

778.846.7665 alys@alyshowe.com www.alyshowe.com

“...rhythmic, exciting, sensitive, full of surprises. The arrangements are imaginative and fun. This CD has shot up to my select group of favourites.”

Elizabeth Volpé  
Principal Harp, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

“[Alyshowe is]...a talented arranger and composer...  
the music is incredibly evocative...delightful rhythmic  
and harmonic surprises in...every tune.”

Stephen Smith  
composer, assistant conductor of VBC and UBC Concert Singers

Alyshowe's distinct voice as a contemporary Celtic musician developed from the rich and diverse multiculturalism for which Canada is recognized. Performing on both harp and voice, Alyshowe has played many venues throughout Canada, Scotland, and Ireland, earning distinctions such as a scholarship to the Royal Scottish Academy, The Watkins Fellowship, a grant from Canada Council for the Arts, and multiple awards in competitions of Scottish harp playing. With training from some of the world's finest harp players, and a deep immersion in the music traditions of Cape Breton, Scotland and Ireland, Alyshowe brings an informed yet innovative touch to each of her arrangements and songs.

With her debut CD, *Phosphorescence*, Alyshowe showcases her masterful understanding of the contemporary style developing among her generation of harp players. From the opening track “Logan Waters,” Alyshowe expands the boundaries of her instrument, moving beyond peaceful and soothing harp music into new territory. The mesmerizing arrangements of Gaelic song-air “A Nigheananag, A Graidh,” and Scots song “Ca’ The Yowes,” will entice listeners into a trance; until they are drawn back into the waking world by the irresistible sparkle and driving rhythms of dance tunes “Musical Priest,” and “O’Keefe’s Slide/Dolina McKay.” Performing innovative new techniques in “Miss Shepherd/Sleep Soond in Da Mornin’,” Alyshowe introduces arresting harmonies with a deft and sure hand in her original compositions “Planxty Shar” and “Phosphorescence.” Accordion, percussion, vocals and whistle enhance the strathsprey, Gaelic song, and jig in “Piper of Dundee/Seallaibh Currih Eoghainn/Laird of Milton’s Daughter.”

*Phosphorescence* takes listeners on a journey that will remain in their hearts long after the final note has faded.



## Phosphorescence 9DJP111

1. Logan Waters 3:08
2. A Nigheananag, A Graidh 5:53
3. Ca’ The Yowes 4:58
4. Planxty Shar 3:50
5. Musical Priest 2:22
6. Mary Hamilton/Miss Sally Hunter 3:58
7. O’Keefe’s Slide/Dolina McKay 3:52
8. Solitude 3:38
9. Lady Owen’s Delight/Merrily Kiss the Quaker 6:00
10. Phosphorescence 2:27
11. Miss Shepherd/Sleep Soond in Da Mornin’ 3:49
12. Piper of Dundee/ Seallaibh Currih Eoghainn/  
Laird of Milton’s Daughter 3:41
13. An Cluinn Thu Mi, Mo Nighean Donn? 4:48



File under: Celtic - Folk - World





Alys Howe

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## BIOGRAPHY

Alys Howe began playing the harp at the age of seven, and since then she has pursued studies in both Celtic and classical music in Scotland, Ireland, and across Canada. Born in Vancouver, British Columbia, Alys credits her early interest in music to the Orff program implemented by the Vancouver Waldorf school, which she attended during her elementary years. Early harp instruction was with Alison Hunter, Miranda Brown, and especially Elizabeth Volpé, Principle Harpist for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. Alys also worked with American harpists Kim Robertson and Deborah Henson-Conant. Her engagement as harpist, for numerous weddings and other background functions, quickly followed early appearances at The Secret Garden, a local Vancouver tea-room. Alys' love for traditional music led to two Gold Medal-winning performances in the Advanced Harp competition at the Vancouver Mod, (a Scottish Gaelic music festival; 1997, 1999), appearances with Lori Pappajohn of *Harp International* and *Winter Harp* (1995-1999), performances for CBC Television private functions (Vancouver, 1998), entertainment for a Jane Goodall lecture at The Orpheum (Vancouver, 1999), a spot on Vancouver Television's breakfast show (weddings, 1999), and interviews and performances in a documentary about the Vancouver Gaelic Choir, called *Road to the Isles* (1999). She has contributed to several recordings, including the seasonal *A Saviour is Born*, and an album of duets with flautist Justine Bliq. A participant in various ensembles, Alys was a member of the Vancouver Bach Youth Choir (1995-1999) and the Vancouver Gaelic Choir (1997-1999), whom she appeared with as a concert soloist and whom she also accompanied on harp over a season of concerts (1998-1999). Having twice been a member of the Vancouver Opera Children's Chorus, Alys performed in *Turandot* (1997) and *La Boheme* (1998).

In 1999, Alys was the first overseas student accepted into the BA Scottish Music and Ethnomusicology program at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, where she was awarded the Trust Fund (2000). While at the RSAMD, Alys received harp instruction from clarsach tutors Patsy Seddon (better known as half of the duo Sileas), Wendy Stewart, and Corrina Hewatt, in addition to private studies with Savourna Stevenson, and Mary MacMaster (the other half of Sileas). Alys studied Scottish Gaelic with Mina Smith, Gaelic Song with Kenna Campbell, and Scots Song and Ballads with Alison McMorland and Andrew Hunter. In Scotland she appeared in various venues throughout Glasgow, Edinburgh, the Orkney Islands, and Skye (1999-2000), as a harp soloist, in a two-harp, fiddle and vocal ensemble with

Rosie Morton and Kirsty Cottar, as a harpist for the RSAMD Scottish Music concert tours, as accompanist to Emily Smith (1999-2000), and as a member of the Glasgow Gaelic Choir for the "Gaelic Women In Song" concert series (1999). Alys also recorded her debut album *Phosphorescence*, of mainly traditional Scottish music, while she was in Glasgow. Based on this recording, Alys was offered full scholarship to attend the Banff School For Fine Arts (2001).

After moving to Toronto to study harp with Sharlene Wallace, Alys graduated with a BFA Hons. in Music Performance from York University, where she also studied music composition with William Westcott and improvisation with Casey Sokol. In Eastern Canada, Alys has continued her Scottish Gaelic language and song studies with David Livingston-Lowe (through the University of Toronto Celtic Studies program), and also with Catriona Parsons, Hector MacNeill and Angus MacLeod (at the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in Cape Breton). She has studied Cape Breton-style piano accompaniment with Anne Lederman (York University), with Kimberley Fraser, and Susan MacLeod (both through the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts). Her appearances in Ontario include The Toronto Harp Festival (2001), where Alys was invited to perform as a soloist, was accompanied by Graham Kennedy on percussion, and gave the premiere of her own composition *Nocturne* for two harps (with Sharlene Wallace). She has also given performances on solo harp for such diverse occasions as: *Christmas by Lamplight* at Pioneer Black Creek Village (2002), the Canadian College of Armed Forces (2003), Osgoode School of Law (2002), York Orientation (2002), and York Alumni Association (2001). Alys has appeared as harpist for the York University Women's Choir performances of Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* (2002), and performed as harpist, singer and arranger for her own graduating recital at York, with Luxon Burgess on flute and vocals and Andrew Mason on bass and cello. She has also performed on harp and vocals with Casey Sokol's Improvisation Ensemble (2002/2003) and has given performances on harp, vocals, and Cape Breton-style piano for Anne Lederman's Celtic Canadian Ensemble (2001-2003).

The recipient of a Canada Council Grant and the Watkins Fellowship (2003), Alys completed her Masters at the University of Limerick in Performance of Irish Traditional Music (2004), graduating with First Class Honours. At Limerick, she studied harp with Fionnuala Rooney, Laoise Kelly, Janet Harbison, Michael Rooney, Catriona McKay, Karen Tweed (accordion), and Clive Carroll (guitar). Taking piano lessons with Geraldine Cottar, Alys engaged in a comparison of Irish piano accompaniment styles versus those found in Cape Breton. Studying vocal technique for traditional singers with Elaine Cormican, as her elective, Alys also studied Scottish Gaelic song with Christine Primrose through electronic media, a co-operative initiative between Sabhal Mor Ostaig and University of Limerick. Alys took the opportunity to research material for her thesis while writing an ethnography contrasting the styles of Sharlene Wallace, Kim Robertson, and Janet Harbison. Based on interviews with harp players and other musicians in North America, Ireland, and Scotland, Alys discusses the role of musicians who approach Celtic and traditional music from the standpoint of cultural outsiders. As part of the music technology module on the course, Alys recorded and engineered a demo CD. Alys has given performances for the Prime Minister of Slovenia (at the Limerick City Museum, 2004), for the University of Limerick Alumni Association on multiple occasions (2003 and 2004), at the Lunchtime Concert series in the Performing Arts Centre (as 3-time featured solo artist, accompanied by Bridget O'Connell, Nicholas Yenson and Alison O'Connell (2003); accompanied by Sarah-Jane Woods and Alan Colfer (2004); and for her own graduating recital, accompanied by Brian Morrissey, Sarah Jane Woods, Alan Colfer, Elsa McTaggart, and the University of Limerick Undergraduate Ensemble (2004); also in ensemble A, ensemble "Fanny Power", as accompanist to Olivia Ryan (2003), and to Aine Heslin (2004).

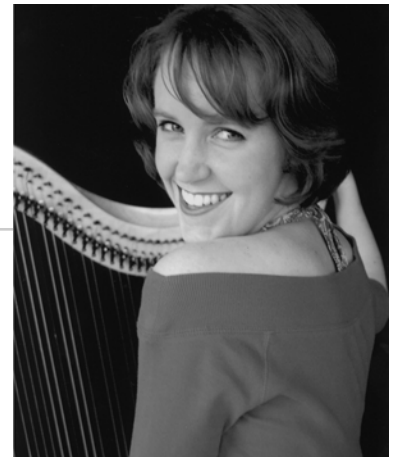
Alys Howe's career as a teacher spans the breadth of Canada, from the East Coast of Cape Breton to the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. In addition to the private students she has taught in Vancouver, Scotland, Toronto, and Ireland, Alys has been a harp presenter at the Coast Summer School of Celtic Music (2003), assistant harp instructor to Rosie Morton at the Edinburgh Harp Festival (2004), as well as to Heather Yule at the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in Cape Breton (2003), has taught harp and piano for Presto Music Studios in Ontario (Dorothy Stavrinou Lavkulik, director), and has been on faculty for harp at Toronto's Classical Music Conservatory (Lusiana Lukman, director), and Amati String Studio in Vancouver (Amy Levinson, director). She was also engaged to give harp instruction to both MA and undergraduate students taking harp as their elective at University of Limerick. Returning to the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts during the summers of 2004 and 2005, Alys offered harp instruction to students of all ages throughout July and August.

Since moving back to Vancouver, B.C. in 2004, Alys has been teaching privately, at Prussin Music (where she offers private harp instruction, as well as teaching a Music For Children class based on the Orff methodology in 2005/2006), Celtic Woollens, and has appeared in such local venues as Aberthau House ("Monday Night Live," 2004), Amati String Studios (2004), and for the studios of Elizabeth Volpé, where she gave a masterclass (2004) and a recital (2005). 2005 also marked the release of Alys Howe's debut recording, *Phosphorescence*, which was featured on the KRVS Radio program "Harpestry: Classical and other Musics of the Harp," hosted by Valerie Green, and on CHLY, "Eclectic Celtic: my roots are showing", hosted by Kenny and Val, where it reached #3 (2005). Alys enjoyed appearing as a soloist and accompanist in concert with the Vancouver choir Pandora's Vox (2005), and also performing on harp and vocals for the Alliance for the Arts Cultural Presentations, held at Vancouver City Hall (2005). Appearing frequently at The Hall of the Clans in Cape Breton during July and August (2004/2005), Alys was also a featured performer for Highland Village Day in Iona (2005). In Vancouver she frequently performs for weddings and events, as well as taking the concert stage at the Scottish Cultural Center (2005), and appearing with The West Coast Symphony Orchestra for performances of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, suites I and II (2005).

Alys has worked as a busker (street musician), an extra, and an actor - the highlight of which was playing Amy in United Players' production of *Little Women* (1996). At UL, Alys was cast as Audrey in the Drama Society's production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. Besides her love of music and theatre, Alys continues to pursue her interests in creative writing and literature. During the academic year 2005-2006, Alys studied Lyric and Libretto writing with Meryn Cadell at UBC. Accepted as a double-major into the Creative Writing Program at York, Alys is the author of four plays, two of which were performed at the Vancouver Fringe Festival (*Critics* 1991, *The Ownership of Women* 1992), another winning second place in the Vancouver Teenrites playwriting competition and subsequently performed at the Gastown Actors' Theatre (*AWOL* 1995), and the fourth, short-listed for publication in the UK "Sacred Earth Dramas" playwriting competition (*Arc En Ciel* 1996). Alys has had two works of short fiction published in the Douglas College journal *Pearls* ("Rapunzel's Revenge" and "Pomegranate Seeds" 1998). In 2002, Alys received Honourable Mention for Poetry in the York President's Prizes competition ("Monogamous Moon"). She has also published poetry in *Existere Magazine* ("Altered Conditions" 2003), *The Fence: a Bi-Women's 'Zine* ("Monogamous Moon" and "Heartburn" 2003), a short story in *Garm Lu* academic journal ("The Children of Lir" 2003), and various articles in *The International Society of Folk harpers and Craftsmen* and *B.C. Harps* magazines (1995 – 2000).

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## SELECT RECENT APPEARANCES

**Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker, suites I and II***, with the West Coast Symphony Orchestra. Performances at the UBC Old Auditorium, and Shaughnessy United Church.

**Solo harp**, Highland Village Day, Iona, Nova Scotia.

**Solo harp and harp accompaniment** for two concerts with Pandora's Vox, *MYST*.

**Harp and voice** for Alliance for the Arts Cultural Presentations at Vancouver City Hall.

**Release of debut CD *Phosphorescence***. Airplay on KRVS ("Harpestry," Valerie Green, host), and CHLY, ("Eclectic Celtic," Kenny and Val, co-hosts), where it reached #3 on the charts.

**Graduation recital, harp and voice**. With Sarah Jane Woods – wooden flute, Alan Colfer – guitar, Elsa McTaggart – voice, and dance percussion (UL Undergrad Ensemble). Performing Arts Centre, University of Limerick, Ireland.

**Reception for the Prime Minister of Slovenia**. Solo harp performance. Limerick City Museum, Ireland.

**"Fanny Power" ensemble**. Harp, with Deirdre Chawlk – accordion, Valerie Casey – fiddle, Ditte Fromsler-Mortensen – fiddle, Cormac Cannon – uilleann pipes. Dolan's Warehouse, Limerick, Ireland.

**Graduation recital, harp**. With Luxon Burgess – flute, and Andrew Mason – bass and cello. Concert Hall, York University, Toronto.

**Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*** with York University Women's Choir (Alan Gasser, conductor), Toronto. Concert Hall, York University, Toronto.

**Knox College Chapel**, Toronto Harp Festival, Toronto. Harp, with Sharlene Wallace – harp, and Graham Kennedy – percussion.

**Premiere of composition *Nocturne*** by Alys Howe. Toronto Harp Festival. Harp, with Sharlene Wallace – harp.

**Royal Concert Hall**, The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Scotland. Solo harp, and harp and voice with ensemble.

**Sabhal Mor Ostaig**, Isle of Skye, Scotland. (RSAMD student tours). Solo harp, and harp and voice with ensemble.

**Orkney Isles**, Scotland. Harp and voice. (RSAMD student tours).

## DISCOGRAPHY

### ***Phosphorescence***

harp, vocals, percussion, accordion, whistles

***A Saviour is Born*** (Peter Mason)

***Harp and Flute Duets*** (Justine Bliq)

## AWARDS

### **Watkins Fellowship**

### **Canada Council for the Arts Grant**

### **B.C. Arts Council Grant**

(four-time winner of this distinction)

### **Banff Centre For Fine Arts, Full Scholarship**

### **RSAMD Trust Fund**

### **Mod Gold Medal for Advanced Harp**

(two-time winner of this distinction)

## EDUCATION

### **Masters in Performance of Traditional**

**Irish Music** (First Class Honours) (harp) graduate University of Limerick, Ireland.

### **BFA Honours Music Performance**

(harp) graduate York University, Toronto.

### **BA Scottish Music and Ethnomusicology**

Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, Scotland (candidate).

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## BIOGRAPHY

Taking the sound of the harp to new places is what Canadian musician Alys Howe is all about. With performances that explore new stylistic territory, Alys will shake your belief that harp music can only be soothing. Drawing upon her classical roots, Alys also immersed herself in the ancient modalities of the Scottish and Irish harp traditions, training in Scotland (RSAMD), Ireland (University of Limerick), and Cape Breton (Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts) to weave three strands from the Celtic traditions into a unique new soundscape. With an approach dedicated to promoting multiculturalism in the music she loves, Alys has appeared in many different concert venues, on radio, television, and documentary programs performing as a soloist and in ensemble – both live and in the studio. Performances have taken her from the Isle of Skye, to Pioneer Villages to playing before the Prime Minister of Slovenia. She has appeared everywhere from the concert stage for *The Nutcracker* to medieval castles in Ireland. Her debut recording, *Phosphorescence* (2005), combines innovative arrangements of traditional material with new compositions, and features songs in both Scots and Gaelic. Demonstrating her masterful understanding of the techniques developing among contemporary harp players, Alys has won awards of distinction including two Mod Gold-Medals, The Watkins Fellowship, and grants from the Canada Council for the Arts. A dedicated teacher and tradition-bearer, Alys shares her love of the harp with students world-wide. Exploring her instrument with passionate energy and dexterity, the music of Alys Howe will open your ears to the diverse contemporary sounds of the harp.