



## Susann Hackett McDonald

May 26, 1935 - May 29, 2025

We are deeply saddened to announce the loss of Susann H. McDonald, distinguished professor emeritus of harp at Indiana Jacobs School of music, on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, at the age of 90. School of Music faculty in 1981, McDonald was recognized as a world-renowned pedagogue, a robust concertizing career and teaching positions at the Juilliard school, the University of Southern California, the University of Arizona, and 35 years at Indiana University. Susann was born May 26, 1935, in Rock Island, Illinois; to George McDonald and Catherine (Hackett) McDonald.

In 1955, at the age of 20, she became the first American to receive the Premier Prix de Harpe from the Paris Conservatory. One year later, Susann would perform for an audience of 60,000 at the Chicagoland Music Festival at Soldier Field. McDonald was a treasured and beloved teacher, musician, and friend to harpist around the world. Susann served as the artistic director for the world Harp Congress from its inception in 1983, until 2011, an accomplishment of which she took great pride in. Susann promoted worldwide friendships and lived to see her students and fellow harpists succeed. In 2008, she received the world harp Congress award of recognition for service to the International Harp Community at the 10th World Harp Congress. McDonald is one of very few to receive such an honor.

She served on juries for virtually all the world's major harp competitions,

including Israel, Italy, France, Hong Kong, and Mexico. McDonald has performed many times on the PBS television show “Joy of Music” with Host and longtime friend Diane Bish, an acclaimed organist. Susann has produced numerous CDs under various labels as well as she founded the U.S. International Harp competition in 1989. Thus, constructing one of the largest and most esteemed solo harp performance competitions in the world.

Susann McDonald’s deep Christian faith was always a guiding light in her life. Susann wrote several daily devotional books, including “Praise the Lord with the Harp” and “A Journey of Faith”. She also was the co-author of “Harp for Today, a Universal Method for the Harp”. Her writings have impacted many around the world. Often Susann could be spotted on her back patio writing and studying the Bible. She was an avid reader, loved to garden, and play golf. She enjoyed her golfing community, submerging herself in the wilderness, in Naples, Florida where she spent her winters since 1999. Susann is survived by two nieces Amy Brakeman (Sausalito, California) and Amanda Mayeda (Culver City, California); and nephews David McDonald (Los Angeles, California) and Christopher McDonald (Torrance, California).

She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, George McDonald Jr.

A visitation will be held for Susann on Wednesday, June 4, 2025, at Allen Funeral Home and Crematory (4155 S. Old State Road 37, Bloomington, IN 47401) from 6pm-8pm. The funeral service will be held at 11am on Thursday, June 5, 2025 at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church (2700 E Rogers Rd, Bloomington, IN 47401) with an hour of visitation beforehand. Susann will be laid to rest at Chippiannock Cemetery in Rock Island, Illinois.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in Susann’s honor to the USA International Harp Competition ( <https://usaihc.org/donate> )



# Cemetery Details

## Chippiannock Cemetery

2901 12th Street  
Rock Island, IL 61201

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUN 4. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory  
4155 S. Old State Road 37  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
(812) 824-5905  
<http://www.allencares.com>

## Visitation

JUN 5. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Sherwood Oaks Christian Church  
2700 E. Rogers  
Bloomington, IN 47401

## Funeral Service

JUN 5. 11:00 AM (ET)

Sherwood Oaks Christian Church  
2700 E. Rogers  
Bloomington, IN 47401



# Tribute Wall

JR

“ *Ms. McDonald was a wonderful musician and teacher, and a lovely person. It was an honor to study with her in the early 1970s. RIP Ms. McDonald*

Jelil Romano - January 13 at 09:17 PM

JM

“ *A woman of God whose writings and harp playing sustains me tremendously...God Almighty Bless Susan throughout Eternity. Amen*

Joseph Mosikili - July 17, 2025 at 10:48 PM

KR

“ *Well done, good and faithful servant!  
You will be with me every time I sit down to practice. You will be with me at every lesson I give. Your love will shine through in every performance, its power is eternal.  
Well done, good and faithful servant!*

*Karen Rokos, IU class 1984  
Harp Instructor, Fountain School of Music  
Dalhousie Univerisity*

Karen Rokos - June 15, 2025 at 06:59 AM

JC

“ *Joyce Claflin purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.*



Joyce Claflin - June 03, 2025 at 05:56 PM

JC

“ Joyce Claflin planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Susann Hackett McDonald.

Joyce Claflin - June 03, 2025 at 05:56 PM

TC

“ The Campbells purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.



The Campbells - June 03, 2025 at 01:44 PM

TC

“ The Campbells planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Susann Hackett McDonald.

The Campbells - June 03, 2025 at 01:44 PM

TC

“ In gentle strings your spirit soared,  
Though silent now, your song lives on.  
A friend whose heart was pure and true,  
Forever cherished, remembered too.

Rest peacefully, dear Susann.

With love,  
The Campbells

The Campbells - June 03, 2025 at 01:40 PM

MA

“ met Ms. McDonald many years ago at the Harp Weeks in the Netherlands. During a certain time I dreamed about study with her. I was captivated by her playing, her personality and by the playing of her students. I went to a summer class in Bloomington and later I got a scholarship to go to IU for a couple years to do my Artist Diploma with her. She welcomed me with open arms. That was one of the best experiences in my life, musically, harpistically and personally. Starting with a familiar “honey”, she knew how to get the best of my playing. I remember once, I went to class with my just new “Chatelaine en sa tour” and I told her: I know how I want that the piece sounded, but I can’t make it. She just told me, full of energy: let’s work on it. That is one of the best lessons I can remember.

*During a long time we had been in touch throw the WHC meetings, the WHC Board, mail and the phone. Unfortunately it had been a long time since the last time we were together.*

*Now, I only can say many thanks, I wil miss you and goodbye, dear Ms. McDonald.*

*I send a big hug to family and also to the big harp family around the world*

*Margarita Arnal*

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**Margarita Arnal** - June 03, 2025 at 12:20 PM

AS

“ Ayako and Kazuko Shinozaki purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.



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**Ayako and Kazuko Shinozaki** - June 03, 2025 at 12:02 PM

AS

“ Ayako and Kazuko Shinozaki planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Susann Hackett McDonald.

Ayako and Kazuko Shinozaki - June 03, 2025 at 12:02 PM

AY

“ Akie, Aya, Kanako, Mieko, Yukiko purchased the Heavenly Grace Spray for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.



Akie, Aya, Kanako, Mieko, Yukiko - June 03, 2025 at 10:40 AM

AF

“ Abra Bush & your Jacobs School family purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.



Abra Bush & your Jacobs School family - June 02, 2025 at 01:42 PM

ED

“ Dear Miss McDonald, you are forever in my heart. Without your kindness and professional guidance I would have quit being a harpist. I owe you my love of music and playing the harp, and the opportunity to meet so many wonderful harpists from all over the world both during the Villars masterclasses and at IU. I will always remember your smile, your incredible energy and enthusiasm, and the fuzzy warm feeling of Wednesday masterclasses filled with high level music, fun and candy. My love and prayers are with you as you enter eternal life. Enjoy the music of heaven!

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**Elisabeth Chardonnet Dahlstrand** - June 01, 2025 at 12:45 PM



“ Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.



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June 01, 2025 at 12:33 PM

“90 years apart, the world welcomed and bid farewell to one of the greatest harpists of all times and in many respects the greatest. Through her incredible dedication to the cause of the harp as a powerful instrument with all of the soloistic qualities which she strongly believed should set it in a class of its own, Susann McDonald made a tremendous difference to the stature of the harp from every imaginable angle. She redefined what being a harpist is, encompassing a range unknown until she did so. Her lifetime work constantly advanced the harp to new heights. First on a first personal level, achieving a career where she performed, toured and recorded all over the world with excellence and then as a teacher, with the entire body of her students. Her colossal accomplishments in creating professional unions, platforms for artistic elevation and connecting harpists from everywhere transformed the global harp community. Whether it is through advocating for every harpist to seek one's best sound, or through seeking the best performances one could deliver or yet developing artistic poise and a dedication to the cause of the harp through research and exploration of repertoire for her beloved instrument, she testified to what one person could carry out. She planted seeds along every inch of her journey in this world and showed us all how to bring them to blossom. She did so with a deep sense of connection to communities she built, making everyone feel included and valued.

*As we deeply mourn her passing, it is impossible not to celebrate her life and reflect upon the amazing influences she was capable of at the same time. We find ourselves again in full admiration-and ever so more poignantly-for the example she set before us.*

*It goes without saying that we, her students, now rise more than ever to take over her work, each of us in our individual path and empowering each other. The leitmotiv of Susann McDonald's spiritual life, the idea of sharing for greater excellence together and for basic goodness will always inspire and lead me. She will be my teacher and mentor for as long as I live. I feel extremely lucky that she was my teacher.*

*May Miss McDonald's kind soul be lullabied by all the amazing harp sounds she so gently and harmoniously helped create in this world and in eternity.*

*With my deepest gratitude, respect and love, and condolences to her family.*

*Sirin Pancaroglu*

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**Sirin Pancaroglu** - June 01, 2025 at 06:16 AM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Susann Hackett McDonald.*



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May 31, 2025 at 11:12 AM

DB

“ Susann was my teacher for 10 years and mentor for more than 3 decades. Her inspiration to play beautifully and give of my time to others, has shaped my lifelong musical career. The many master classes as well as dinner parties that she hosted at her home at 3308 Covenanter will be remembered with great fondness. What fun we had! She always asked me to "dress the salad" when we were getting ready to set out the wonderful spread of food for the students. I guess that was because I was the vegetarian in the group; but she did enjoy a huge green salad, and always had baked potatoes!

*I remember the many hours I sat at the harp (on her grand gold Style 11, if I was lucky) with Susann by my side, pencil in her left hand, writing those valuable suggestions directly into my harp scores. From her home in Pasadena where I first began my studies with her, to the harp studio at USC, to the homestead and garden on Covenanter in Bloomington, even after the fire took her lovely home, to the massive harp department at IU, with the many practice rooms that surrounded her teaching studio 003, the harp lessons always contained such a wealth of knowledge.*

*Teaching for her while she was on sabbatical, leading the harp ensembles at IU as both a Graduate Assistant and later as a part-time Assistant Professor, housesitting for her dogs, and accepting leadership positions that she recommended for me, whether for the World Harp Congress, or the USA International Harp Competition, kept me active and involved in the harp world. For her influence of being of service to others, while promoting the glorious qualities of the harp, I am thankful. I learned from Miss McDonald that life will not always be fair, but will be full of surprises!*

*Susann, may you rest in peace and rise in glory, in that celestial and eternal home that awaits us all, Dr. Bev*

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Dr. Bev - May 31, 2025 at 10:44 AM