

# Yolanda Kondonassis

## Extended Biography (1092 Words)

Yolanda Kondonassis is celebrated as one of the world's preeminent solo harpists. Hailed as "viscerally exciting" (*The Chicago Tribune*) and a "brilliant and expressive player" (*The Dallas Morning News*), she has performed around the globe as a concerto soloist and in recital, pushing the boundaries of what listeners expect of the harp. Also a published author, speaker, professor of harp, and environmental activist, she weaves her many passions into a vibrant and multi-faceted career.

Praised by *Gramophone* for her "keen sense of dramatic timing and a range of colour that's breathtaking," Kondonassis has sold hundreds of thousands of albums and downloads worldwide. Her extensive and critically acclaimed discography, released on the Telarc, Azica, Oberlin Music, New World, and Channel Classics labels, includes over twenty titles and over two-dozen world-premiere recordings.

She was nominated for a 2020 GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo for her live, world premiere recording of Jennifer Higdon's *Harp Concerto* (written for Kondonassis) with The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (Azica, 2019). Her 2008 album of music by Takemitsu and Debussy, *Air* (Telarc), was also nominated for a GRAMMY Award. Other lauded releases include Alberto Ginastera's *Harp Concerto* on *Ginastera: One Hundred; American Harp; Solo Harp: The Best of Yolanda Kondonassis; Together* (with guitarist Jason Vieaux); *Ravel: Intimate Masterpieces; Music of Bright Sheng* (including the world premiere recording of Sheng's *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra*, written for Kondonassis); *Salzedo's Harp; Debussy's Harp; The Romantic Harp; Music of Hovhanness*; the first-ever harp recording of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons; Quietude; A New Baroque; Pictures of the Floating World; Sky Music; and Scintillation*.

Since making her debut at age 18 with the New York Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta, Kondonassis has appeared as soloist with countless major orchestras in the United States and abroad such as The Cleveland Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Dallas Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Houston Symphony, NFM Wroclaw Philharmonic (Poland), Orquesta Sinfonica de Puerto Rico, Odessa Philharmonic (Ukraine), and New World Symphony to name a few. Other appearances include engagements at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the 92nd Street Y, and Taiwan's National Concert Hall.

Kondonassis' performances have been a feature at renowned festivals throughout the United States, including the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Marlboro Music Festival, Minnesota Beethoven Festival, Spoleto Festival, Strings Music Festival, Tanglewood Music Festival, Bravo! Vail, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Mainly Mozart Festival, and others. She has been featured on CNN, PBS, Sirius XM Radio, and National Public Radio, and is a frequent guest on podcasts and live social media events.

The 2021-2022 season marked the debut of *FIVE MINUTES for Earth*®, a project created by Kondonassis that both celebrates Earth and illuminates the challenge to preserve it. The featured composers, including Jocelyn Chambers, Chen Yi, Michael Daugherty, Daniel Dorff, Reena Esmail, Keith Fitch, Patrick Harlin, Stephen Hartke, Nathaniel Heyder, Takuma Itoh, Aaron Jay Kernis, Philip Maneval, Máximo Diego Pujol, Gary Schocker, and Zhou Long, were tasked with creating works of approximately five minutes in length that express a powerful experience inspired by Earth in one of its many conditions or atmospheres. Each composer generously donated their work to the project, and in partnership with Kondonassis' nonprofit organization Earth at Heart®, every verified performance of any of the works after the live and recorded premieres by Kondonassis – by any harpist, anywhere in the world – will result in a monetary contribution to a recognized earth conservation organization. The world premiere recording, entitled *FIVE MINUTES for Earth*, is available on Azica Records as of April 1, 2022.

Committed to the advancement of contemporary music for the harp, Kondonassis has promoted numerous new works through her vast recorded catalog and in live concert premieres. In 2021, Kondonassis presented the world premiere of Aaron Jay Kernis' *Elegy . . . for those we lost, for trumpet and harp*, a tribute to the families and victims of COVID-19, as part of The Cleveland Orchestra's *Adella.Live* series and available as a single on Azica Records. As author of *The Composer's Guide to Writing Well for the Modern Harp* (Carl Fischer, 2019), she also recently released two educational companion videos for composers. With her book, she standardized and streamlined the language and symbols used to denote the large spectrum of techniques and special effects on the harp, even making music composition software symbols accessible through her website.

As a composer and arranger, Kondonassis has published three books with Carl Fischer Music: *On Playing the Harp*, a comprehensive guide to harp technique and methodology; *The Yolanda Kondonassis Collection*, a compilation of her many original transcriptions, arrangements and compositions for the harp; and *The Yolanda Kondonassis Christmas Collection*, featuring Kondonassis' most popular arrangements from her acclaimed Telarc disc, *Dream Season: The Christmas Harp*. A new volume to be published by Theodore Presser and co-curated by Kondonassis, *The Earth Collection*, will feature three new compositions by Kondonassis, in addition to other earth-inspired works written especially for the publication, and will be available in 2022.

Kondonassis carries her passionate artistic commitment to the protection of natural resources, air quality, and climate change. Royalties from several of her projects are donated to earth causes and she is the founder and director of Earth at Heart®, a non-profit organization devoted to inspiring earth conservation awareness and action through the arts. Her first children's book, entitled *Our House is Round: A Kid's Book About Why Protecting Our Earth Matters*, was published in 2012 by Skyhorse Publishing and praised as "the perfect children's introduction to environmental issues" by The Environmental Defense Fund. The book was licensed as a featured title by Scholastic Books and was published by Skyhorse in an updated, paperback edition with the title *My Earth, My Home* in January of 2022.

Born in Norman, Oklahoma, Kondonassis attended high school at Interlochen Arts Academy. She continued her education at The Cleveland Institute of Music, where she received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees as a student of Alice Chalifoux. Kondonassis' long list of national and international honors includes top prizes in the Affiliate Artists National Auditions in New York and the Maria Korchinska International Harp Competition in Great Britain, two Solo Recitalists Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a 2011 Cleveland Arts Prize. In addition to her active performing and recording schedule, she heads the harp department at The Cleveland Institute of Music, is the founding Artistic Director of The Maine Coast Harp Institute, and has presented master classes around the world. Yolanda Kondonassis plays a Lyon & Healy Salzedo Model concert harp. For more information on Yolanda Kondonassis, visit [www.YolandaHarp.com](http://www.YolandaHarp.com).

### **Long Biography (794 Words)**

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## Medium Biography (582 Words)

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As an author, composer, and arranger, Kondonassis has published four books to date with Carl Fischer Music: *The Composer's Guide to Writing Well for the Modern Harp*; *On Playing the Harp*, a comprehensive guide to harp technique and methodology; *The Yolanda Kondonassis Collection*, a compilation of her many original transcriptions, arrangements and compositions for the harp; and *The Yolanda Kondonassis Christmas Collection*, featuring Kondonassis' most popular arrangements from her acclaimed disc, *Dream Season: The Christmas Harp*. A new volume to be published by Theodore Presser and co-curated by Kondonassis, *The Earth Collection*, will feature three new compositions by Kondonassis, in addition to other earth-inspired works written especially for the publication, and will be available in 2022.

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## Short Biography (256 Words)

**Yolanda Kondonassis** is celebrated as one of the world's preeminent harp soloists and has performed around the globe as a concerto soloist and recitalist. She released her first solo recording in 1993 to widespread critical acclaim and has since recorded over twenty albums, sold hundreds of thousands of discs and downloads worldwide, made over two dozen world premiere recordings, and received two GRAMMY nominations. She is hailed as "viscerally exciting" (*The Chicago Tribune*) and has been praised for her "keen sense of dramatic timing and a range of colour that's breathtaking" (*Gramophone*). Also a published author, speaker, professor of harp, and environmental activist, she weaves her many passions into a vibrant and multi-faceted career.

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