

Obituary for Günther Arnold

By Manfred Rußmann

It is with deep regret that we learned of the death of Günther Arnold, who passed away on Saturday, March 15, 2025, at the age of 77 in his hometown of Waldkraiburg, Bavaria/Germany.

Günther was an outstanding Jew's harp player and one of the most important representatives of the Austro-Bavarian playing tradition - the alternating technique (Wechselspiel). His remarkable ability to play melodiously on the Jew's harp made him one of the main protagonists and leading interpreters of folk music. The combination of folk music, early music and popular music shaped his extensive repertoire. Most recently, he worked on an arrangement of Ravel's Bolero for harp and Jews' harp.

Günther Arnold was born near Waldkraiburg in 1947 and grew up in poor circumstances. His ambitious character soon became apparent, as he attended a grammar school and later completed a technical degree in Munich.

His musical Jew's harp journey began in the 1970s when he heard the Jew's harp player Fritz Mayr. Fascinated by the unique sound of the Jew's harp, Günther learned to play autodidactically and developed a distinctive and unique way of playing. The harp of his wife Annelies Brandstätter gave this sound a special touch. Together they performed as the duo "CrembalumArpa" at numerous events and also released two CDs that recorded their fascinating musical interpretations.

In addition, Günther devoted himself intensively to the history of the Jew's harp. He published instructions for playing the Jew's harp, created music books for harp and Jew's harp and passed on his extensive knowledge to his students for decades in numerous seminars, whom he always inspired with his passion and commitment.

In addition to his intensive musical career, Günther was a teacher of mathematics and physics at the technical college in Altötting until his retirement. His commitment to the education and development of young people will be remembered fondly.

Günther Arnold not only leaves behind an important musical legacy in the Jew's harp world, but also many eventful memories for his musician friends and Jew's harp students. He will live on in our hearts and in his numerous pieces of music that he wrote down for Jew's harp.

The author, Manfred Rußmann is a Jew's harp player from Molln and learned the first steps on the instrument from Günther Arnold. ■