

This article by Kathryn Cater was first published in the October 2014 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter



You can find Kathryn's PDFs at [www.harpcenter.com/Cater](http://www.harpcenter.com/Cater)



Honestly, I wanted to be a ballet dancer, but Mom didn't know that, so I got piano lessons. In kindergarten my piano teacher gave such impassioned speeches that I discovered I could slip under the bench, run to the kitchen for a snack and return before she even knew I was missing! My mother, however, was watching, and thus realized I was not a child prodigy.

In second grade I started with a new teacher. I struggled with boring exercises but would play the pretty pieces in my Thompson book for hours. I wished all my lesson pieces could be fun to play, so I started composing my own music. Unfortunately, my teacher ordered me to stop "wasting my time" and I obeyed.

Fast forward through killing my hands playing Beethoven sonatas for competitions, accompanying choirs and the annual musicals: those condensed orchestra scores with pounding octaves shooting pain up my arms. My dream of being a professional musician was slipping through my weak fifth fingers. That was when I discovered the beauty of the harp, and joy that it fit my small hands without pain.

I was blessed to be hired as a restaurant harpist for 20 hours a week right out of college, and quickly discovered customers preferred the songs they knew. Ten years playing pop tunes will teach anyone to improvise!



Then my husband and I moved to my family farm to give our daughters the joy of exploring the woods and fields, a freedom I had cherished as a child.

At this time I was introduced to a brilliant flutist, Sandy Norman, and with her encouragement was soon writing arrangements for our duo, "RoseWynde".

Because of Sandy's enthusiasm, I started to believe that writing music was not "wasting my time". Since then we have produced five CDs and are still writing, arranging, and performing in concerts.



It was also after I returned to the farm that my lovely harp teacher, Marion Fouse, encouraged me to start teaching harp lessons and introduced me to some eager students. I soon realized that there was a wealth of rewarding lesson material for young pianists, but there were fewer works for young harpists. My harp students complained if they had to play the same pieces they had heard other students performing, so I just started writing for them.

My goal was to give students short, easily learned pieces with an emphasis on playful melodies. I tried to incorporate exercise patterns and employed repetition to help in memorization. Though designed for lesson material, I am so pleased to hear that these little pieces are being used for recitals, gig music and therapy music by harpists of all ages. I've heard they are especially useful when performing for children. This makes me so happy.

Thanks to the encouragement of my publisher and very kind words from teachers and students, I continue to enjoy writing music for students of all ages.

-- Kathryn Cater