

SKAILA KANGA

Interviewed May 1, 2024

Born in Mumbai 1946

Began on the piano at age 3.

At the start of her career the harp was the only seat for women in an orchestra and therefore a better chance of employment. She was the only woman for 30 years. She did receive help from older colleagues. Juggled family (four children) and work. By the 90s, more women were given the opportunity in the late 60s only an old French instrument was available.

Studied at the Royal Academy of Music, but left at age 20 to work, and did not return until age 45.

Her father was a violinist in the London Philharmonic Orchestra. With his help she got a position in the Saturday concerts during the summer.

**Work:**

25 years working in chamber music

No function work

A good deal of session work including film scores

In 2002 she became head of harp at the RAM

Coaches all chamber music at RAM

Much depping work.

Published arrangements for (i.e.) Wigmore Hall and Cheltenham Festival

**Performances:**

Royal Ballet touring company for 6 months (1966) – Swan Lake

National Ensemble for many years (did not tour because of family responsibilities)

Four Musketeers with Harry Secombe

Wizard of Oz – Palladium (2 years)

Trained her students as deps for the show.

Tale of Two Cities (lasted 2 weeks)

Carousel – London and touring ((10 months)

42 Street – 1<sup>st</sup> depping job. Listened to a recording 22 times before playing.

Les Mis anniversary concert (2019) – in the O2.

Phantom of the Opera anniversary concert Albert Hall

Accompanied many choirs

Worked with Tommy Riley the harmonica virtuoso many times

James Taylor Quartet - Barbican

Frank Sinatra (1980s) – a week each at the Royal Albert Hall and Festival Hall. “My Way” has a harp introduction.

The Carpenters (1976) - Palladium

Barry Manilow - Wembley Area – where she was told to “play softer”.

Royal Albert Hall Proms (live) – her string broke during “Ravel”. The piece couldn’t be played. She had to run to the dressing room to retrieve a replacement while the audience waited. The Evening Standard gave her a mention: “Penalty shootout holding up the Proms.”

**Work ethic:**

Preparation is the key

Creative satisfaction comes from hearing students improve.