

This article by Sylvia Woods was first published in the March 2017 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter

You can find Sylvia's PDFs at www.harpcenter.com/SylviaBooks

In my June 2014 Newsletter I started a new feature, highlighting composers or arrangers whose music is available through harpcenter.com. So far, 18 amazing harpists have been introduced. You can read about them in our [previous newsletters](#).

Several of you have emailed asking "What about Sylvia Woods?????" So, this month I'm featuring . . . myself . . . talking about my [original compositions](#).

I started learning the pedal harp during my freshman year at the Univeristy of Redlands in January 1969. Two years later, my sister moved to Paris, France, and sent me an LP by the Breton harper Alan Stivell. I fell madly in love . . . with Alan (though he never knew it), and also with Celtic harps. That's what started me on this journey.



Alan Stivell was also the inspiration for my only composition with lyrics: [Harpers Are Not Bizarre](#). In 1982 I drove to Santa Barbara for an Alan Stivell concert.

On the 90-minute drive home, I wrote the lyrics for this silly song. It has nothing to do with Alan, and he is definitely not bizarre, but his concert must have inspired me. Ever since then, I've ended my concerts with this wacky sing-along, complete with shooting an arrow from my harp strings. You can watch a video of me performing this song on the [sheet music](#) or [PDF](#) pages of the music, or on [YouTube](#).



From 1976 through 1979 I toured the U.S., Europe, Great Britain and Canada as a member of Robin Williamson and His Merry Band. (By the way, harper and future harp maker Chris Caswell was also a Merry Band member. He's 2nd from left in the photo.) I was allowed one harp solo per performance. For the first year or so, I played Alan Stivell's tune "Ys ", which I learned off of his "Renaissance of the Celtic Harp" album. Eventually Robin convinced me to try writing my own music. That was

something I had never really considered doing before! So I sat down at my harp . . . and my first composition was what eventually became known as "Metamorphosis " in my [Harp of Brandiswhiere](#) suite.

For the next few years I continued to write the music for the suite. I wrote "Brandiswhiere's Triumphant Return" in about 30 minutes. Some of the other songs took over a year to "get right."

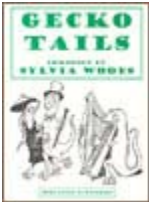


Tom Woods, my husband at the time, had the idea for the Brandiswhiere story. He's the one who named the characters Brandiswhiere and Gourenspur and came up with the initial concept of a harper who saves the world with his music. Tom, my brother Don Snyder, and I all collaborated



on writing the story. We hired Steve Douglas, an amazing artist from England, to create the illustrations. My brother Don was a recording engineer, and he recorded and produced the LP. His musical and orchestration ideas were invaluable to me. The [book](#) and LP (now on [CD](#)) were both released in 1982. The recording has won numerous awards including "Best Fantasy Album" by the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films, and several Popular Music Awards by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

My brother Don and I also created my two Christmas recordings: [Three Harps for Christmas Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#). Don suggested that I write an original Christmas tune, so I wrote [Winter Bells](#) for Volume 2.



Tom and I started coming to the Hawaiian island of Kauai in 1989, and we bought our first house here in 1990. I had wonderful employees at my store in Glendale, so I was able to come to Kauai for several months per year. This is where I wrote many of my books in the 1990s and early 2000s, and I also got back into composing my own music. My 2003 [Gecko Tails](#) suite was inspired by the cute (but annoying) geckos that live in all the houses here in Hawaii. The best-known piece from this suite is "Gecko Stroll," which is the tune that you hear whenever you enter my harpcenter.com site. I recorded a CD of the music, which comes with the book.

So, those are all of my original compositions that I've published (so far!). If you want to know more of my history, you can check out the [About Sylvia](#) page.

- Sylvia Woods