

HARP NOTES

Newsletter of the Australian Therapeutic Harpists Association

Calendar of Events

ATHA AGM

Our ATHA AGM will be held on Tuesday 5th November at 7.30pm. Followed by our Tune-a- Month session. Please note, a nomination form can be found at the end of the newsletter.

Tune a Month

- Meets online first Tuesday evening of each month.

ATHA Discussion Group

- Meets online third Tuesday evening of each month.

National Therapeutic Harp Gathering

National Therapeutic Harp Gathering – Portarlington.
13th – 15th June 2025.

Alice Giles coming to Portarlington

(see full details on page 13)
Saturday 26th October 2024



Welcome to the 2024 Spring edition of the ATHA newsletter. Once again, we have a newsletter full of interesting and exciting content. Also, our AGM is coming up, so a nomination form has been included.

It's wonderful to have members recount what they have been involved in throughout the Winter months. I extend my personal thanks to all who share through contributions, their harping experiences. Please keep sending them.

Ever consistent, Brandden has provided another informative and helpful Workbench article.

I hope you find this edition informative and engaging. If you'd like to contribute to future editions, please contact me at harptranquility@gmail.com

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM is being held on Tuesday the 5th of November, after which the regular Tune-a-Month will follow. All offices are vacated, so if you are a full or associate member and would like to nominate for a position on the ATHA committee (this applies to all current office bearers), please complete the nomination form attached to the end of this newsletter and return to info@australiantherapeuticharpistsassociation.com prior to the AGM.

News from our Members

From ACT

Alison Ware

The Therapeutic Harp program continues across Canberra Health Services offering both staff wellbeing programs and bedside patient visits.

During winter I presented at the Spiritual Care Australia conference on the therapeutic use of music within hospital and community settings.

It was well received, and it was wonderful to be acknowledged by Kirsty Beilharz in her presentation on “The role of Creativity and Reflection in Spiritual Care, including practical applications of music, arts and media”.



Spiritual Care Australia Conference presenting on therapeutic music within hospital and community settings



At the conference I enjoyed talking to people also offering music programs in healthcare however, all stated that funding remains difficult to secure. This makes it difficult for music programs to be offered on a regular basis.

Harp yoga continues both in community and for the Cancer council of the ACT. Accompanying a yoga session with live harp music is a lovely way to support others in community and harp music adds another layer of support for participants.

I will be co presenting with Jo Carroll a retreat day for cancer patients funded by the cancer council of the ACT next weekend. This is a new initiative offered to include harp yoga, art processes, hand massages and interactive wellbeing sessions



I continue to visit the zoo. The Wapiti Elk have become very responsive to the harp and its always a joy to play for them.

I continue to be grateful for the opportunities the harp and creative arts have given me.

Alison – www.harpcare.com.au

From NSW

Nicky Lock

A precious moment with my reverie harp....



I have just been getting back after COVID to taking my reverie harp into the aged care facility where I volunteer and inviting residents to feel its vibrations...

The first week I did this, I held it for one of the residents who has been slipping deeper and deeper into her dementia over the past few months. Currently she is generally completely passive and unresponsive to anything that is going on around her.

However, this day some magic happened. I held the harp in her lap and guided her hand to touch the back of the reverie harp and then gently strummed it.....right at that moment she turned to me and smiled the biggest smile.

The recreation officer was with me, and she was completely astounded at the woman's connecting reaction to the harp and how she reconnected with us all in a visible way at that moment.

Wow - moments like this help us to realise how precious this work is.....

MacMasters Beach NSW October Self-care weekend retreat bonus!

Morning workshop run by US based sound healer, medieval harp improviser and vocalist Ruth Cunningham.

Ruth is a classically trained musician, a sound healing practitioner, and a founding member Anonymous 4. She combines these skills to improvise music that connects people to the healing and spiritual power of music. She specializes in improvisational sacred music from varied spiritual traditions in both liturgical and concert settings. <http://www.ruthcunningham.com>

We have been able to secure Ruth to run a Saturday morning workshop for us at our retreat weekend. Ruth will join us by Zoom from her home in New York and will teach us how to incorporate humming and chanting practice with our therapeutic harp work. She will guide us in tailoring a meditative sound journey for our group. We plan to workshop her material further over the weekend.

The workshop itself will be open to all ATHA members and other interested therapeutic harpists to join us online.

Depending on numbers attending, the workshop fee will be the order of \$40.

Contact Nicky Lock on familylock@bigpond.com for more information

You're invited to attend...

A SELF-CARE WEEKEND RETREAT

at beautiful MacMasters Beach, on the NSW Central Coast

Friday 18th - Sunday 20th October, 2024

Come along and enjoy some rest and relaxation, in the company of your therapeutic harpist friends. This is a weekend to rejuvenate and recharge, whilst enjoying some low key workshops, improvisation, jam sessions, sharing of ideas and experiences, and building friendships.

There will be a small cost to cover accommodation and workshops. BYO food (or we can arrange if logistically this is difficult for you). Final cost will depend on total number of participants.

Numbers are strictly limited (maximum 10 people)
To secure your place, please send your \$50 deposit to:

Account name: N J Sheppard Lock
Account no: 3028323
BSB: 512 170

To register, and for more information, please email Nicky at: familylock@bigpond.com

Clare Steward

Hi all! For those who don't know me, my name is Clare Steward and I am currently a student in my final unit of study with the THTP. My two major tasks these past few months have been completing my Independent Study (*'Therapeutic Music in Liminal Spaces'*) and accruing my Practicum hours.

For me, this is all taking place across a local palliative care unit, a large metropolitan hospital and a local Riding for the Disabled Centre (RDA).

Although I spend the vast majority of my time playing in the hospital setting, I feel very fortunate that at THTP a portion of our practicum hours may be spent playing for animals. I have spent many lovely hours with the four horses at Richmond RDA – Gibson, Burger, Monty and Mac.

I thought I might share some of my more interesting reflections, each taken from a different day, as well as a photo of my friend Mac – giving the harp a good sniffing!

'Gibson came and investigated the harp again – he had a big fairy ladder in his mane – I felt like I was playing for unicorns xxx. The sun was warm on my back. Gorgeous.'

'It is right to honour the silence – there is something there.'

'A very settled and serene afternoon. Burger's entrainment was incredibly calming for me – his breath, his sleepy eyes. Who is helping whom?'

For those unfamiliar, a 'fairy ladder' is a series of twisty looking knots that form naturally in a horse's mane, to make a kind of loose plait. Folklore has it that the 'fairies' would come at night and choose only the very best horses to ride, making 'fairy ladders' in their manes to use as reins.

It may also interest non-horse people to know that a horse's resting heartrate is about 40bpm – much slower than ours. This is one of the reasons that horses make such excellent therapy animals. They also use entrainment *all the time* – the herd can hear and match each others heartbeats (and ours!) and uses this information as an early detection system when danger is around; if a herd member's heartrate increases, there must be a threat nearby. Our heartrate will often entrain with our horses – this is frequently observed during riding therapy when a participant is anxious or unsettled at the start of a session, but quickly calms and relaxes once close to or mounted on their equine partner.





More animals!!

During the practical component of my Independent Study at Nepean Hospital, I had the enormous delight of playing for the Nepean Therapy Dogs.

Aren't they so gorgeous?! These little guys get pushed around the hospital in special 'prams' to visit anyone who needs a cuddle and a laugh.

Their handlers and I had a ball in the otherwise lonely P1 carpark waiting area!

This was an entirely accidental meeting (while I collected data about music in liminal spaces!) but so much fun!

It was also my privilege to be invited to speak at the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District's Palliative Care Conference on 23rd August.

I gave a presentation on 'Therapeutic Music in Palliative Care' and spoke with our clinicians, staff and volunteers about what a therapeutic musician does and the use of both the Celtic and reverie harp at end of life.

Lots of folk came and tried the reverie harp during our lunch break and so many wonderful conversations were sparked – the strings were touched and new ideas were planted. I felt very humbled to be a part of this fantastic day and to share what we do, alongside such incredible clinicians and palliative care staff.

This work takes me along a deeply beautiful path. 'The beautiful terrible' (from the book 'Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day', by Kate Bowler).

With each step, the path reveals itself more, but *only* as each step is taken. I am so grateful for the support, generosity and insights that ATHA and its members share with me along the way.

Take care and have a "beautiful, terrible day" x.

Louise Bell

The Harmonising Harp

*Modal music for
therapeutic harpers
by Louise Bell*



- I'm creating a new collection to enhance our therapeutic harping
- Over 20 original compositions!
- Major Modes: I've composed ~ and transposed ~ two pieces for each of the 7 modes, one in keys of A, B^b, C, D; the other in keys of E^b, E, F, G ~ crafted specifically for those ranges, and versatile for perception and reflection of resonant tone (14 pieces)
- Minor Modes include Phrygian Dominant & 4th Octave Overtones
- Tunes in 3 different Pentatonic scales
- Varied arrangements ~ Easier and Intermediate versions, as well as Leadsheets: simply play the right hand melody + the big letter with left hand, or create your own chord voicings
- Improv chord guides will extend playing time and liberate melody
- Includes theory of scales, modes and chords, with colourful charts
- Bonus styles: Jazz, Blues, Latin!
- Can be played on harp or piano
- Simpler than the pieces in *Modal Magic* louisebell.com.au/shop-1

I'll let you know as soon as it's available for purchase!

Email: music@louisebell.com.au

© Louise Bell 2024

From Victoria

Anke Arkestyne

This story might inspire you. It for sure helped me to think more positively about my harp playing.

When I perform in a concert or play for other harpers my hands get jittery and affect my playing. But if I have to play for residents in a nursing home or in hospitals, I do not have that jittery hand shaking, because it is not about myself, it is what I can be, or do, for the other person or persons.

One day I went with my student to a nursing home in Emerald. She works there to get the hours and experience needed for her IHTP certificate.

Marc the lifestyle manager is from the Ukraine and he is the best life style manager I have ever met. As soon as he saw me and Anke Wagner he ran up to me and asked me if I would play for 15 residents visiting from another nursing home.

"I just want to show off what we do here," he said. It was a glorious day! The fountain murmured pleasantly in the background, and the distant hills were clearly visible. It was a *paradise day* as I call those windless, sunny, not to hot days.

I greeted the ladies and gentlemen and started to play 'Bygone Days' on my small Blevin therapy harp. When I was finished one lady stood up and with her hand on her heart, she said, "I have never had a harp touch my heart as your small harp just did, thank you, thank you." All the others showed their agreement by vigorously nodding their heads. Needless to say, I was grateful for the feedback but curious. I asked why she came to that conclusion.

"We have, now and then, a concert harp come to play at our nursing home and it does not touch me as your harp does, and the pieces are so long we lose the plot!"

I was really touched by that comment because so often I have thought I am not good enough...if only I could play like Mary or Alice. But a comment in Glenda Underhill's book stuck with me. It is when Orla, coming to the harp as an adult, is told that she may not be a great harper, but she will be an important one.

Holding that thought takes the self-imposed comparing out of harp playing for me, and makes space for my music to flow more. I can trust my intuition and become a better harper to assist other souls.

We never know what is coming our way.

Years ago, when I was studying for IHTP, I played for a group of wealthy people living with dementia. Halfway through 'Danny Boy', one of the ladies shouted at top of her voice, "IF ONLY THEY HAD PAID HER MORE, SHE WOULD HAVE PLAYED BETTER!!!!!!!"

It was hilarious. On telling this story to my harp friend, she remarked, "Yes, only kids, drunks, and those living with dementia speak the truth....."

Enjoy your harp!

Carla Whiteley

Have harp, will travel 2008 - 2024

STAGE 1.

When you fall in love, you want to be with the object of your affections 24/7, and once you have fallen in love with a harp there is no leaving it behind. You just need to be with it and hold it, no matter where you go.

Travelling with a harp is a little like travelling with a baby, it can be very joyful but also difficult and anxious work in many ways.

My first harp was a small, 26 string, Denwar Harp, that I bought in 2008 with the aim of travelling with it, but how? The soundboard was rather broad, which posed its challenges.

I purchased a school sports bag with a Masonite base.



A canvas manufacturer made a cover with a zip. I was to go overseas for 4 months, visiting some of our children who were in far flung places in the world and the thought of being without a beloved instrument was not at all appealing.

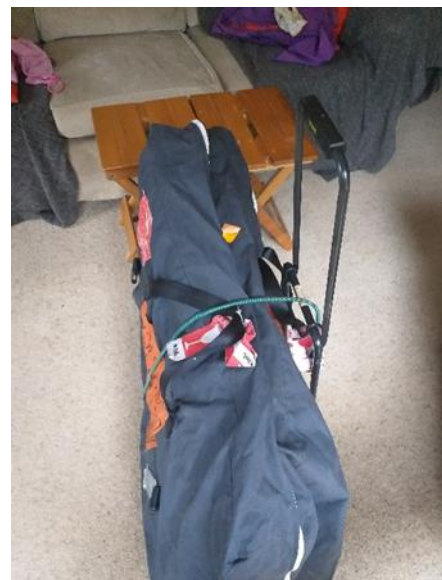
I have always travelled with my clothes in net-bags, (the sort you use in the laundry) one for tops, one for undies, one for shawls etc. I placed all the net bags around my harp and my toiletries.



The sports bag was strapped closed and the canvas bag was placed around the lot. The bag was then placed on a small trolley that I had purchased, at a well-known bag and suitcase store, and secured with octopus straps.



When I checked the bag into the oversized baggage section, the trolley neatly fitted in between the sports bag and the outer canvas bag.



We travelled in this manner through the USA, Ireland, England and parts of Europe and Asia. At times the shape of it was a little awkward, however I managed. The harp never came to any harm and I was delighted to have my beloved baby harp with me on my journeys.

STAGE 2.

Time came for me to farewell my Denwar harp and to purchase a Christina Therapy Harp. This harp had a smaller soundboard and came with a well-padded carry bag. The net-bags were once again such a blessing. I made a black-cloth cover for the harp and an orange label "Fragile Harp" I wheeled my suitcase, with all my clothes in net-bags, plus all the other odds and ends, to the airport. I had booked an extra suitcase. When I arrived at the airport, I placed all my net-bags with clothes, around the harp in its wonderful well- padded bag, said a prayer and took the



harp to oversized baggage. I travelled in this manner for several years and never did my harp sustain any damage.

STAGE 3.

I had heard of the Rees Fullsicle Harp, built specifically to fit into the overhead lockers. Personally, I was not excited by the rainbow-coloured ones. However, Rees produced a special edition fullsicle harp, Black American Walnut and Beech (they are still making these). When I was able to try it out I was surprisingly pleased with its sound and after selling some other instruments I was able to purchase one.

Thus commenced my last stage of travelling with my harp. I would wheel my suitcase and carry the harp on my shoulder. I had a few standup discussions with various efficient crew members but stood my ground. Since Covid this has not been quite such a problem as airlines have revised their policies and are now allowing small musical instruments to travel in the overhead lockers. I reached a point however, where I no longer wanted to carry a harp on one shoulder and wheel a suitcase with the other hand.

STAGE 4

Time to stop carrying the harp on one shoulder was my plan and purchase a Deluxe bag, a backpack harp bag.

I was unsuccessful in purchasing a deluxe bag, from Rees Harps as they were not manufacturing them until late 2024 and Brandden Lassells had none in stock. As luck would have it, I found a very creative and talented canvas maker in Gippsland. (Tarwin Lower, SG Canvas 0490 251 495 / 0427 679 559 for any-one that is interested).

He looked at the Rees deluxe bag on line, and was able to make a magnificent cover for my Fullsicle Harp bag which I was now able to carry on my back. So, this was my fourth attempt at travelling with my harp.

I have just returned from 3 weeks in the Netherlands and the UK visiting family and friends. Travelling with my harp on my back, wheeling a suitcase, and carrying my small back-pack with various small items on my front. It was brilliant, I have to tell you. The harp on my back made life so easy. I hardly knew it was there. It fitted beautifully into the overhead lockers.

I am looking forward to many more journeys with it in this manner.



Bernadette O'Rourke

Look who I played for one day ...

My therapeutic harp work takes me mainly to aged care facilities and hospitals...but sometimes my recipients are a 'little surprising'

They came over, loudly cheeping with curiosity...then they got cold bottoms and had to run back to get under the warm lamp light.

A week later there were eleven chicks. They lazily slept all over each other in a stack. When I very gently played music, they all raced over to watch and dance...when I stopped, they returned to their sleeping positions.



Sometimes I sit outside the hospital rehabilitation gym...I play quietly while patients are doing their exercises with staff supporting them.

In the hallway in front of me, patients walk between orange witch's hats placed on the ground, as they undergo assessments. I offer to play walking music ...I start off matching the persons speed and if the physiotherapist wants them to try walking a little faster, I increase my speed too. Results are often a pleasant surprise.

We all smile afterwards and some patients say the music carries them along, taking their minds off some of the nerves and discomfort.

Christine Middleton

How exciting!!

Alice Giles is coming to Portarlinton.

Alice is a world class harpist, Australian Antarctic Arts Fellow, and the granddaughter of Cecil Madigan, a member of Douglas Mawson's Australian Antarctic expedition 1911-1914, geologist, and Australian expeditioner.

Alice will facilitate a Harp Workshop in the morning and treat the Harp and General community of Portarlinton to a very special Harp Concert in the afternoon.

Alice will speak about her grandfather, her music, and her trip to Antarctica where she performed at Mawson Station in 2011 commemorating the Centenary of the first Australasian Antarctic Expedition.

We've been fortunate to be treated to some wonderful harp events and this one is sure to be another.

This is such a rare and unique opportunity.

We'd love to have your company at what will be a very special event.



HARP WORKSHOP & CONCERT

Treat yourself to a lovely day of Harp, Food and a Wonderful Concert. Learn a simple tune, develop new skills, meet other harpists and share the joy of our chosen instrument. Open to all ages and levels of harp proficiency.

Alice Giles has been celebrated as one of the world’s leading Harp Soloists. As an International Touring and Recording Artist, she has performed extensively across the USA, Europe and the UK.

Described as a sensitive, intelligent and brilliant harpist, Alice was also a recipient of an Australian Antarctic Arts Fellowship, performing a solo concert at Mawson Station in 2011 commemorating the Centenary of the first Australasian Antarctic Expedition.

Numbers Limited. Please direct all Enquiries & Bookings to Christine.mi@bigpond.com or Mobile 0419 526 550

HARP WORKSHOP & CONCERT

10.00am-4.00pm

\$50

(BYO Lunch Plate to Share)

SATURDAY

26th October 2024

VENUE

Harp Workshop

10.30am-12.30pm

(Portarlington Uniting Church Hall)

**113 Newcombe St
Portarlington**

VENUE

CONCERT

(Portarlington Uniting Church)

**111-113 Newcombe
St Portarlington**

From Western Australia

Helen Punch

On Sunday 4th of August as part of the Dying to Know Day and in partnership with the South West Compassionate Communities Network, the Bunbury Garden Labyrinth was the venue for people to come and walk the labyrinth. Whether they be a carer, someone living with a terminal diagnosis, or living with the memories of someone who has died, walking the labyrinth is a safe place to reflect on death and dying.

“Labyrinths offer a space for those who come, to remember and honour loved ones, cherished times and contemplate life. In walking the path, we are invited to move from our usual busy lives, into quieter ‘being’ and nurturing spaces, within and around us. In doing so, labyrinths help us to find a centre of peace and calm”.

Helping to facilitate this event were Occupational Therapists, an Integral Wellness Facilitator, a psychologist and myself as a therapeutic harpist. After the walk we sat in a circle for people to share, listen or sit in silence. It was a beautiful day and the weather was kind to us with the sun shining.



Harp Workbench

As a service to the subscribers of this newsletter, Brandden Lassells of Harps and Harps will answer questions you may have pertaining to the making, maintenance or repair of harps.

Question: *What are some types of harps besides a standard folk harp?*

Most people are familiar with the typical Folk Harp, with a single course of strings commonly ranging from 12 to 44 strings. The world of semi-tone levers allows for playing the harp in various keys without retuning the strings but by engaging the lever and raising the string's pitch by a semi-tone. Options are to have semi-tone levers on none of the strings or perhaps on some of the strings, such as the more common keys needing only C# and F# or the B for b flat. Or, to play in any key, a complete set of levers with a lever on each string. This type of harp can have many labels, such as Folk Harp, Celtic harp, non-pedal harp, lever harp, diatonic harp, etc.

The double-strung harp has become popular recently. It has two rows of strings, or courses, that are precisely the same strings parallel to each other. Each side has its own set of levers. There are many interesting and creative ways to use the two rows, such as keeping your hands from running into each other, making it easier and faster to repeat notes, and using creative accidental/lever use.

Another classification is a chromatic harp, which can be played in various keys and does not require semi-tone levers but has all the strings required to play in the various keys. The 7/5 cross strung has seven diatonic strings crossing with five sharp and flat string accidentals. Much like a piano, one row being the white keys and the other the black keys. It is played near the centre where the strings cross and the sharps or flats can be played by reaching up or down. The Pleyel harp was a well known chromatic harp from another era. There is also a 6/6 cross-strung chromatic harp. One row is tuned in whole notes (6 notes in an octave) from C (c, d, e, f#, g#, a#) and the other row is also tuned in whole notes but from C# (c#, d#, f, g, a, b).

Another classification of the harp is the triple harp. In this situation, there are three parallel rows of strings. The two outer rows are diatonic scales, and one reaches through to the centre or chromatic row to play the sharps or flats.

Pedal or orchestral harps have more strings. The concert grand pedal harp has 47 strings. These strings are diatonic, and there is a mechanism active by seven pedals, one for each note in the scale, that allows the player to get sharps and flats. The concert grand is known as double action; for each of the seven notes, playing a semitone higher or a semitone lower is possible.

Any of these harps can come in a variety of sizes and shapes and are usually strung with nylon, gut, synthetic strings, or a combination of these. They can be amplified or even electric, with a pickup on each string.

This article has just touched on the more common harp types; there are many more, such as Latin American or Paraguayan harps, which tend to have lower tension and closer string spacing, and there are metal-strung harps.

Questions and comments for future "Harp Workbench" column of this newsletter can be addressed to the editor, Glenda Underhill harptranquility@gmail.com or to Brandden. Brandden Lassells, the proprietor of Harps and Harps, home of the light weight all carbon fibre harps. Brandden can be contacted on (07) 4125 8393, 0419 692 286 or through his website www.harps.com.au

Notice of nomination for a position on the committee of the Australian Therapeutic Harpists Inc. 2024-2025

Please return this nomination form to info@australiantherapeuticarpistsassociation.com before the AGM.

All positions will be declared vacant at the Annual General Meeting and separate elections will be held for each position. Nominations can only be made by full and associate members of the Australian Therapeutic Harpists Inc. who are over 18 years of age.

51 Nominations

- (2) An eligible member of the Association may —
(a) nominate themselves; or
(b) with the member's consent, be nominated by another member.

Committee positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Ordinary Member

(a) I wish to nominate for the position of _____

Name _____

Signed _____ Date _____

(b) I wish to nominate _____

for the position of _____

Name of proposer _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Acceptance of nomination by nominee: I accept the above nomination and agree to serve on the Committee in the position for which I was nominated.

Signed _____ Date _____