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You can find Ellen's PDFs at www.harpcenter.com/Tepper

I was born in Port Jefferson, New York. From early childhood, my parents fostered my love for music and creative arts. At the age of five, after seeing a group of young people playing harps on television, I knew that the harp would become my instrument of choice.



In 1960, when I was seven, my family moved to Vienna, Austria. I took piano lessons for a year, and when I turned eight, I began studying the harp under Hubert Jelenik at the Vienna Music Academy. As the youngest student at the Academy, I was known as *Die Kleine*, the little one.



After returning to New York, I studied harp with Pearl Chertok and Maestro Mario de Stefano. I attended the Philadelphia College of Art for a year and then enrolled at the Philadelphia Musical Academy, where I studied harp with Margarita Csonka Montanaro. She was an excellent teacher and brought to my attention a problem I had developed: I did not read music well and compensated by memorizing as I went along. (I certainly do not recommend this approach!) Under her expert guidance, I became a better musician and received a BM in Harp Performance in 1978.

I studied at Drexel's School of Library Science and ran the Settlement Music School library for a short time. I also worked as a baker at a natural foods restaurant and played harp gigs.

After taking time off to raise three children, I began teaching private harp lessons and have been doing so for over 30 years now. I love teaching all ages, and I especially like to work with students who have a musical background. Teaching is like doing a jigsaw puzzle, helping them find the missing elements to get to that "Aha!" moment.

I have performed at hundreds of weddings. I've also played for funerals, where I feel my harp and I provide something vitally important. My most difficult performances have been while playing through grief: for my best friend's funeral in 1979 and a whole weekend of gigs immediately after my father died on Good Friday in 2011.

For the past 20 years, I have performed off and on at the historic William Penn Inn in Gwynedd, Pennsylvania. Playing in a restaurant is difficult because I never know who is listening or precisely what they'd like to hear. I prefer to play in a concert setting, where I can interact more meaningfully with the audience. For that reason, I love to play in the memory unit of nursing facilities. I set the music free, and someone catches a memory. People tell me what has stirred them, and some even write poems about it. You never know how your music will affect the people who hear it.



When performing unfamiliar music, I've discovered I can engage an audience when I offer a context and make them laugh, so I talk about the music and set up jokes in my performances. A favorite is my program of "The History of the Harp in Ireland," where I tell stories and play both the Irish gut-strung and wire-strung harps.

A lifelong passion for early music has resulted in my collection of early harp replicas, as well as a baroque triple harp. In the early 2000's I played with the Practitioners of Musick, an early music group in Princeton. My most technically challenging performance with them was Handel's Concerto. I played it on the triple-strung harp, using the earliest score with the original instrumentation. I've also served as a faculty member at Early Music Week at Pinewoods Camp in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Although I'd never sung before, I started taking voice lessons about ten years ago. I now sing with Terry Kane in our duo The Jameson Sisters, playing my Celtic harp while Terry plays the mandolin. We perform Celtic music, standards, and opera arias. We have two CDs: *Burns Night!* is Scottish music, and *Neat!* is Irish.



I've been torn between art and music my entire life. In the late 1990s I began to work in polymer clay and combined that with dressmaking to create historical dolls and dolls for breast cancer survivors. I also began to paint the images that I had embroidered. I make Reverse Paintings on plexiglass, painted from the back with oil-based ink markers and acrylic paint, a technique which requires thinking backward and putting the finishing touches on first.

So indeed, my early family emphasis on both music and art has followed me throughout life. The best advice I've ever received was to *Keep Going! Learn more music, push the harp's envelope. And learn the standards, because people don't always know what they like, but they like what they know.*

Ellen

