

Autoharp Clearinghouse February 1996 – Gudrun Derlin

This month's publication is dedicated in honor of its cover personality, **Gudrun Derlin** from Hamburg, Germany. We "met" through a series of FAX transmissions and letters, and it didn't take long to realize that Gudrun and I were kindred spirits. I found both her personal story and her association with the autoharp to be most interesting, and asked her if she might share it with AC's readership? What follows is her response. **ER**

First of all, I would like to thank Eileen very much for giving me this opportunity to share with you some of the new things that are taking place in Germany in respect to the autoharp.

Let me start by introducing myself. My name is Gudrun Derlin. For the last thirteen years, I have been running an art, communications and public relations agency. But, my **new** ambition is to promote the autoharp in my country. In addition to this, I am writing a book for children about art, and I'm also busy with missionary work for a Mother and Child group.

I was born in 1951 in Lubeck, a beautiful town from the Middle Ages on the Baltic Coast of northern Germany. In my childhood, I often visited my Uncle Charlie in his art studio and observed him working at his easel. These first impressions set the foundation for my future involvement in the arts. I wanted to learn to play an instrument because I loved to sing. My parents bought me an electrified spinet. This was quite something in those post-war days! I was self-taught, and played it until I was a teenager.

At the age of nineteen, I made my state exams as Medical Technician, moved to Hamburg and worked in that profession for eleven years. Because I enjoyed horseback riding, I later worked in a veterinary hospital as an Equine Technician. At the same time, I jobbed as a representative on international industrial fairs, as a photo model, and wrote my first journalistic articles.

When I was thirty, I met a man to whom I shall just refer as R.S. He was, and is, an excellent Viennese portrait painter. I moved to Vienna, Austria and started to manage his career. We lived part time in the United States (Florida and California).

Five years later, I ended the relationship because I discovered that he was totally committed to Scientology. He wanted me **in**, I wanted him **out**. Through this painful experience, I began to look at life from a different perspective. By way of my investigations against Scientology for *Der Spiegel* magazine, I came in contact with “born again” Christians in California. These ex-scientologists told me there is indeed a person stronger than L. Ron Hubbard--and that is Jesus Christ! Because of their witness, and a spirit-filled pastor in Clearwater, Florida, I got saved. Christ has been at my side since then, and He gave me the strength to quit with my companion.

When I was thirty-six, I met the father of my daughter, Divina, in Vienna. Unfortunately, he abandoned me during the pregnancy, and I returned to Hamburg alone. The difficulties I encountered in becoming a single parent led me to commit my life without reservations to Jesus Christ. Before that, I had just been a “lukewarm” Christian--but now, I was truly “born again.”

Because of this change, I decided to go to Christ for the Nation Bible School in Bad Gandersheim, Germany. Their headquarters is located in Dallas, Texas. This school, which is directed by Americans Mike and Kay Chance, is famous for its blessing through praise and worship. Mike is the lead singer of the worship band. During the morning services, students often start singing brand new songs to the Lord, perfectly composed without any prior rehearsal.

This reminds one of passages in the Old Testament, Psalm 33:3: *Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.* Psalm 40:3: *And He hath put a new song in my mouth, (even) praise unto our God; many shall see (it), and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.* In the New Testament, the apostle Paul inspired the Colossians and Ephesians with these words, Ephesians 5:18: *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit; 19: Speaking to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;* Colossians 3:16: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

It was here that God set me free to worship Him in a totally new way. A great joy came into my heart that has not left me since that time. He made me able to sing again. I had the desire to play an instrument, but knew I wouldn't be able to manage to learn the piano or guitar.

On the morning of my forty second birthday, I heard an autoharp for the first time in my life. A Greek girl named Pathena and her students sang hymns in front of my door, accompanied by Pathena's Oscar Schmidt Autoharp. I fell in love with the sound instantly, and knew that the autoharp was to be my instrument. Pathena, who is presently preparing to go to Israel as a missionary, taught me the basics. I was very encouraged.

However, she warned me that it would be extremely hard to find an autoharp in Germany. So, I started praying about it, and suddenly knew that there was one somewhere in Hamburg! The first shop I visited, which specialized in vintage stringed instruments, had an old dusty ChromAarp sitting on a shelf as if it had just been waiting there for me. Later, I called some

other stores, but none of them even knew what a chorded zither was. (That first instrument is now being played with great passion by my Welsh gentleman friend, Hugh.)

Later, I asked a friend, who was coming over from America, to bring along an Oscar Schmidt (OS 110 Ozark). This was my second autoharp. And, because another student from the Bible School also wanted one, I started to investigate as to whether this instrument was still being made somewhere in Germany? I discovered that there was a company still in existence in the former East Germany that was producing what they called the Chord Zither. This is how I found my third autoharp--and the new goal for my life.

On 8 July 1995, I went to visit the owner of the factory, Mr. Jorg Hopf and his mother, Beate. (The story of that meeting is being sent as a separate message due to group restrictions in respect to length. **ER**)

Through this discovery, my friend Kerstin acquired her Hopf Chord Zither, and some others did as well. Interesting for me is that 95% of the new autoharp enthusiasts are Christians, and most of them are people who have a love for Israel. For example, Kerstin traveled to Israel during her school vacations and helped Jacob Damkani in his evangelistic work in Jaffa. To this Messianic Jew, an autoharp was given as a gift by the pastor of my Mother and Child group. She loves the Jews as I do. Peter Gleiss, one of the leading pastors of the Spiritual Revival Foundation within the Lutheran Church, has bought one as well. He supports the Jewish Messianic movement. I believe Christians who have discovered their Jewish roots are touched in their spirit by this instrument.

As psaltery, the zither is mentioned in the bible for the first time in I Samuel 10:5 during the reign of King Saul. *After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where (is) the garrison of the Philistines; and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy. 6: And the spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.*

You will discover that the zither and harp were used by the Jews often for prophesy. The spirit of God came on the musicians when they started playing. King David sang his songs to its sound. Saul's evil spirit was cast out by David's harp playing, and he also composed his Psalms on it! In Psalm 33.2, he sang: *Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him with the psaltery (and) an instrument of ten strings. 3: Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.*

I experience a big blessing for myself and for my listeners when playing this instrument. People are deeply moved, sometimes to the point of tears, when I play Christian songs.

My vision is to make the Harfenzither (I like this name better than Chord Zither) known to Christians. I believe one reason God gave the autoharp back to the Germans is because it is part of His plan for worldwide revival. God wants to restore His people and bring them back to their very roots.

Continually praising God was part of the lifestyle of the early Christians. See Luke 24/5 52: *And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; 53: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.* God is seeking worshipers all over the world right now. He wants to dwell in His people. This is Zion, where He lives forever (Psalm 132:13,14). To help people understand these passages in scripture, I offer seminars with teaching from my bible school.

Genuine praise and worship will ALWAYS change YOU, and often your circumstances!

I presented the autoharp at a nationwide Lutheran revival congress recently. The very positive, and sometimes heartwarming and moving, response was a confirmation for my vision. Mr. Hopf was really amazed about the miracle of so many new orders for his instruments. I told him, that for this he could say "Thank you" to God, because I felt this blessing came directly from heaven!

My dreams for the future include wanting to produce a recording using the instruments mentioned in I Samuel 10:5. Also, I would like to form a worship band, with mainly autoharps, in my prayer house group. We already have five autoharpists among its seven members. Another plan is to invite autoharpists from the United States to play in Germany. Mike Fenton came to Germany in January and met my autoharp friends. I would like to produce a video with him for the European market.

May I make several requests from AC readers? I have heard of an autoharp orchestra with twenty 'harpers in Switzerland. If someone knows more about them, please drop me a line.

I'm always interested in professionally-produced autoharp recordings with hymns, gospels and spirituals. Feel free to send me a sample with invoice.

Does anyone use the autoharp as an instrument for outreach in a missionary context? I am very interested in details, and would like to publish them in my newsletter. Also, I am very much looking forward to hearing from anyone who uses the autoharp in conjunction with music ministry. **Gudrun Derlin, Guldtweg 12, 22587 Hamburg, Germany - Phone - 040-866 3117 - FAX - 040-86 9231.**

P.S. I recently bought a 1968 Silvertone Autoharp from Maurice Dill of Evansville, Indiana through an ad in the *Clearinghouse*. It has been converted to a diatonic instrument, and I am thrilled to get this “new baby.” **GD**

Editor’s note: This article was written in German and then translated into English. So, I ask that you not get “up in arms” if the scriptures don’t read verbatim as you know them. Also, the contact info listed above is most likely no longer current as it is almost twelve years old. Pictures of Gudrun and the Hopf Chord Zithers and workshop are in the Photos section under Autoharp Clearinghouse on the Autoharp Enthusiasts group at Yahoo. Non members may request them as attachments directly from me. **ER**