

# INTRODUCTION TO THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

30 years ago, in 1978, when I wrote this book, the harp world was a far different place than it is today. There were only a handful of craftspeople making harps, and they often had waiting lists of a year or more. Because of this, harps were not as easy to purchase as they are today. There were also only a few recordings (LPs) of music performed on lever or folk harps.

When I began teaching, I realized that there was also a lack of music for the folk harp. Most of the music available was for the pedal harp, or for young children whose legs weren't long enough to reach the pedals. I couldn't find books that were suitable for the people who were becoming interested in the resurgence of the folk harp. That is why I wrote this book.

Folk harp teachers were also hard to find at that time. There were lots of pedal harp teachers, but a vast majority of them were not interested in teaching anything that didn't have pedals. This is why I entitled the book "Teach Yourself," because in those days, that was the only option for most players. And thousands of players have done just that . . . they have taught themselves to play just using this book, and also perhaps the video or the DVD.

Luckily, today you don't have to do it on your own. There are thousands of teachers throughout the US (and other parts of the world!) who are ready and willing to help you learn to play the harp. I highly recommend that you start lessons with a teacher as soon as possible. No matter how good a "teach yourself" book may be, the guidance and feedback you get from a teacher is invaluable. It is easy to get into bad habits without someone "looking over your shoulder" and showing you the correct way. Bad habits are harder to fix later than if you learn correctly from the beginning.

The "Thanks To" section on page 2 of this book is from the original edition. On the first line you'll see that I thank "Katharine, Shawna, and Heidi for being great guinea pigs." These were three of my first students, and were the first people to learn the harp by using this book. I'd like to give you an update on them. Katharine has been "taking some time off" from the harp, but has recently begun to play again on both lever and pedal harp. Shawna was 11 years old when she started lessons with me. She's now a professional harp player named Shawna Selline, and we sell her CDs on our website. And Heidi is Heidi Spiegel, a harpist who has been working for me since 1988 and who is an invaluable asset to the Sylvia Woods Harp Center. She is also a fine artist who has illustrated the covers of over a dozen of my books and pieces of sheet music.

**In this 30th Anniversary Edition, I have kept all of the music pages exactly as they were in the first edition. Only the introduction and appendix pages have been revised.**

There are no sharps or flats in any of the pieces in this book. At the time I wrote this book, sharpening levers were not nearly as good, or as accurate, as they are today. They generally did not give an accurate pitch when engaged, and often wore away the strings. Many harps sold at that time didn't have any levers at all. That's why you don't need any sharpening levers to play the pieces in this book. (See pages 73 and 74 for more information on how to use sharpening levers.)