

This article by Aryeh Frankfurter was first published in the July 2022 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter

You can find Aryeh's PDFs at www.harpcenter.com/Frankfurter

In last month's issue, we featured Lisa Lynne. This month, we are proud to feature another talented harpist and arranger, [Aryeh Frankfurter](#), who is Lisa's husband! Here's what Aryeh has to say about himself and his music.

Music was always central to my life, but I never imagined it would become my vocation. I was in grad school getting a doctorate in philosophy when attending a Pete Seeger concert changed everything. I was inspired to live a happier and more meaningful life, so I left the program, moved to San Francisco, and became a street performer.

It still surprises me that the folk harp would be the primary instrument of my musical journey. I began with classical violin lessons at age three, and at twelve, I played in university-level orchestras. I eventually studied under the concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony. In college, I played violin and viola in chamber music ensembles under teachers from the San Francisco Conservatory.

I explored many musical styles in my teens: progressive rock, jazz fusion, and various ethnic music genres. At age 15, while busking with my fiddle at the Agoura Renaissance Fair, I was introduced to the Celtic Harp. I became enchanted with folk music, and the Celtic harp became my focus.



I busked my way through my Berkeley college years, becoming "The Harp Guy," one of the colorful and eccentric figures that haunted the campus, along with the Polka Dot Man and the Bubble Lady. When my professors wondered what I was doing, I replied: "Living my life philosophically (through music) rather than talking about it."

I returned to San Francisco and started busking full-time around 1993. Over time my geography grew from BART stations and street corners to popular tourist destinations like Ghirardelli Square and the Cannery - then to farmers' markets, art fairs, festivals, and events up and down California.

I used a Tascam 4-track tape recorder to hand-duplicate my cassettes, one by one, to sell on the street. It grew from there to self-producing a full-length album each year. Between the tips and selling tapes - and then CDs - I earned a good living and bought a house in San Francisco.

While playing at Ghirardelli Square, a couple of Swedish fiddlers asked if I'd like to go to Sweden to perform at a music festival there. So, off I went to Sweden! I had no idea that this experience would change the entire trajectory of my musical/artistic life.

I didn't know much about Swedish music but discovered it was evocative, haunting, elegantly powerful, and quite challenging. I couldn't resist. I came home with dozens of CDs and listened to nothing else for about a year. Eventually, I transcribed and adapted some of the tunes for the harp. My first Nordic-centered album, "Harp Songs of the Midnight Sun," was released in 1998.



I performed at several harp conferences. One fellow harper who noticed me was Lisa Lynne. She wrote to me, saying that she enjoyed my Nordic albums, and asked if we could exchange CDs. I was familiar with her Windham Hill recordings, so I was flattered by her request and said, "Yes!" We met when I played a 2006 concert at Sylvia Woods Harp Center with fellow harpist and Nordic music enthusiast Beth Kolle. Lisa and I became friends, started making music together and merged our lives.



Since Lisa played most of the harp in our duo, I focused on the nyckelharpa I had purchased in Sweden, and recorded several albums featuring this instrument. (You can read more about this unique Swedish instrument on my [website](#).) I also played multiple instruments supporting Lisa's music in her Windham Hill tours. Aside from some harp duets in our concerts, the harp receded from my focus for a while.

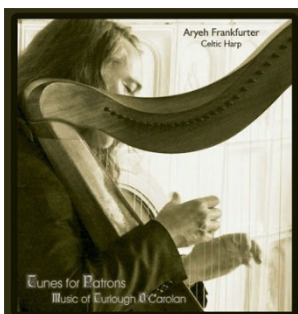


Patrick Ball was always one of my harp heroes. I had been listening to his recordings since I was a teen just starting on the instrument. (I also loved music by Kim Robertson, Chris Caswell, Derek Bell, and Alan Stivell.) Around 2010, Patrick was looking for musicians to expand his shows and help underscore his storytelling. The chemistry was immediate when Lisa and I met him. We performed and toured with Patrick for eight wonderful years with our "Legends of the Celtic Harp" show, which told legendary stories of the harp through time. Performing with Patrick was one of my most rewarding musical experiences.

Lisa and I married in 2015. The following year we left San Francisco and bought a ten-acre farm in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. We have a large music barn and host events for the local community. I plant gardens and fruit trees, drive a tractor, and am the primary servant to our orange Maine Coon cat, Nigel.



Lisa and I still tour and play with other musicians, performing at large and small stages throughout the West Coast. We teach at music camps and give presentations at harp conferences and symposiums.



In 2021 I returned to my harp roots, recording and releasing a solo harp album, "Tunes for Patrons: Music of Turlough O'Carolan." I am also breaking out my fiddle once again, as I have recently developed an affinity for old-time music.

Life, so far, has been a wonderful ride, and I owe it all to the harp.

-- Aryeh

Editor's note: On Aryeh's website, you can [purchase his CDs and mp3s](#) and watch [18 videos](#) of his performances.