



Have Harp Will Travel

by Genevieve Duffy Winkenbach

Editor's note: For almost ten years, from 1948 until 1957, a group of five young women toured the United States playing under the name The Angelaires. In 1951, they were accepted by Columbia Artists Management and toured for Community Concerts, moving their harps and themselves through snow and ice and from coast to coast. Over the years, some twenty-one harpists played in the ensemble. The following is an account of one member's experiences during her stint with the group. The members of the Angelaires during the time described were Mary Jo Breusing Green, Carol Baum, Elyze Yockey Ilku, Marion Harding and Genevieve Duffy Winkenbach. For another account of the Angelaires, see Mary Jo Green's account "The Angelaires," which appeared in The American Harp Journal, Vol. 12, no. 4, Winter 1990.

IT'S 1953 and the Angelaires, a harp quintet under Columbia Artists Management of New York, are making a stop in Oklahoma to audition me to see if I am good enough to take Genny Hatter's place as the newest Angelaire the following year. Genny started the Angelaires at the Curtis Institute of Music while she was finishing her degree. Genny, Carol Baum, Elyze Yockey, Marian Harding and Jeanne Fintz Goldstein, all top notch harpists, made up the original group and were returning from a tour in Las Vegas.

After my audition, I was given some of the music to learn, enough to cover at least three hours, so I assumed I made the cut. Despite my having played some of the pieces at North Texas during summer school, the load was overwhelming! Working six to eight hours a day was the norm. At one point, Dr.

Champlin, our neighbor in Enid, Oklahoma, called my dad to say, "Don't you think your daughter is practicing her harp a little too much? I'd worry about her!" I tried to get most of the music learned before going to Pennsylvania where I stayed with Ginny Hatter at her home at Levittown, Pennsylvania. After several weeks with Ginny, I was ready to move to Philadelphia to live with Carol on Delancy Street, within walking distance of Curtis. It was an empty apartment, so we slept on cots and played the harp.

My boyfriend came over from Long Island in his convertible, which made for some interesting viewing as we rolled down the streets of Philadelphia with my harp sticking straight up in the air in the back seat. Needless to say, we had more than a few stares from people wondering what we were doing!

Practice at Curtis was an experience in itself. We climbed the three flights of stairs every day for at least a month. The school had five small size 14 harps for us to play on, and we each had our own harp in the apartment to work with at night. This intensive kind of rehearsing made us listen to each other constantly. As most of the music was in five parts, none of us could sit back and relax.

Some of the students at Curtis who arranged the popular music would come into the rehearsal to see if we were playing it right. Once we made the grade, the teachers from the school came in to check us out, even Salzedo himself made an appearance! They all had something to say to improve our performance (no surprise there).

Prior to this, I'd studied with Lilian Phillips at North Texas State University in Denton, Texas, during the summer, learning Salzedo pieces. I was even

asked to come back to the university for a grand concert which Salzedo himself would conduct. There were several days of rehearsals before the concert, and a dress rehearsal with Salzedo just before the big show. We thought everything was perfect, but Salzedo was able to pick out the one girl who made a mistake while twenty-five harps were playing. It's hard to hide from that kind of ear!

I went to Camden to study with Salzedo with the Texas girls. I must say I was quite nervous. In the winter time, I was working on my degree from St. Mary's of Notre Dame. My teacher there was Sister Trinitas who studied with Alberto Salvi. After graduating, my folks allowed me to go to New York City where I lived in Manhattan, and took lessons from Salzedo. In addition, I went to the Barbizon School, hoping I could earn money from modeling. You could starve if you relied only on the harp for income. Later, a classmate and I lived in an apartment on Long Island. Salzedo wasn't too excited about the hour and a half commute to get to my lessons.

After graduation, Mom and I went to Chicago to pick out my graduation present, which was a Lyon & Healy gold 23. After the harp was shipped home, Salzedo wrote me a note advising that "due to the size of [my] paws, I had picked out the wrong harp." Instead, he picked out the one he thought I should have, which had a beautiful sound. Luckily, Dad was okay with the swap as it ended up costing him even more money!

To get ready for the 200 stop concert tour (averaging two and a half concerts a week), we each received a letter from a bank used by Columbia Artists so we could cash our checks while we were on the road. The bus we were to ride in had to be reconstructed to take the five harps and their trunks. It wasn't a brand new bus, but it worked fine for us and was home while we were on tour.

For the first half of the concerts, with classical repertoire, we each had long pastel satin formals with spaghetti straps. Mine was light blue with Baker shoes dyed to match. We each had an extra long hatpin to pin up the skirt to avoid it getting caught in the pedals. For the second half, with lighter musical fare and popular arrangements, we changed into dresses of black lace, with a ballerina length safer for pedals.

Our harp trunks, sometimes serving as dressing rooms, had to be fitted with a mirror, shelf, clip to hold our dresses, a place for shoes with jewelry and make up (inside the shoe box), along with a complete extra set of strings, and a Lyon & Healy harp bench with legs folded in the top which was put on sliders on the post side of the trunk. On the outside, our names were printed in white, so we all knew which harp was ours. Of course, in preparation for the tour, all harps had to be regulated at Lyon & Healy.

After the concerts, all five harps in their wooden trunks were packed in the back of the bus. In the front of the bus, there were four double seats. Carol and I sat together because we both smoked at the time. My "busy work" was knitting argyle socks for different boyfriends (not all mine), and reading. While we were on the bus, we had to wear "church clothes" which did not include slacks, as was also the custom for our lessons with Salzedo, so we would "look the part of concert artists." We all eventually got used to seeing the same outfits everyday.

Luggage was limited, and I had an imitation alligator hatbox that did the trick for me. Naturally, at that time orlon skirts, sweaters, blouses, and our p.j.s had to be washed out at night, with radiators serving as our dryers. Typically, there would be two rooms pre-booked for us, with double beds in each. As there were five of us, we would take turns sleeping on the added cot. One time, in Canada, when the snow was up to the windows of the bus, the extra bed didn't have a mattress, only the springs, so blankets and pillows had to serve as the mattress. That was the night Matty Negri, our faithful driver, had to leave the heater on in the bus for the harps because it was so cold. Real concert star treatment for us!

Most of the time after our performances, we were given what we liked to refer to as "cavity receptions," due to the amount of sweets, cakes and cookies available, but every once in a while, like the time on Prince Edward Island, our hosts went all out and we even had to wear our formals. That happened to be the night I was so sick that I almost fell off the stage when we took our last bow. At the reception I talked to a local doctor who was good enough to call my dad for a prescription and even got the medicine

for me. All this done in French, so it really felt like an international stop. There were always write-ups in the local papers at each stop, and those were sent to our folks back home.

At Michigan State, a student recorded our concert with what was the best technology available at that time (old 78 records). The needles on phonographs moved from the outside to the inside of the record. The problem with this particular recording was that the student had recorded it in reverse, so it could only be played without using the phonograph's automatic arm, to allow the needle to move from the inside of the record to the outside.

We had our share of interesting bus drivers. Our first, Frank, (I think that was his name) didn't last too long. In Pittsburgh, he almost started a fight with someone he thought was taking his parking place. Then Carol had to call Mike Lanin (vice president of Howard Lanin Management, our manager and contact in New York) to tell him the bus driver had a girlfriend riding in our bus whom he was "renting out" each night in the hotel. Needless to say, that didn't go over too well.

Our new bus driver, Matty, (Matthew Negri) was great, although he would get a little upset with us when we insisted on eating in restaurants that were "pretty." Moving those harp trunks around wasn't much fun, but he was pretty good natured about everything.

Before the concert, Liz had the job of tuning all the harps. We didn't have a strobe, only the C tuning fork. Only one person tuned, so that all the harps would be the same. Carol was elected to give a talk at each concert on how the harp works and how to care for them. Some of these talks had to be in French in the Montreal area. Having someone who spoke French also helped in the Canadian restaurants too!

To make the stage look balanced, we put the two Salzedo models, belonging to Carol and Liz on either side. Then we put the natural 23s, belonging to Marian Harding and Mary Jo Brusling Green inside the Salzedo models. My gold 23 went in the middle.

Some of the things that happened during the concerts were kind of laughable. One night while we were playing Salzedo's *Whirlwind*, something went

wrong with the heating exhaust. It got so dark from stage left to stage right, that one-by-one, we dropped out, and eventually, only one of us was left playing. The local papers had fun with this one with cartoon drawings of all five girls coughing and sneezing.

Another time when we were using the hat pin to pin up the skirt of the long formal, Liz looked down and saw that she was still wearing her fur-lined snow boots. At yet another stop, we didn't have dressing rooms, and the only light was the stage light. I couldn't find my bra. Carol's friend Paul was sitting in the balcony and, looking down, could see my bra spread out in all its glory, hooked on my crinoline slip!

At one point, we were scheduled to play in Toronto with Andre Kostelanez conducting. The newspaper article read, "5 Harps Reach Town but Angel Missing." The night before the concert, my boyfriend and I had gone dancing at the Rainbow Room in New York. I missed the train and ended up staying in a hotel in New York. I woke up early the next morning to catch a train to Toronto and barely got to the concert on time.

We played various TV shows including Steve Allen's *Tonight Show*. On one TV program, they set us on glass risers set at five different levels which made it quite difficult to hear one another but we seemed to make it through unscathed. Like many performers, we had our routines. Just before starting any concert or show, we would remember to say a quick prayer that we'd do well.

The Angelaires did reunite one more time as a group when Mary Jo Brusling Green put together quite a program in Chicago for the AHS conference, including the dresses we wore, a map of where we'd been, pictures of the bus and of us, and a recording of us playing. We even played our arrangement of *Oklahoma*. It was wonderful to be together again. To this day, we've remained very close and all treasure what we shared together. Today's concert tours are nothing like what we went through, but I wouldn't change a thing about the Angelaires or the run we had together!

Postscript: After the Angelaires, Elyze Yockey went on to play with the New Orleans Symphony and then the Detroit Symphony. Carol Baum played

with the Chicago Symphony and then moved to Boston to freelance. Marian Harding has played at the Birmingham Inn and with other orchestras in Birmingham. Mary Jo Bruesing Green (now deceased) played with the Chicago Lyric Opera with Elizabeth Cifani. I went on tour and played for T.V. shows with the Fred Waring Orchestra, and one summer with Duke Ellington.

Sample Angelaires Program

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| I. | Music in Spanish Styles: | |
| | Pavane | 16th Century Spanish |
| | Spanish Dance No. 5 | Granados |
| | Cancion en la Noche | Salzedo |
| | Malaguena | Lecuona |
| II. | Sixth French Suite | Bach/Salzedo |
| | Allemande | |
| | Sarabande | |
| | Gavotte | |
| | Minuet | |
| | Bourée | |
| III. | The Sunken Cathedral | Debussy |
| | On Wings of Song | Mendelssohn |
| | Fraîcheur | Salzedo |
| | Clair de lune | Debussy |
| | Whirlwind | Salzedo |
| <i>Intermission</i> | | |
| IV. | Variations & Finale on the French Song
"Au clair de la lune" | arr. Paul Soffray |
| | O'Donnell A'Boo | Irish Folk Song |
| V. | Jamaican Rhumba | Arthur Benjamin |
| | All the Things You Are, from "Very Warm for May" | Jerome Kern |
| | Lover, from "Love Me Tonight" | Richard Rogers |
| | Black Magic | Harold Arlen |
| | Hallelujah, from "Hit the Deck" | Vincent Youmans  |

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