



## ROMANCING THE STRINGS

INGRID SCHELLENBERG

**H**er occupation comes with a great dress code: few women have so many opportunities to dress up in elegant, flowing skirts and fancy gowns. Then there's the work environment. "I get to go to parties all the time," says harpist Ingrid Schellenberg. "It's always new, always different, always fun."

Ingrid provides ambiance at weddings, business gatherings and events anywhere from a gazebo in the middle of a vineyard to Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. She has played with the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra as principal harpist for four years and maintains a busy teaching schedule with students ranging in age from seven to 79.

In the ground-floor studio of her Penticton character home, antique furnishings share space with a variety of harps in different sizes. Ingrid's statuesque performance harp is the tallest. Settling into her seat beneath it, she nestles it against her shoulder. Fingers flying, she draws forth wisps of melody and lively crescendoes, making it look completely effortless.

Growing up in the South Okanagan, music was always part of Ingrid's life. Her mother took her to the symphony and encouraged her to take piano lessons; in school she played flute and guitar. One day, listening to *Greensleeves*, the sound of the harp caught her attention. Ingrid recalls thinking, "Isn't that beautiful... I need to do that."

As soon as she got her hands on a harp, she was smitten. "I just fell in love with it," she says. Building on her training in classical piano, she studied with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's Elizabeth Volpé, and today her repertoire ranges from classical and old jazz favourites to contemporary — even rock.

As the music flows from one genre to another, I am amazed: *Stairway to Heaven*. Led Zeppelin never sounded so... well, heavenly. —Dawn Renaud

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD