

**CLASSICAL MUSIC**

# Catrin Finch



**ANDREW BURTON:** What inspired you to play the harp?

**CATRIN FINCH:** I grew up on the west coast of Wales. When I was five, my parents took me to see an amazing Spanish harpist called Marisa Robles who was playing in the nearby town of Lampeter. Marisa is very flamboyant and has a huge personality. She was my inspiration: I decided there and then that I wanted to play the harp and told my parents about it. On my sixth birthday, I went downstairs and discovered that my parents had rented a little Celtic harp for me and I started lessons. Growing up in Wales, there was no shortage of harp teachers! Within a couple of years I wanted to move on and found a teacher called Eleanor Bennett who lived in north Wales, a five hour round trip, and I studied with her for the next eight years until I was 16 years old. My parents were very supportive and took me on that round trip every fortnight for eight years. There were other opportunities too; when I was 10 I joined the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

**AB:** When you first heard the instrument, what was it about the sound that appealed to you?

**CF:** It's a very magical, ethereal sound. I think any young child is quite inspired by the instrument when they first see it and of course when you hear it being played by a master, it is an absolutely beautiful sound. It's a wonderfully relaxing sound in what is an increasingly busy world. It has the power to stop you in your tracks for a few minutes and take you to another world.

**AB:** How extensive is the repertoire for the harp?

**CF:** Not very, that's one of the problems we have. But plenty of contemporary composers are writing for the instrument now. The modern

**On Friday, February 5, the ever-popular European Union Chamber Orchestra returns to Cambridge Corn Exchange to perform the latest concert in the News-backed 2015/16 Cambridge Classical Concert Series – an uplifting programme of Bach, Mozart, Debussy and Haydn that will be the perfect way to banish the winter blues. Andrew Burton spoke to harpist Catrin Finch about the appeal of her instrument, the Mozart concerto and pushing the boundaries.**



instruments are very robust whereas traditionally harps struggled to make a really big sound so it was difficult to write for them as solo instruments. There are over 3,000 moving pieces on a modern pedal harp; it's incredibly intricate. Big composers never wrote anything for the harp, apart from Mozart, whose *Concerto for Flute and Harp* we'll be playing at Cambridge Corn Exchange on February 5.

**AB:** What should audiences expect from Mozart's *Concerto for Flute and Harp*?

**CF:** It's become one of our signature pieces. It has three movements, the first of which is quite upbeat and jolly. The way the harp and flute play around one another is lovely, passing over themes constantly from one to the other. The second one is very beautiful and lyrical and I'm sure the audience will instantly recognise it. The final movement is a very playful rondo.

**AB:** What else would you like to achieve with your harp playing?

**CF:** I'm constantly trying to push my harp playing forwards and experiment with its boundaries. I do a lot of music outside of the classical music world as well. I'm doing a project with the Senegalese kora player Sechou Keita, I play jazz, I've got various electric harps, I've been known to plug them in to whammy pedals and all sorts of things. I'm always trying to

develop new ideas for the instrument. I hope that audiences in Cambridge will go away surprised by what the harp can do. That's my main aim when I perform; to leave people impressed with what the harp is capable of.

**AB:** What advice would you give to any aspiring classical musician?

**CF:** I would tell them to keep faith, keep going and practise hard and not to get too caught up in the industry, which I think is increasingly difficult for young musicians. Remember what it is you love about music and don't get fooled into thinking that it's all about becoming a celebrity. The recording industry is infamous for trying to churn out stars but I think it's important that young musicians become passionate about music first and aspire to do it because they love music.

**AB:** What's your practice routine?

**CF:** It's non-existent! I'm a mother of two children who are 5 and 9; there's a house, a husband and a family to look after so routine doesn't exist. My practice routine is: whenever I can!

**AB:** What lessons has your life in music taught you?

**CF:** To have faith in what you believe in and to try your best to get there. It's easy to get side-tracked so my main lesson is to keep going with what you believe in.



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Ahead of the concert, Catrin will be taking part in a pre-concert talk starting at 6pm at Heffers Bookshop in nearby Trinity Street, free of charge to concert ticket holders.

European Union Chamber Orchestra, Corn Exchange, Friday, February 5, 7.30pm. Tickets £28.50-£38.50 from [cornex.co.uk](http://cornex.co.uk) / (01223) 357851.

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