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You can find Beth's PDFs at www.harpcenter.com/Kolle

Like many young girls, I was captivated by the sight and sound of the harp. It was a treat to drive past the home of 'The Harp Lady', which one could easily identify by the large gold harp centered just inside the beautiful stained glass window of the living room. How gorgeous! But I was learning piano, and then flute and guitar. And I was mentally hobbled by the odd notion that I must be angelically perfect in every way to play the harp, so just forget about it, Beth.



Then I met a harpist at my university, and she was a real person, not some angel, with the same foibles and questionable behavior that any other 20-year-old has. Although we played music together for years, it took me a long time to wrap my mind around the possibility of me playing the harp. It wasn't that I doubted that I'd like to learn harp, it was that I was afraid I'd love it, and that the harp would change the course of my life.

Well, guess what! That's exactly what happened when I finally sat down for my first harp lesson from my dear friend Tudy. As Harper Tasche, whom I met some time later, told a mutual friend: *'...and she was launched out of a cannon on a harp!'* Wheee!

Soon, like within weeks, I was composing and arranging music for the harp -- not great music, but it was at least a good first attempt. I listened to as many harp recordings as I could find, learning the best way to arrange a tune to bring out its best qualities. Along the way I discovered the harp community, found just about anywhere if you look hard enough: pedal, lever, wire, double, cross, triple, Latin....an amazing community of musicians unlike any other.



I also discovered gig-playing and found I loved playing harp in public. It's so much fun to play for people who have never been close to a harp before. But I wanted to break new ground on the harp, play unusual music. What could I possibly play that would be unusual and still delightful? On the sage advice of Harper Tasche (just do anything he advises you to do, it will be worth it!) I started the process of melding two of my interests: harp and Scandinavian music.



Delving through my memory of folk music from multiple years of teaching Scandinavian dance, I started arranging those exquisite tunes for the harp. In short time, *The Northern Folk Harp* collection of arrangements was born. I printed a few copies and handed them out to friends for critique, but someone wrote a lovely review and posted it to the Harplist. Orders started flowing in and I had to scramble to finish the book and bind my first hundred copies.

Several books and CDs followed, and I was invited to play and teach at several harp conferences around the US. A chance meeting with knitter and author Annemor Sundbe led me on a two-week trip to Norway, one of my favorite countries, where I played a concert at a festival in the valley called Setesdal.



That trip inspired the idea that within a year gave birth to the Harpa Tours. In 2006, 2008 and 2013, harpers from the US and Canada came together to tour Norway, and in 2006 we included a festival in Sweden. We put from 6 to 10 harps on the stage during our whirlwind two-week tours, playing in exotic settings and beautiful medieval churches, gaping at the scenery, and jamming with the locals wherever we went.

I've just finished my tenth book of harp arrangements, *Songs for the Midnight Sun* (Afghan Press). It's funny -- just about the time I think I've run out of gorgeous Nordic tunes, along comes a batch of new ones I've never heard before. I find I just have to stop right now and put them on the harp.

