

Caryl Thomas

Caryl Thomas heads an exciting harp department at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, UK, and is widely recognised as one of the most accomplished solo recital harpists of her generation. She made her American debut in 1981 at Carnegie Hall as winner of the Concert Artists' Guild Award, and her London debut at the Wigmore Hall a year later. She has performed to critical acclaim throughout the UK, Europe, the USA and the Far East, and her innate musicianship is supported by a solid technique and an exceptional ability to communicate with her audience.

Caryl graduated from the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff and gained a Masters' degree from New York University. Her teachers were Ann Griffiths, Marisa Robles, Pearl Chertok and Susann McDonald. She has been awarded many scholarships and prizes, including a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship, the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, and the ISM Young Artists Award. Caryl was the first British harpist to win a major prize at the International Harp Contest in Jerusalem, when she was seventeen years old. In 1985, William Mathias composed the *Santa Fe Suite* for her, who premiered it at the Wigmore Hall.

In 1996, Caryl was invited to give a solo recital at the World Harp Congress in Copenhagen. She has performed as a concerto soloist with the London Philharmonic, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square, and has appeared twice as concerto soloist with the Mozarteum Orchestra in the Grosses Festspielhaus in Salzburg playing the Gliere Harp Concerto and the Mozart Concerto for Flute and Harp. During a period as harpist with the London Philharmonic, Caryl worked with eminent conductors such as Sir Simon Rattle, Klaus Tennstedt, Leonard Slatkin, Bernard Haitink and Sir Charles Mackerras, and played the Bartok Festival at the Royal Festival Hall under the baton of Sir George Solti. She has also performed Wagner's Ring Cycle with Welsh National Opera and Sir Reginald Goodall.

A keen exponent of chamber music, Caryl has been a member of the Prometheus Ensemble, The Debussy Trio, and The Instrumental Quintet of London, which made its debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall at the South Bank, London in 1987. She has also appeared in duo recitals with flautists Susan Milan and Jonathan Snowden. Caryl has performed with Bryn Terfel, Dennis O'Neill, Rebecca Evans and Dame Shirley Bassey, and in 2002, was featured on an album with the Icelandic pop singer Bjork, and appeared with her on her European tour.

Caryl's discography includes the Mozart Flute and harp Concerto with the London Philharmonic and conductor Andrew Litton, a solo recital entitled *Clair de Lune*, a collection of chamber works with the Prometheus Ensemble named *French Impressions*, recordings of Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*, Rutter's *Dancing Day* and an album of works by the Welsh composer Grace Williams. Her broadcasting work includes recitals for Radio 3 and three series of her own television programme for S4C.

In 2007, Caryl was Artistic Director of Arpa Viva Cymru, a ten-day harp festival held in Cardiff, which incorporated the 7th European Harp Symposium and the Cardiff European Harp Competition. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and a Trustee of the Ryan Davies Scholarship Fund. She was appointed Head of Harp Studies at the RWCMD in 2011 and gives masterclasses at home and abroad. In June 2016, Caryl will be a member of the jury at the 10th USA International Harp Competition in Bloomington, Indiana.