Concerto was stunning, beautifully scored, and a major work for violin and orchestra. After hearing this work, I became convinced that asking André to write a harp concerto was the best idea to add a new, exciting work to our repertoire.”

Previn featured Van Hoesen numerous times as a soloist both in Pittsburgh during the subscription season and on tour with the orchestra. During Previn’s tenure with the PSO, Van Hoesen performed the Ginastera Concerto, the Rodrigo Concerto Serenata, the Debussy *Danses*, and the Mozart Concerto for Flute and Harp with Previn’s cadenzas written for the performances. To say the least, Previn was a fan of the harp and especially of Van Hoesen’s performance on the instrument.

Although living on different continents, Previn and Van Hoesen worked together on this concerto, going over it measure by measure during several trips to New York City. “Andre seemed a bit worried about writing for solo harp,” said Van Hoesen. “But he did a great job as I knew that he would. Of course, his orchestral scores contain large harp parts, and that coupled with his years in Hollywood gave him all the tools necessary to write for the harp. In addition, I sent André lots of written material, texts about harp writing, photocopies of music, examples of good harp writing, and CDs for him to peruse. I don’t believe that he has written much for solo harp in the past. I am so glad that he agreed to the composition of the Harp Concerto and that it is a great addition to our repertoire.”

Previn’s Concerto for Harp explores the full range of the instrument beginning with sparse melodic writing and gradually expanding throughout the concerto. The second movement is full of lush, romantic, expanded chords. The final movement begins with a sizable solo cadenza for harp and follows with quick rhythmic passages between the harp and orchestra. Andre Previn even included a few quotes from other famous harp concertos such as the Ginastera Harp Concerto. The Previn Concerto for Harp is not easy to put together with orchestra, but well worth the effort, said Van Hoesen.

Prior to performances in Pittsburgh, Van Hoesen spoke to the audience in pre-concert lectures about



Dotian Levalier
concerto: *Four Angels*
composer: Mark Adamo
notable: The commission came from Levalier’s desire to “leave the world a great concerto.”



Gretchen Van Hoesen
concerto: *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra*
composer: Andre Previn
notable: The work is one in a series of concertos commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony for its principal players.

Opposite page: Ann Hobson Pilot performs John Williams’ *On Willows and Birches* on opening night of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s season Sept. 23.



Yolanda Kondonassis
concerto: *Never Far Away*
composer: Bright Sheng
notable: The piece calls for
the use of a protractor to
create an amplified
whistling effect on the
bass wires.



Paula Page
concerto: *Absolute Ocean*
composer: Augusta Read
Thomas
notable: The work is
scored for a reduced
orchestra, making it more
versatile than a typical
concerto



Ann Hobson-Pilot
concerto: *On Willows and
Birches*
composer: John Williams
notable: The concerto was
commissioned to mark
Pilot's retirement after 40
years with the Boston
Symphony Orchestra.

what to listen for and to explain how the piece took shape. This was a rare opportunity for the audience members to learn about the piece and about the harpist's role in the creation, preparation, and performance of the concerto. The premiere was recorded live at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh and broadcast nationally on National Public Radio. While no recording is currently available for sale, Van Hoesen said she hopes to record the piece in the future.

The concerto was received in Pittsburgh with standing ovations and excellent reviews. Andrew Druckenbrod of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette wrote, "...the harp part had focus, form and substance. Beginning with an eight-note motive in the first movement, the harp dominated the piece. In fact, with two cadenzas and multiple other solos, the work almost had the feeling of a harp recital. The second, and longest, cadenza had Van Hoesen at points strumming the instrument like a grand old Romantic harp, rendering it a calliope and plucking it like a percussion instrument. ... this was the highlight of a work that did the one thing a concerto must—celebrate the instrument."

NEVER FAR AWAY

Bright Sheng, composer

Yolanda Kondonassis, harpist

Jahja Ling, conductor, San Diego Symphony Orchestra; Leonard Slatkin, conductor, Dallas Symphony Orchestra; David Lockington, conductor, Grand Rapids Symphony; Bridget-Michaele Reische, conductor, Oberlin Symphony Orchestra

Premiered Oct. 24, 2008, at Copley Symphony Hall in San Diego. Score is not yet published.

It was around 2003 when Yolanda Kondonassis called Bright Sheng and asked if he would be interested in writing a work for the harp. Although she didn't have all the pieces in place, Sheng was a composer she thought would be a wonderful match for the harp. This was the first piece of the puzzle. As a soloist rather than permanent member of an orchestra, Kondonassis knew she would need to create a consortium of organizations to ensure the commission the proper funding and the exposure she thought it would deserve. Jahja Ling, the conductor of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra and a friend of Kondonassis for over 20 years, was the next person she approached. The Dallas and Grand Rapids Symphonies as well as Oberlin Conservatory were soon also on board for the project.

Chinese-American composer Bright Sheng's style is greatly influenced by a melding of cultures. He is

known for powerful and aggressive music, but he spent a lot of attention focusing on balance and the use of the instrument. "The harp is a delicate instrument, you have to make the harp sing and sound resonant," he said. "With a huge orchestra, I think the biggest challenge is to have the orchestra play pretty substantially at the same time the harp is heard," said Sheng, adding that this was the most difficult aspect of the project for him.

Kondonassis knew exactly what she wanted from the new work. "I wanted a harp concerto that would stretch both the expectations of the instrument and the audience's imagination—Bright gave me both," she said. "One of my goals over the next couple of decades is to not only expand the repertoire for the harp but to also expand the range and reputation of the instrument. I truly believe that the harp is one of the music world's most untapped resources."

Kondonassis and Sheng met in person a number of times to discuss the new piece during the process. During these meetings Yolanda tried to blend Bright's vision with playability on the harp. "The harpist's job is not to tell the composer what to do," she said. "It is to work within their vision as much as in the realm of possibility. Bright is very creative and had a specific vision that I did not want to interfere with."

Sheng explores a wide and innovative array of textures, timbres, and sonic blends including what Kondonassis considers the most difficult aspect of the concerto: weaving thick paper through the entire range of the instrument and playing about 90 percent of the final movement this way. The thick paper amplifies the harp, changes the color, and makes the strings much tighter to play and therefore much more difficult to produce the loud dynamics that were called for. Kondonassis added that it does wonders for muscle building. "You'll be as strong as a horse after working on this piece!"

Sheng includes the extended techniques familiar to most harpists, but also experiments with some new sounds. For example, after realizing that hand whistles (sliding an open palm over the bass wires to produce a whistling effect) wouldn't project well in a large concert hall with orchestra, Kondonassis found that using the smooth side of a rubber protractor helped project the sound. By the week of rehearsals and concerts with the Dallas Symphony, she realized the protractor looked too much like a protractor to the audience, so she sacrificed a beloved Orange Bowl t-shirt to cover the protractor and give it the appearance of an exotic Chinese instrument.

The first movement, titled "Moonlight Shadows,"

is very atmospheric, evoking a dreamy soundscape recalling both Chinese folk music and movie music. "The Drunken Fisher," the work's second movement, juxtaposes passages of fast and slow, gentle and aggressive, fortissimo and pianissimo. The exciting finale, "Doctored Pentatonics," uses the prepared harp technique to produce a percussive effect that enhances the wild and bold writing.

Kondonassis premiered *Never Far Away* in October 2008 with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra and Jahja Ling, conductor. She gave additional premieres with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra with Leonard Slatkin in January 2009, the Grand Rapids Symphony with David Lockington in April 2009, and with the Oberlin Symphony Orchestra with Bridget-Michaele Reische in October 2009. The concerto will be published after Kondonassis does a bit more reconfiguring of the score to make it visually accessible and more "harp friendly." Kondonassis recorded the concerto with Ling and the San Diego Symphony. Telarc released the

CD, "*Never Far Away: Music of Bright Sheng*," in October 2009.

ABSOLUTE OCEAN

Augusta Read Thomas, composer

Paula Page, harpist

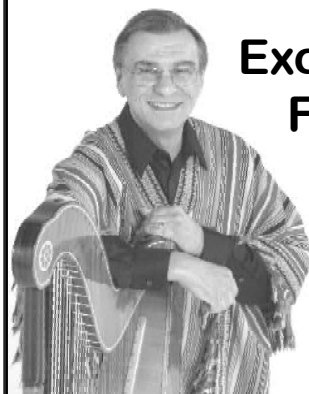
Twyla Robinson, soprano

Hans Graf, conductor, Houston Symphony Orchestra

Premiered Jan. 22, 2009, at Jones Hall in Houston. Published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

Absolute Ocean, a setting of three E. E. Cummings poems for soprano, harp, and orchestra, was the 2008-2009 season commission by the Houston Symphony Orchestra as part of a plan to commission concertos for all the principal players in the orchestra. While not a typical concerto, this work uses the harp in an obbligate role. The harp embellishes the vocal line, and is soloist in an instrumental interlude between the second and third movements, along with the concertmaster, alto flute, and celeste. The composition is scored for a reduced orchestra with smaller string and brass sections, small

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percussion instruments (although it requires quite a few players), and only eight wind players. This instrumentation allowed Thomas an interesting blend of orchestra colors and addressed the challenge of balancing the vocal line and harp soloist.

The first thing Paula Page did after hearing that Augusta Read Thomas would be commissioned to write a concerto for her and the Houston Symphony was

to speak with the composer, get to know her, and talk about what she hoped for with the work. Due to Thomas' busy schedule and a short deadline, they were unable to meet in person and tweak parts of the work together before it was completed. Page received a finished part approximately six months before the premiere. About one month before the premiere was scheduled, Thomas added the instrumental interlude as a quasi cadenza

for Page.

When asked about *Absolute Ocean*, Page said, "I really enjoyed working with Gusty. People really loved the cadenza. This work is perfect for a smaller or regional orchestra because it doesn't need as many players." Page also indicated that she would be more than happy to share her thoughts and experience with any harpist that is considering a performance of *Absolute Ocean*.

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ON WILLOWS AND BIRCHES

John Williams, composer
Ann Hobson Pilot, harpist
James Levine, conductor, Boston Symphony Orchestra

Premiered Sept. 23, 2009, at Symphony Hall in Boston. Score has not yet been published.

Legendary harpist Ann Hobson Pilot sat center stage on opening night with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in September to premiere *On Willows and Birches*. The concerto is a gift from the composer and conductor John Williams, a colleague of

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From l. to r.: Composer John Williams, harpist Ann Hobson Pilot, and BSO conductor James Levine take a bow following the premiere of Williams' new harp concerto.

Williams changed his mind and agreed to write the concerto. "It is a great honor for me to have John Williams write a piece for me," Pilot said. "I enjoyed all the years we worked together and wanted him to write the piece because I have the utmost respect for him as a composer and conductor. I think the work will be a new staple in the repertoire."

The first movement, with its gentle orchestration and chamber-like setting, is based on a line from Psalm 137, "We hanged out harps upon the willows." Pilot described the movement as very

atmospheric and impressionistic with touches of Ravel and Williams' own creative style imitating the sound of wind blowing through willow trees and harps.

The second movement "On Birches," is celebratory, energetic, rhythmic, and joyful. It displays the soloist in an extended virtuosic cadenza, and is inspired by a line

of poetry by Robert Frost, "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."

The composition pays tribute to one of the BSO's most admired performers on the occasion of her retirement after four decades with the group. The concerto was also the centerpiece of the BSO's program as they opened Carnegie Hall's 119th Season on Oct. 1 in New York. Jeremy Eichler of *The Boston Globe* described the concerto as "a well-crafted two-movement concerto that clearly fulfills its stated aims of paying tribute to Pilot and showcasing her formidable musicianship."

THE TEST OF TIME

With these new works, their composers and harpists stretched both the listeners' and performers' boundaries. More than anything else, time is usually the arbiter of music's longevity. Will one of these new compositions become the next Ginastera, Ravel, or Mozart that brings so much attention to the harp? Only time will tell. ●

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Carol arrangements to add to your collection, plus a book of waltzes

by Jan Jennings

Just in time for the holidays, Noble Strings Press has published *O Night Divine: Christmas Favorites for the Harp*, arranged by John Andrew Barber. This collection includes twelve familiar holiday melodies.

The arranger suggests they are more suitable for pedal harp, although several of them can be played on lever harp with either no adjustments or just minimal changes. Pedal markings are included below the staff, and no lever changes are notated. Fingering is suggested only occasionally, and tempi and dynamics are left to the discretion of the player.

As you play through a few of these arrangements, you'll quickly see a pattern of Mr. Barber's style develop. He likes to change keys and time signatures. "Angels from the Realms of Glory" starts out in C, moves to F, and then shifts to A minor for a short section before finishing up back in C. This one would be challenging to do on lever harp unless you simply skip the section in F. "Angels We Have Heard on High" also modulates from G to D and back to G again, and changes from 4/4 to 6/8 and back to 4/4. "We Three Kings" also has a meter change.

He likes grace notes. "In the Bleak Midwinter" and "O Holy Night" feature grace notes, but they are not overdone and it mostly gives the effect of broken chords.

He likes to change the harmonization of the piece and puts very little emphasis on dominant chords, delays them, or eliminates them altogether. For example, there are several instances in "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (measures three, 23, 28, 31, etc.) where we traditionally hear the dominant chord on the first beat of the measure, but Mr. Barber waits until the third beat to switch to the dominant. Ditto for "Away in a Manger," where we barely hear the dominant

on the last beat of measure 23. In measure 14 of "We Three Kings," he eliminates the dominant altogether and simply returns to the tonic. We also hear some chord substitutions, such as in measures nine and 12 of "We Three Kings" or measure 19 of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." This latter piece has a dulcet intro that is also used as an interlude between verses.

He likes to use the upper register of the harp. "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" and several others get you up into the first and second octaves. Conversely, the lowest note in any arrangement is a sixth-octave C.

And finally, he likes to use running eighth notes for the left hand accompaniment. This is by far the most prevalent representation of his style because you find them in every piece. It is also probably the most difficult aspect of his arrangements, but intermediate players should be able to sight-read this music. The typesetting is easy to read and there is only one impossible page turn ("O Holy Night"). "All Through the Night," "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," and "Joy to the World" complete the list of contents.

Throw all the elements of Andy Barber's style together and the end result is an assortment of sweet, appealing, and reasonably easy arrangements of popular Christmas carols.

Sharon Thormahlen has a new book of waltzes called "Waltz Upon a Time," published by Afghan Press. There are 15 waltzes in the book, taken from "The Waltz Book," by Bill Mattheisen. Ms. Thormahlen has written very accessible lever harp arrangements of this standard repertoire in the folk music world. The pieces can also be played on pedal harp, but no pedal markings are included.

Talk to us

We want to know about your new music releases. Send review copies of new works to: *Harp Column*; Attn: Reviews, 2101 Brandywine St., Suite 200, Philadelphia, PA 19130. Review materials cannot be returned.

Lever harps must have at least the Bs tuned to flat. All the pieces are in the keys of F, C, G, D, or A (or the relative minor key). Some fingering is suggested, but most of the music falls very comfortably in the hands. Like her previous publication, "Dance Thru the Music," she uses an "x" to indicate crossing over or under. Since this is not the standard notation, it would be helpful to have this explained, as not everyone may know what she means.

It would also be preferable if arrangers would use standard notation to indicate pre-set levers at the beginning of the piece. The simplest method is to put a "fix" box above the first measure that includes only the pre-set levers that are not part of the key signature. Instead, Thormahlen uses text to explain pre-set levers at the beginning of "Hopkins Waltz" and "Ashokan Farewell." It works, but it is not as efficient as a "fix" box.

Diamond-shaped notes are used to indicate lever changes. However, they are very tiny. It would be easier for those with vision difficulties to see if the diamond-

shaped notes were enlarged to the same size as the other notes—a simple matter with most music writing software. Otherwise, the typesetting is easy to read. A natural sign was omitted next to the diamond-shaped note in measure 44 of "Enriches Vous."

The music is sight-readable for intermediate players, and advanced beginners should also be able to play many of these waltzes with a little practice. Chord sym-

bols are included above the staff, making embellishment very easy if you so choose. Embellishment is not needed, however, as these are all very nice arrangements as written.

Happy holidays, everyone! ●

Jan Jennings is the music review editor for Harp Column and the author of The Harpist's Complete Wedding Guidebook and Effortless Glissing. You can e-mail her at mail@harpbiz.com.

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strange but true harp stories

The not-so-great outdoors

On Labor Day weekend I performed for a quaint woodlands wedding ceremony up on a hill in a clearing. The harp was set up inside a stone pavilion with wooden benches facing it. "An idyllic setting," I thought to myself. The only downside was the millions of bugs I shooed away during my 15 minutes of prelude music.

I finally received my cue from the very

pregnant wedding coordinator that the wedding party was coming up the stairs and ready to begin. I put my hand in my lap momentarily and I got stung by a bee! On my finger! I had a moment of panic since it hurt like \$%& and the sting was where I bent my right hand fourth finger. I whispered a loud "Pssst!" to the photographer and tearfully told him what hap-

pened, asking him to quickly get the coordinator.

After the pregnant coordinator sprinted up to me (she thought maybe I was allergic, but I'm not) I decided to suck it up and play through the pain. That was the longest processional of my life as I watched my finger swell up to twice its normal size. Quick-thinking workers brought me ice and all was well (almost) by the recession. The bride never knew what happened!

—Mindy Cutcher
Oreland, Pa.

When I lived in New Orleans some years ago a squirrel got into the house. We were surrounded by beautiful trees, so I'm surprised it only happened once. Immediately our dog, a boxer named Reilly, charged after it, and we all charged after him trying to rescue the squirrel. However, the little rodent had other ideas. He mistook my Lyon & Healy pedal harp for a tree and kept running up the column in an attempt to save himself. He scampered along the neck and back again several times, eventually perching himself, shivering and terrified, on the top of the column.

The noise level skyrocketed as we all shrieked, the dog howled and barked, and the poor squirrel became increasingly disoriented. To quell the chaos (and save my harp) I threw a blanket over the harp, and, after several frantic attempts, my son caught the squirrel in another blanket and released it in the great outdoors.

Reilly returned to the harp for a long time afterwards, sniffing obsessively, wondering how his prey had escaped! ●

—Mary Black
Cambridge, Mass.

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Aoyama Orpheus, concert grand, natural maple, \$12,950. Extended soundboard, 47 strings. Lightly used, meticulously maintained. Excellent sound, mint condition. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Camac Athena, concert grand, natural, \$12,000. Five years old, 47 strings, extended soundboard. Includes dolly, soft shell case and stool. Email tdement1985@gmail.com.

Camac Athena, concert grand. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT

Camac Athena, concert grand, mahogany, \$8,950. Ten years old, straight soundboard. Beautiful bright tone, excellent condition. Call 336-285-5861 or email gwepner@yahoo.com. NC.

Camac Electro-acoustic Big Blue, 47 strings, high gloss ebony. Extended soundboard. Use acoustically and fully electric. Call 860-675-0227 or peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Camac Vendome, concert grand, sipo-mahogany. Erard style, extended soundboard, decal. Includes five year warranty and padded cover set. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Lyon & Healy Style 100, 46 strings, high gloss ebony, \$12,950. Decorated, straight soundboard. Excellent structural and mechanical condition. Very good cosmetic condition, an elegant harp. Rent to own available. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Lyon & Healy Style 15, 46 strings, natural. Decorated, straight soundboard. Excellent condition and sound. Rent to own. Low price. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Lyon & Healy Style 22, gold. Built 1929. Newly riveted, new neck. Excellent structural, mechanical and cosmetic condition. Exceptional sound. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Lyon & Healy Style 23, concert grand, gold, \$25,000. Harp professionally used by former owner. Email valentyn_km@yahoo.com. NH.

Lyon & Healy Style 23, concert grand, natural, \$20,000. Built 1978, serial #7799. Excellent condition. Includes wooden trunk and extra string set. Call 319-331-4938. IA.

Lyon & Healy Style 23, natural, \$19,950. Serial #8224, 31 years old. One owner, excellent condition. Includes trunk and extra set of strings. Call 707-542-2068. Santa Rosa, CA.

Lyon & Healy Style 85CG, concert grand. Extended soundboard, 47 strings. Excellent structural and mechanical condition. Fine sound quality. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Lyon & Healy Style 85P, natural, \$8,500. Two

years old, regulated November 2008. Like new condition. Includes matching music stand and stool. Call Debbie at 412-366-2283 or email djbutterflydogs@gmail.com. Pittsburgh, PA.

Salvi Daphne, 40 strings, mahogany, \$7,500. Serial #9223. Three piece travel cover and dust cover included. Email mmason6288@yahoo.com. Northeast Ohio.

Salvi Daphne, 40 strings, natural, \$7,500. Built 2001, recently regulated May 2009, excellent condition. Serial #10950. Electronic tuner, three (3) piece travel cover and dust cover included. Email russiansam@musician.org or call (619) 582-5111. San Diego, California.

Salvi Diana, 47 string concert grand, ebony, \$15,000. Approximately thirty years old, extended soundboard. Beautiful warm, rich tone. Padded carrying case and dolly included. Call 931-215-6882. TN.

Salvi Diana, concert grand, high gloss ebony. Extended soundboard, 47 strings. Excellent condition. Fine Salvi sound quality. Must sell. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Salvi Diana, concert grand, high gloss ebony, \$22,500. One year old, professional quality. Perfect condition. Played by Amy Lee of Evanescence on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, see on You Tube. Includes Salvi three piece transport cover, used once, and matching stool. Call 856-786-9569. NJ.

Salvi Diana, concert grand, high gloss mahogany, \$19,000. Nine years old. Beautiful, full, rich sound. Perfect condition, never moved. Includes matching bench. Email plstykke@cox.net. AZ.

Salvi Orchestra, 46 strings, ebony. Straight soundboard. Very good structural and mechanical condition. Rent to own. Low price. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Salvi Orchestra, 46 strings, walnut/natural, \$9,500. Beautiful tone. Includes cover and dolly. Call 850-897-8233.

Salvi Sinfonietta, 47 strings, maple, \$16,000. Six years old, special order maple with olive wood inserts, decorated soundboard. Perfect showroom condition. Call 520-991-4067. AZ.

Salvi Sinfonietta, semi-grand, mahogany, \$14,000. Four years old, 47 strings. Excellent condition. Transport covers included. Call Cathy at 949-472-6132.

Swanson Empire, concert grand, blonde/semi-gilded, \$20,000. Lovely tone. Light, comfortable harp. Price negotiable. Call 617-309-8823. CA.

Venus 46 strings. Extended soundboard, goes down to low C. Includes padded cover and warranty. Low price. Rent to own. Call 403-678-6509 or email info@harpangel.com.

Venus Cherub, 44 strings, mahogany. Twenty-five years old, straight soundboard with decals. Very good condition. A striking instrument.

Email harp goddess@gmail.com.

Venus Encore, colonial maple, \$12,000. Custom decal. Excellent condition, beautiful tone.

Includes two covers, extra strings and cart. Call 740-350-7213. OH.

Venus Encore, concert grand, blond, \$10,900. Five years old, recently regulated. Comes with padded case, matching bench and stand. Call Dave at 215-723-3871. PA.

Venus Polonaise, concert grand, mahogany/bronzed details, \$33,000 o.b.o.. Four years old. Rare harp. Pristine condition. Includes cover, matching accessories and cart. Call 951-333-0884 or email celiaharp@aol.com. CA.

Venus Prodigy, 44 strings. Extended soundboard. Full rich sound. Includes five year warranty and padded cover. Call Canada 403-678-6509, info@harpangel.com or US 860-675-0227, peterreis@harps-international.com.

Wurlitzer DDX, concert grand. Rare harp. Gothic design. Extended and decorated soundboard, 47 strings. Rebuilt six years ago, new neck, bottom body base frame, re-riveted, gilding restored. Wonderful sound. Photos available. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Wurlitzer "B", 46 strings, gold. Straight soundboard. Excellent condition. Exceptional sound. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Wurlitzer AA. Extended soundboard. Newly regilded. Like new, fine structural, mechanical and cosmetic condition. Rent to own, low price. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Wurlitzer DDX #988, Concert Grand, \$19,700. Completely rebuilt by Lyon & Healy. One owner. Fantastic look and sound. Shipping trunk. Contact Gerald Goodman, 212-249-0240. goodmansharps@msn.com.

Lever Harps For Sale

Blevins Cynde, 30 strings, cherry/birch, \$950.

New 2001. Loveland levers on F's and C's. Excellent condition. Includes cherry leg set, padded case, tuning key and spare strings. Call 951-237-3976 or email bunit@charter.net. CA.

Camac Alan Stival, 38 strings, high gloss finish. Fully levered, gut strings, round back, concert spacing and tension. Harp designed by renowned folk harper, Alan Stivell of Brittany. Full rich, celtic sound. Includes heavy padded transport cover. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Camac Electro-harp, 32 strings. Fully levered. Ultra-light, carbon fiber construction, True Fire custom finish. Professional tripod and harness available. Great jazz instrument. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Camac Mademoiselle, 40 strings. Fully levered,

concert spacing and tension. Looks and feels like a small pedal harp. Two year warranty. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Camac Melusine de Concert, 38 strings, high gloss finish, low price. Fully levered, round back, professional quality. Heavy padded transport cover available. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

John Pratt Chamber Harp, 36 strings. Hand crafted, fully levered with Camac levers, extended soundboard. Concert spacing, concert tension. Exceptional sound. Includes five year warranty and padded carrying case. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

John Pratt Debutante, 36 strings, natural maple, \$3,600. Hand crafted, fully levered with Camac levers, concert tension, straight soundboard. Includes padded cover and full five year warranty. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

John Pratt Princessa, 36 strings, sapeli mahogany, \$3,195. New, hand crafted, traditional column with crown, concert spacing and tension. Beautiful tone. See at www.summer-hayesmusic.com.

John Pratt chamber harp, camac lever 36, Bubinga, \$4,200. Beautiful African Bubinga wood, 4 years old, excellent condition call Dana at 630-554-7972 will email pictures, includes padded Pratt case. Chicago area.

Lyon & Healy Prelude, 38 strings, mahogany, \$3,800. Excellent condition. Tuning key and cover included. Call 513-967-9312. Cincinnati, OH.

Lyon & Healy Troubadour IV, 36 strings, maple/blonde, \$3,000. Serial #7986, performance levers. Excellent condition, very resonant. Includes Fishman pick-up, tuning key, Harpware chemise, L&H cover. Call 770-410-1903 or email harp@mindspring.com. Atlanta area.

Lyon & Healy Troubadour IV, 36 strings, natural, \$2,450. Serial #7254. Includes cover and shipping carton. Call 619-295-3901 or 619-823-2783 cell.

Lyon & Healy Troubadour IV, 36 strings, natural, \$3,000. Includes tuning key and cover. Call 541-888-5429. OR.

Noteworthy County Cork, 26 strings, cherry/curly maple, \$1,595. Full Loveland levers, Sitka spruce/curly maple soundboard, height forty-four inches, fifteen pounds, removable attached stool. Tuning key and padded carrying case. Call 619-522-0543. CA.

Rick Rubarth, Merlin, 35 strings, mahogany, \$3,100. Full Loveland levers, fluorocarbon strings. Includes Colorado Case padded transport cover and full five year warranty. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Stoney End Braunwen, 29 strings, cherry, \$1,350. Full Loveland levers, birch soundboard, seventeen pounds. Beautiful sound. Extra set of strings, tuning wrench and case included. Shipping paid by buyer. Call 828-273-3372. NC.

Stoney End Lorraine, 29 strings, walnut, \$700. Approximately six years old. Levers on C, F. Legs

and tuning key included. Photos available. US buyers only. Call 915-603-2444. Southern CA.

Swanson 36 strings, kelly green, \$2,995. Fully levered, Celtic decal. Fine condition. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Thormahlen Cygnet, 36 strings, maple, \$3,000. Complete levers. Pristine condition. Includes deluxe case and extra strings. Call 614-527-0245 or email jbachelor@wowway.com. OH.

Timothy Stormking, 40 strings, cherry, \$5,400. Camac levers. Fabulous tone that projects. Price includes case and import costs. See at www.TheHarpStudio.net. Call 607-687-3410. NY.

Triplett Axline, 30 strings, \$2,695. Fine-line harp series, fully levered. Excellent condition. Two year warranty. Includes fleece lined padded cover. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Triplett Celtic I, 34 strings, maple, \$3,200. 23 years old, beautifully seasoned, low C to A, full Loveland levers, 25 pounds. Amazing full bright sound. Includes tuning key, fleece lined padded case, and extra strings. Call 619-522-0543. CA.

Triplett Celtic II, 34 strings, walnut. Staveback, decorated with abalone binding and engraving on column. One of a kind. Magnificent sound. Excellent condition. Two year warranty. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Triplett Christina, 25 strings. Therapy harp. Full Camac levers, goes down to C below middle C, engraved floral design on soundboard. Seven year warranty. Includes ergonomic lap bar and harp strap. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

Triplett Nino, 34 strings, Baltic Birch, \$2,295. Nylon strings, low C to high A, Baltic Birch soundboard, beautiful artwork on fiberglass back, full set Camac levers. Sized for small hands and reach. Tuning key And fleece lined case. Call 619 522-0543. CA.

Triplett Sierra, 36 strings, \$2,995. New. Fully levered with Camac levers. Includes fleece lined case and seven year warranty. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. CT.

Triplett Wire strung, 35 strings. Bronze wire strings. Excellent sound, like a bell. Rent to own. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

William Webster Harp 40 strings, cherry, \$4,050. Camac levers, flared column, spruce soundboard. Beautiful tone. Looks like small pedal harp. Case included. See at www.TheHarpStudio.net. Call 607-687-3410. NY.

Harps Wanted

Lyon & Healy 85GP or similar, Up to \$12,000. 44 or 46 strings. Currently renting and wish to buy within our budget. Call 831-601-4553. CA.

Lyon & Healy or similar, semi or concert grand, \$3,500 to \$4,500. Please help. Looking for well maintained pedal harp. Call 316-650-7272 or email abigail5350@yahoo.com. KS.

Harps For Rent

Lyon & Healy pedal harps, starting \$100 monthly/\$200 deposit. Call 305-724-4081. See budgetharprentals.com. FL.

Pedal and lever harps for rent. Rent any length of time or rent to own. Available in US, Canada and Japan. Call Harps Unlimited International at 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com. US and Canada.

Triplett Sierra, 34 and 36 strings, cherry, \$70 per month. Call about rent to buy option. See at www.TheHarpStudio.net. Call 607-687-3410. NY.

Various lever harps for rent, 36 & 34 strings, \$80/\$85. Lever harps for rent in the Atlanta area Call 770-442-9172. GA.

Harp Accessories

New and used benches, music stands, dollies and trunks all makes and sizes. Call 860-675-0227 or email peterreis@harps-international.com.

ABOUT CLASSIFIED ADS

Subscribers to the print edition of *Harp Column* may list one free ad up to 20 words in any of our standard categories (harps for sale, harps for rent, etc.). All other classified ads will be charged a flat rate of \$20 for 20 words or less; ads over 20 words will be charged an additional \$20 per 20 words (21—40 words is \$40; 41—60 words is \$60, etc.). All ads appearing in the print edition of *Harp Column* will also appear at www.harpcolumn.com and vice versa.

Rules for counting words: The name of the harp manufacturer counts as one word, even two-word names like "Lyon & Healy" and "Dusty Strings"; the style of the harp counts as one word, even two-word styles like "Style 30"; "semi-grand" and "concert-grand" each count as one word; descriptions such as "gold," "walnut," etc. each count as a word; phone numbers and e-mail addresses each count as a word; every other word in the ad counts individually.

To place an ad, visit the classified ads section of www.harpcolumn.com. By placing your ad directly through the Web site, you will have the ability to make changes to it yourself and remove the ad immediately when your harp sells. You may also place your ad by calling 800-582-3021 or e-mailing cringen@harpcolumn.com.

Ads will be approved and placed on our Web site upon receipt of payment. *Harp Column* assumes no responsibility for veracity of classified ads or for anything concerning the products described in the ads.

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