

# My Hands Were Singing

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Before I came to UR, I volunteered a few of my summers in Iowa, detasseling corn in the fields as many immigrant youths from around the country do for a living. It was a humbling experience for me. I saw first hand the difficult lifestyle of a migrant worker, moving each season in search for work that only minimally compensates their toils. Due to their societal-imposed poverty, many of them are not given the opportunity of even minimal education.

After my family moved away to Las Vegas, Nevada, I didn't have the chance to help them any further. But born from those experiences was my passion to make the most of my educational resources. I used school as a jumping board and seized every opportunity available to push myself to succeed. Concordantly, as more summers passed, my dreams of higher education became stronger and more realistic. Given my experiences in Iowa, I felt the need to achieve certain goals that would lead not only to a successful

career, but also to the ability to help others through my career.

Coming into Rochester I was very focused and determined, I had already decided on an academic path. I chose to pursue a five-year dual program at UR and the Eastman School of Music concentrating on economics and harp performance. The program allowed me to explore the two disciplines to the best of my ability until I was certain which career path I



would choose.

During this time I also served on the Presidential Cabinet. As a student of both UR and ESM, I strongly felt that students at both campuses would reap

the benefits of an improved integration. Among other goals, I encouraged better communication and increased activities between the two schools.

I spent my free time at UR supporting the Interfaith Chapel as a chaplain's assistant and as an assistant wedding coordinator. The chapel was a second home for me and opened my eyes to the importance of each religion though contact with URCF, Hillel, PCC, Muslim, and Newman communities.

Mentors such as Rev. Greg Osterberg taught me how my musicianship with the harp could be of service to others. I in turn contributed many harp performances on the wings of charitable functions such as the Rochester AIDS Foundation.

Using UR's resources, I found summer internships at the Nevada Test Site in Las Vegas, NV, on Capital Hill in Washington, DC, and at Xerox. After my final internship,

I realized my interests were narrowing and becoming more specific. Although I gained invaluable experience through my work in those summers, I realized

they were unrelated to my goals for the future. Parallel to that to this point, I shied away from the harp on occasion because I was afraid I would not be able to make an impact on people. So harp music became just a secondary concentration of my academic pursuits. But after two summers working without it, I knew it was my true calling, specifically musical harp performance.

Performing is intense, difficult, and challenging. Each performance is a new experience. It involves all aspects of your body: the physical, the mental, and the emotional. To give a good performance, one must be confident both in skills and in presentation. But even when I knew my junior year I could attain my heart's desire as a professional harpist, I believed I was not entirely ready. Hence, again, I seized every experience, every opportunity to improve my own musicianship.

I spent a portion of summer 2000 in Mexico City with my family, and attended the fourth Latin American Harp Encounter. While there, I visited the Conservatorio Nacional de Musical, and had the unexpected opportunity to spend time with a professor of harp, Mercedes Gomez, and her students. It takes a lot of determination and love of music for the students at CNM to advance in their studies given that only three in 10 students have harps at home. The other students awake at

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