

In Memoriam: Carrol Mae McLaughlin

1952-2018

by Dr. Cathryn Clayton and Kelly Mae Harris

ON March 10, 2018, the harp world lost one of its brightest stars. Dr. Carrol McLaughlin passed away from metastatic ocular melanoma. Dr. McLaughlin's love of the harp spread joy to all who could hear her. She loved performing, teaching, and most of all she loved uplifting the lives of those around her.

Carrol's decision to play the harp came when her grandmother read her the story of an angel who gave away her harp to make someone happy from the book *Little Lost Angel* by Janet Field Heath. Living in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada, her family was not able to find a harp, so Carrol played the saxophone, her father's instrument. By age 5, she was playing with her father's jazz band. This is where Carrol acquired her love of jazz. Her parents did obtain a harp and by age 14 she was performing with the Calgary Symphony. Canadian child labor laws were even changed for her to be employed there.

Carrol later studied at the Julliard School with Susann McDonald, obtaining an MM in Harp Performance. It was during this time that she premiered at Carnegie Hall with a glowing review titled "The Harp Takes Off". A week later, Carrol won the Salvi Jazz Harp Competition with her arrangement of "Cantina Band Song" from *Star Wars*. Carrol obtained her DMA with Susann McDonald, who was then teaching at the University of Arizona. Carrol also moved for a time to London and studied with the famed Russian harpist Maria Korchinska. She later settled in Los Angeles and began working in the studio trade and as the jazz editor to *The American Harp Journal*, a position in which she served for 11 years. It was in her role as jazz editor that she interviewed Bill Marx, son of Harpo Marx, about his famous father, and the two established a great




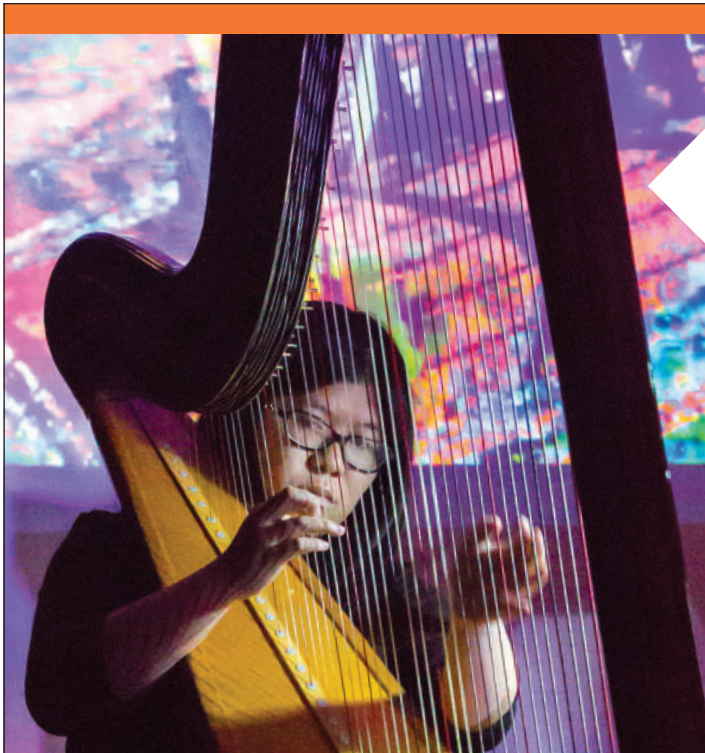
friendship. Bill asked Carrol to transcribe some of his father's compositions, as Harpo didn't read music. Carrol was the only harpist given permission by the Marx family to record Harpo's music. Carrol and Bill made a CD together titled *From Harpo With Love* and toured with Columbia Artists Management.

Dr. McLaughlin became Professor of Harp at the University of Arizona where she taught for 30 years. She established HarpFusion, the world's largest touring harp ensemble at that time. The ensemble recorded numerous CDs and became a celebrated performing group. Throughout her distinguished career, she toured the world as a solo artist and performed extensively as a concerto soloist with orchestras throughout the U.S., Japan, Russia, Canada and South America. She recorded numerous CDs and



composed several works for solo and ensemble harp. She had many publications including her book, *Dr. Carrol's Power Performance*. Her philosophy of life was "Certainly You Can", a phrase her mother, Ida, used all the time. Dr. McLaughlin encouraged her students to pursue excellence in everything they did.

She will be deeply missed by her daughter, Kelly, grandchildren, Analise and Kolton, and the many students, colleagues, and friends who knew and loved her. 



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In 2017, the Peabody Harp Studio performed two concerts at the 13th World Harp Congress in Hong Kong, including their award-winning multimedia program, *Dimensions*.



Faculty artist **Ruth Inglefield** is the coordinator for the Harp Department at Peabody.