

This article by Felice Pomeranz was first published in the October 2019 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter

You can find Felice's book at www.harpcenter.com/Felice

When you are a professional harpist, people invariably ask, "What made you want to play the harp?"

Ever since I can remember, I have always wanted to play the harp. This fall, (just like Sylvia Woods), I have played the harp for 50 years! I still look at this beautiful instrument and think how blessed I am to be able to go to work every day and love what I do!

I was born and lived first in Los Angeles. When my parents divorced, I chose to live with my mother in Lawrence, Kansas. While there, I began playing a lever harp, studying with the gracious and charming Margaret Ling. When my mother became ill, I returned to Los Angeles to live with my father and stepmother. I was heartbroken and very lonely. Fortunately, we met Dorothy Remsen through the LA Philharmonic, and she introduced me to Marjorie Call. Marjorie quickly became like a mother to me, and the harp became my best friend.



During high school, I attended the Interlochen summer camp in Michigan and met many amazing musical friends. I even played for President Ford (the first of four presidents for whom I've played)!

After high school, I went to the University of Redlands so that I could continue my studies with Marjorie Call. During my freshman year, a few of my pals from Interlochen said that they were auditioning for the Tanglewood Summer Institute. I had no idea that Tanglewood was the summer home of the Boston Symphony (BSO) or that this magical place would change my life! I won a fellowship to study there the following summer. I was humbled and honored to work with Seiji Ozawa, Sir Colin Davis, Klaus Tennstedt, Gunther Schuller, and my idol, Leonard Bernstein! I especially enjoyed having lessons and coaching with Maestro Schuller and the BSO principal harpist, Bernard Zighera. At the end of the summer, Maestri Schuller and Zighera suggested that I should come to Boston to study at the New England Conservatory (NEC). I moved to Boston and have been here ever since!

Shortly after graduation from NEC, I met Deborah Henson-Conant, who also had just moved to Boston, and Carol Kulzer, who played at the Ritz Carlton. We three founded The Gilded Harps, of which I am still the Director and now sole owner. The Gilded Harps is a music consortium of the best professional harpists, string players, flutists, and now jazz musicians, in the Greater Boston area. We provide music for all kinds of events and perform extensively all year long. I am gratified with our success and amazed at how popular the harp has continued to be! Playing in The Gilded Harps has made it possible for me to play for celebrities, politicians, heads of state, presidents, and kings and queens. Please see our www.gildedharps.com website for more information about the company.

Ten years after graduating with my bachelor's degree from NEC, I returned there to pursue a Master's in Jazz Studies. To this day, I believe I am still the only harpist to receive a Master's in Jazz from that venerable institution.

In the fall of 2001, Berklee College of Music decided to add harp as an instrument in the String Department. I applied for the sole faculty position and was hired in January 2002. We have grown from one harp student in 2002 to eleven this fall and have had as many as fifteen at one time! We now also offer lever harp as well as pedal harp as a major. Harp students can be Performance Majors, but they can also explore Music Therapy, Song Writing, Music Engineering and Production, Film Scoring, Video Game writing, and many other exciting fields of study. I have been so gratified and proud of my students who have gone on to prestigious careers in music. Some of the many students we've had include:

- Mairi Chambeul (who now teaches at Berklee)
- Maeve Gilchrist
- Stina Hellberg Agback
- Charles Overton
- Pia Salvia
- Cesar Secundino Mendez
- and many other fine musicians!



So many great musicians give workshops at Berklee. For example, I was fortunate to work with the wonderful jazz pianist and author, Kenny Werner, on his "Effortless Mastery" clinic. Kenny is a great guy and a frequent visiting artist at Berklee.

Several of my students are collaborating with me on a new project of Contemporary Etudes for today's harp players. It will be suitable for pedal and lever harp and will be available in the next few months. We are all donating our time to this project, and the proceeds from sales of the book will go toward a Berklee Harp Scholarship.

My [Berklee Harp book](#) offers technique, exercises, and tunes to teach harpists to improvise. It is being used worldwide as a tool for improvisation.



I also have created the following:

- recorded several recordings with my jazz quartet
- produced a beginning Jazz Harp DVD called "Jazzy Beginnings"
- recorded a jazz harp play-along called "Harp in the Band"
- written many arrangements of popular pieces from the Great American Songbook

I have met so many amazing harpists at festivals and teaching all over the world. Many students come to Berklee, and others study with me online. I am also on the roster of Master Teachers in the Harp Column Academy. It's so gratifying to watch students progress!

Playing our beautiful instrument has made my life (and my family's life) so joyful and full of good friends. I will cherish all my great musical memories forever.

Photos:



1. Felice with her first pedal harp, giving a workshop and concert shortly after being named Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Harp Society in 2010.
2. Felice with her Berklee students performing at the American String Teachers' Association Conference.
3. Felice with Kenny Werner at his "Effortless Mastery" class at Berklee. "The reason I brought the Harpsicle is that it's easier to bring to class and the point isn't what you play, but your intention as you play it!"
4. Felice's jazz quartet: Barry Smith (bass) Felice, Yoron Israel (drums), Marco Pignataro (saxes)
5. Felice with the poster for her concert in Japan, 2019