

# Charlotte NC Chapter of the **AMERICAN HARP SOCIETY**

## December 2023 Newsletter

### Message from the Chapter President

Greetings Friends,

December is busy and joyous time of year for harp students, professionals, and teachers. The Charlotte, NC Chapter of the American Harp Society is sponsoring **two Christmas Concerts**:

The first at 3:00 pm on December 10th at **Ballantyne Presbyterian** will be conducted by Bette Roth, who will be retiring from this role after 50 years of service. We will be celebrating her many contributions over the years.

The second Christmas Concert, directed by Christine Van Arsdale, will be on Sunday, December 17th at 3:15 pm at **ImaginOn**.



**Be sure to RSVP** to Bette Roth at [betroth@bellsouth.net](mailto:betroth@bellsouth.net) and Christine Van Arsdale at [vanarsdalec2@mailbox.winthrop.edu](mailto:vanarsdalec2@mailbox.winthrop.edu) by **December 4th** to participate in these delightful concerts.

### Creativity and Innovation in Music for Hospice and Healthcare

**Date:** Saturday, December 9, 2023, 1:00–2:30pm ET

**Presenter:** Kathleen Blackwell-Plank

**Title:** Coping with Musician Injuries and How to Avoid Them

**Description:** The physical demands of playing music (and transporting harps) can put musicians at risk for hand or arm injuries. This hands-on session will explore stretching techniques, warm-up routines, and equipment that can help avoid injury. In addition, participants will be introduced to arrangements for one hand alone which can be played while recovering from hand injuries.

**To register:** <https://fundraise.atriumhealthfoundation.org/event/interlude-music-webinar-series-2023-24/e516377>



Kathleen Blackwell-Plank



## Celebrating!!!

### Bette Roth and Her 50 Years of Harp Music in Charlotte

In 1971, Bette and Wolfgang Roth moved to Charlotte to play with the Charlotte Symphony. Within a couple of years of arriving in Charlotte and establishing her studio, Bette involved harp students in offering Christmas Concerts as an outreach to the community and for the fun and development of students. The very first harp ensemble concert was presented at The Methodist Home, now known as Aldersgate. Playing the harp is often a solo activity and Bette wanted to offer harpists the opportunity to experience playing in an ensemble which offers the unique musical skills of watching the conductor, listening, and blending one's sound with others. In addition, these multigenerational experiences for harpists of all levels of development offer socialization and inspiration. Repertoire building was one of Bette's goals. Each year as harpists prepare these classic Christmas carols, they continue to build and polish their skills so that one day they will feel confident in offering a program of Christmas music for their family, a party or special occasion. Over the years, musical parts for varying skill levels were created to allow everyone from beginner to professional to participate. These hand-written parts are now digitized and available on the chapter website for members. The Christmas Concerts were joyous occasions that inspired younger siblings who heard solos performed and observed these performances.

# Celebrating!!! (continued)

At that time when Bette arrived in Charlotte, there was not a local chapter of the American Harp Society. Establishing a chapter had been a dream of Elizabeth Clark and Linda Booth, harpists in the Charlotte community, and by the mid-1970s the local chapter of the American Harp Society had been established. Over the years, the harp community began to grow with more harp teachers and students and increasing numbers of Christmas Concerts being offered in locations throughout the region. Locations of concerts have included: Founders Hall, the Southern Christmas Show, First Union Atrium, ImaginOn, Plantation Estates (now Matthews Glen), Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, Westminster Towers, Rock Hill, Lake Wylie Assisted Living, and Ballantyne Presbyterian Church. At one point Bette was conducting five concerts a season, a tremendous load for a professional harpist at a very busy time of the year. Betsey Sesler, professional harpist and teacher arrived in the area in the 1990s and joined the effort in presenting these concerts. Christine Van Arsdale, a former student of Bette's also contributed to the growth of the Christmas performances through her students, organizational skills and leadership. Over the years, hundreds of harpists have participated in these concerts. The synergy created by these concerts and community outreach helped develop the vibrant harp community of the Charlotte region.

**Founders Hall ca. 1998.** Bette Roth and Betsey Sesler leading the Christmas Concert.



In addition to harp chapter development, Bette's fifty-year legacy includes educating hundreds of harp students, producing a cadre of professional harpists and promoting the love of harp music. Bette explained that these concerts were an important part of her family tradition. Over the years, her daughter Carla, and grandchildren Sebastian and Elisabeth, all participated in the Christmas Concerts. After 50 years at the helm as artistic director of these concerts, Bette will retire and pass the baton to others. Her daughter, Carla Ketchum, will again join the ranks of the harp ensemble in her mother's honor at the December 10, 2023, concert at Ballantyne Presbyterian Church. In appreciation of Bette's foundational role in creating the harp chapter, educating harp students, and inspiring a love of harp music, Bette has been named a lifetime member of the Charlotte, NC Chapter of the American Harp Society. In her honor, the summer enrichment scholarships offered by the chapter on an annual basis will henceforth be named the Bette Roth Scholarships.

**Southern Christmas Show:** Betsey Sesler on the left and Bette Roth on the right.



Christine Van Arsdale leads the **Christmas Concert at ImaginOn** in 2022.



Bette Roth conducts the **Christmas Concert at Ballantyne Presbyterian in 2022.**  
Teacher, Delaine Leonard on the right.



Bette with her students at the **Christmas Concert at Ballantyne Presbyterian in 2022.**  
**From left to right:** Ava Nicoletti, Renee Dib, Bette Roth, and Tessa Jackson.



Charlotte Harps



CharlotteHarps@gmail.com

[www.charlotteharps.org](http://www.charlotteharps.org)

