

LILY NEILL

“... musical and artistic freedom which is boundless in its possibility and contagious in its energy and passion.” - Irish Music Magazine

Audiences around the world are captivated by Lily Neill’s infectious passion for the lever, or Irish harp, and the dynamism and breadth of her live performances. Irish Music Magazine writes, “Lily Neill's musical compass remains eclectic. While she courts the old manuscripts and composers, her Sat Nav is placed firmly leftfield. That sphere includes plentiful original compositions which form the backbone of her live and recorded programme so far. One of the most challenging and provocative musicians of her time - Lily Neill's daredevil approach works wonders”.

Lily’s first steps into the world of music were taken as a child. By age ten she had given her first professional performance, which was followed by numerous awards at music competitions, including the All-Ireland harp competition and the U.S. National Scottish Harp Championship. As a teenager Lily performed for former U.S. President Bill Clinton (she would later perform for former Irish President Mary McAleese) and alongside Irish super-group “The Chieftains” with the late Derek Bell in his final two performances in Washington, D.C.

Lily Neill earned a 1st Class Honours degree in Irish Music and Dance from the Irish World Academy at the University of Limerick, Ireland, and a Master of Music degree from the prestigious Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland. She has also lived and studied in Vilnius, Lithuania, where she worked with musicians at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. At present Lily is based in England.

Lily has brought her harp playing to audiences through performances on television and film soundtracks as well as in concert halls, arts centres and major music festivals such as the Festival Interceltique de Lorient, Festival Les Irlandays in Paris, Celtic Fest Chicago, the first Baltic Harp Music Festival and the Irish Festival of Oulu. In 2007 she was honoured to be an Artist-in-Residence at Strathmore Hall Arts Center where she premiered a new work for harp and koto. Lily has also frequently been invited to perform at Irish Embassies throughout Europe.

“Without Words”, Lily’s debut solo album was praised by Irish Music Magazine upon its release as “...part of the new Harp revolution extolling aspects of harp music never previously heard”. Her follow-up album, “The Habit of a Foreign Sky”, further illuminated Lily’s versatility and captured attention with its dramatic musical range and interpretations of such “...staggering beauty that is melts your hard heart” (The Irish American News).

In addition to her solo work, Lily has collaborated on a number of projects with dancers, poets, Japanese classical musicians, pop, rock and visual artists. These collaborators include the Folger Consort, Senegalese kora player Kadialy Kouyate, Irish fusion group “Kíla”, rock band “Carmen Gray”, Irish singer/songwriter Colum Sands, tap dancer Cartier Williams, poet Philip McDonagh, composer Timo Alakotila, cellist Vesa Norilo, filmmaker Cassius Matthias and Pulitzer prize-winning poet Paul Muldoon and his rock band “Rackett”. Lily’s experiences in both solo and collaborative spheres as well as her solid grasp of the historical harp music of Ireland and related folk music traditions make her a sought-after teacher. She has given master-classes at schools such as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, London's City University, the University of Limerick, the Sibelius Academy and Montgomery College, among others.

Lily’s performances reflect her passion for music, from the eerily beautiful to the exuberantly playful. This passion draws listeners into a vivid, efflorescent soundscape. This is harp like you’ve never experienced it!