

BIOGRAPHY - CATRIN FINCH

Described as “**The Queen of Harps**”, Welsh harpist Catrin Finch has delighted audiences with her performances in the UK and worldwide. Inspired to learn the harp at the age of five, her rise to prominence started almost immediately, achieving the highest mark in the UK for her Grade VIII exam at the age of nine. She studied with Elinor Bennett for eight years before entering the Purcell School. Catrin graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 2002 where she studied with Skaila Kanga and received the Queen’s Award for the most outstanding student of her year.



Her first major competition success came in 1999 winning the Lily Laskine International Harp Competition in France, one of the premier harp competitions in the world. On winning the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York, Catrin went on to play in over thirty states in the USA, including recitals and concerto debuts in New York, including the Lincoln Centre and Weill Recital Hall, Boston and Washington D.C. In May 2004, and again in 2012, she was nominated for a Classical Brit Award and has also received an “Echo Klassik” in Germany.

Catrin is the former Royal Harpist to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. Holding the appointment from 2000-2004, she had the honour of reviving this ancient tradition last held in 1873. During her period as Royal Harpist she played regularly at the Royal Palaces and performed to Royalty from around the world.

She has performed extensively throughout the USA, South America, the Middle East, Asia, Australia and Europe. She has appeared with many of the world’s top orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Pops, the Philharmonia, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the London Mozart Players, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, the Lake Charles Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony and the Manchester Camerata. Festival appearances include Salzburg, Edinburgh, Spoleto, Smithsonian Folklife, MDR Musiksommer Festival in Leipzig, Le Domaine Forget and Lanaudiere Festivals in Canada and the Gödöllő Harp Festival in Hungary.

In November 2012 Catrin released a CD on the DG label celebrating a new collaboration between Catrin and celebrated composer, John Rutter - “**Blessing**”. The CD, which also features a composition by Catrin herself, the **Celtic Concerto** went to number 1 in the UK classical charts and was nominated for a Classical Brit Award. This follows the success of her “**J.S. Bach’s Goldberg Variations**” which entered the UK Classical charts at number 1 in 2009.

Catrin has appeared on all the major television and radio networks in the UK and many abroad. Among her earliest appearances on TV were two features on the BBC’s ‘Blue Peter’, and since then there have been many appearances on radio and television in the UK. In 2003, Catrin presented a TV documentary about herself entitled ‘Charlie’s Angel’ which was awarded a BAFTA Cymru/Wales award for the best music programme. She has recently been heard presenting concerts with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales live on BBC Radio 3 from the Hoddinott Hall in Cardiff Bay. Recent TV appearances include BBC Breakfast and the Andrew Marr Show.

She has collaborated closely with composer Karl Jenkins on stage and disc, including the première of a new double harp concerto commissioned by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. She has received half a million hits on You Tube for her performance of Karl Jenkins' Palladio. Catrin has recorded for most of the major international recording companies, including Universal Records, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI and Sony Classical, both solo and with notable artists such as Bryn Terfel, Sir James Galway and Julian Lloyd-Webber.

Her versatility in different musical genres is demonstrated in her many recordings, which range from solo classical recitals and concertos, her own arrangement for harp of J S Bach's Goldberg Variations through to an eclectic cross-over mix with her own 14 piece band "CF47" and the presentation of some of Wales' most popular traditional melodies in an innovative and refreshing way using electric harps, state of the art technology and ground-breaking sound effects.

In 2013 Catrin Finch collaborated with Senegalese kora player Seckou Keita on a record celebrating the harp traditions of Wales and West Africa, which has been outstandingly well received, winning the 2014 Album Of The Year in both Fruits and Songlines magazines, sitting atop the World Music charts for a number of weeks. Catrin and Seckou toured the album, entitled "**Clychau Dibon**", in Europe and the U.S. to rave reviews.

March 2015 sees the release of Catrin's new self-composed album entitled "**Tides**", on her new label 'Acapela'. This new release marks the first time Catrin's own compositions have appeared as a body of work on stage and on record, revealing a new side to her exceptional musicality, including her piano skills for the first time on this album. Growing up on the West coast of Wales, Catrin cites her childhood by the sea as her main influence on her creativity. She has recently started supporting the International Development charity Water Aid, and has gifted **Changing Tides**, one of the tracks on her new album, to support the organisation's work to bring safe water and sanitation to some of the world's poorest communities. Her ensemble will be touring the UK in May and October to support the album.

She has received honours from the University of Wales Aberystwyth and Bangor, Glyndwr University, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and the Royal Academy of Music. She is a visiting Professor at the latter two musical institutions and is in great demand for masterclasses. In July 2012 the first ever Catrin Finch Academy Summer School was held on the outskirts of Cardiff and future plans include developing the project online where Finch will post exercises for young harpists to follow.

Known for her work within the community and with the younger generation, Catrin is committed to promoting the harp and classical music in general to a new and wider audience.

NB: Catrin's biography is updated regularly and we ask that it is not altered without permission.