

# MAGICAL STRINGS

*Philip and Pam Boulding*

With dancing hammers and pulsating strings, Philip and Pam Boulding create the distinctive music of **Magical Strings**, described by The Washington Post as "warm, graceful and sonically gorgeous." Celtic harps and hammered dulcimers are colorfully augmented by pennywhistles, concertina, valiha (Malagasy harp) and storytelling. Since 1978 they have drawn a loyal following worldwide, captivated by their energetic arrangements of Celtic music and their own engaging compositions, intertwining Celtic roots with classical and world music influences.

Practically a household name in the Northwest, **Magical Strings** has toured throughout the United States, Canada, and Ireland. In Japan they toured twice ('97 and '99) with their family quartet, including Brittany and Brenin on violin and cello, performing many sold-out concerts from Okinawa to Sapporo. As a duo Philip and Pam opened for Dan Fogelberg in 30 major U.S. cities, sharing their music with enthusiastic crowds of up to 15,000 a night. Following the tour they were invited to record with him on *River of Souls* and then a second album, *The First Christmas Morning*.

Since 1980 **Magical Strings** has recorded 18 albums on Flying Fish/Rounder, EarthBeat Records, and their own label, Magic Hill Music. Their more recent CD featuring the family quartet, *Where Dragons Dance*, appears on Allegro's *Alula Visions* label. Their three newest releases appear on their own label: *Dances and Dreams – Best of Magical Strings*, which celebrates 30 years of their career featuring their favorite tracks from the first nine albums; *Musings*, a solo harp all-original album from Philip; and *Celtic Yuletide Live!*, featuring energetic live performances from their 2009 Yuletide season. Their music has received a growing stream of international airplay and acclaim over the years. *Islands Calling*, was named "their best album yet" by Billboard Magazine in 1996, and features several guest artists including Alex de Grassi and Hawaiian slack-key virtuoso Keola Beamer.

Philip and Pam have performed on radio and television networks around the country, including 'A Prairie Home Companion,' NPR's Weekend Edition, CNN both at home and in Europe, and prime time TV in Japan. They placed first at the Grannard bicentennial harp festival competition in Ireland in 1981; have collaborated with Northwest ballet and theatre companies, and performed for Russia's Boris Yeltsin when he visited Seattle. They were awarded a residency by the Cill Rialaig Irish arts organization in Co. Kerry, Ireland for a summer of inspiration in an historic cottage overlooking the western sea, where they composed much of the material for their most recent recordings.

The Bouldings run the well-known **School of Magical Strings**, inspiring students of the Celtic harp and hammered dulcimer since 1978. They design and manufacture instruments for an international clientele (over 2,600 built to date) and continue to host the annual **Magic Hill Summer Harp Camp** on their property. Philip and Pam love to share their music with children and have performed in schools throughout the country, including Waldorf schools where for over 30 years they have taught harp, lyre, painting, and orchestra classes. Once referred to by the local media as the "Von Trapp Family of the Northwest", their love of music is embraced by their 5 children and 6 grandchildren, many of whom still join them from across the country to perform their annual Celtic Yuletide Concerts along with Irish dancers and a host of guest artists in concert halls throughout the region. Their youngest, violinist daughter Brittany, currently resides in Seattle with her husband and performs with Seattle Symphony, PNB, and as concert master for both the Auburn symphony and the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre.

Philip and Pam continue to have boundless energy for their creative life, which is nurtured by their home on a beautiful 5 acres they call Magic Hill, overlooking the Puget Sound.

P.O. Box 1240, Olalla, WA 98359 (253) 857-3716 info@magicalstrings.com

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