

## Maximizing Success for the Orchestral Harpist

Jaymee J. Haefner, BM, MM, DM  
University of North Texas Faculty  
Southwestern Regional Director, American Harp Society  
www.TheProfessionalHarpist.com  
[jaymee.haefner@unt.edu](mailto:jaymee.haefner@unt.edu) or [Jaymee@TheProfessionalHarpist.com](mailto:Jaymee@TheProfessionalHarpist.com)  
940.565.3739 (harp studio at UNT)

- I. General resources (see resource list on pg. 4-6)
  - a. Organizations, websites and journals
  - b. Books
  
- II. About the instrument
  - a. Brief history (see pg. 11-12)
  - b. Lever harps (non-pedal or folk)
    - i. Strings and numbering
    - ii. Chromatic limitations
  - c. Pedal harps
    - i. 2000+ moving parts
    - ii. Tuned in Cb
    - iii. Pedal and fork mechanisms
    - iv. Strings: wire, gut, and nylon
  - d. Used vs. new harps: pros and cons
    - i. New harps
      1. Known history
      2. Warranty
      3. Free 1-year regulation
      4. More expensive, and appreciate every year
      5. Where to purchase:
        - a. From manufacturer
        - b. Harp Retailers
    - ii. Used harps
      1. Lesser cost
      2. Uncertain history
      3. Harps have relatively short lifespan (less than 100 yrs)
      4. Appreciate in cost, so you might be paying more than the original owner paid for the instrument
      5. Where to purchase:
        - a. From classified ads
        - b. Individuals (check AHS Chapter Newsletter)
        - c. Retailers of used harps (some are Certified Pre-Owned)
  
  - e. Accessories

- i. Padded cover (3-piece set and/or trunk is optional)
  - ii. Tuning key (preferably rubber, long-handled)
  - iii. Electronic tuner with calibration settings
  - iv. Pick-up mic
  - v. Extra strings, wire cutter, and string-ends
  - vi. Harp Cart (for pedal harps) and adjustable bench
  - vii. Optional accessories:
    - 1. Dusting cloth and polish
    - 2. De-humidifier for storage location
- f. Maintenance, care, and tuning
  - i. Insurance
    - 1. Merz-Huber
    - 2. Anderson Insurance ([www.harpinsurance.com](http://www.harpinsurance.com))
  - ii. Regular tuning, and down-tuning when not used
  - iii. Regulations
  - iv. Safe storage
    - 1. In a temperature/humidity-regulated room
    - 2. In a low-traffic area
    - 3. Out of direct sunlight (use a cover if it is)
    - 4. Near a corner or wall

### III. Finding harpists

- a. Contact local harp teachers
  - i. Local Universities/Colleges
  - ii. AHS website teacher's directory
  - iii. Local AHS chapters or regional mailing lists
- b. Recruit new players

### IV. Repertoire considerations (see AHS Education Project 2000 handout, pg. 7-10)

- a. Orchestra:
  - i. A brief history
  - ii. Our most-common excerpts
  - iii. What if no harp part exists?
    - 1. Using parts from other instruments, especially piano
    - 2. Combining a treble and bass instrument (such as vln and bass)
    - 3. Writing a new part and adding effects, such as glissandi
    - 4. Source: *Writing for Pedal Harp* by Inglefield and Neill
  - iv. What if the part is too difficult?
  - v. Items to avoid in making or choosing arrangements or compositions
    - 1. Repeated notes
    - 2. Extensive chromaticism—use enharmonics
    - 3. Sudden key changes
    - 4. Keys with many sharps
- b. Harp Ensemble

- i. Repertoire
  - ii. Pedal and lever harps may be combined
  - iii. Conducted or lead by one harpist while performing
- c. Chamber Music
- d. Maximizing rehearsal benefits
  - i. Early arrival for tuning
  - ii. Preparation of pedal markings
  - iii. Counting rests and the importance of cues
  - iv. Visual placement within the ensemble

#### V. Acoustic considerations

- a. A quiet instrument, prone to buzzing when overplayed
- b. Placement within the ensemble and visual considerations
- c. Amplification
- d. An overview of idiomatic effects
  - i. Arpeggios
  - ii. Harmonics
  - iii. Glissandi
    - 1. fingers
    - 2. nails
    - 3. flat palm
    - 4. muffled
  - iv. Sol Xylo
  - v. Tuning Key Slides
  - vi. Knocks and Wire gong
  - vii. Pdlt (*près de la table*)
  - viii. Finger muffles/ Pedal Slides

## *Resources*

### **Organizations, Websites, and Journals**

The American Harp Society (and Journal) [www.harpsociety.org](http://www.harpsociety.org)

- Website contains contact list for area teachers, chapters, and Regional Directors.
- Journal includes classified ads for used harps.

The Harp Column [www.harpcolumn.com](http://www.harpcolumn.com)

- Classified ads for used harps are listed online and in bi-monthly publication.
- Practical information for harpists of all levels.

The World Harp Congress [www.worldharpcongress.org](http://www.worldharpcongress.org)

- International organization which holds gatherings of international harpists.
- Biennial publication focusing on scholarly topics, and promoting contemporary harp composers.

The Folk Harp Society (and Journal) [www.folkharpsociety.org](http://www.folkharpsociety.org)

- Journal of the International Society of Folk Harpers and Craftsmen.

### **Practical Advice for Harpists, Educators, Composers, and Directors**

*A Harp in the School: A Guide for School Ensemble Directors and Harpists*

Edited by Chelcy Bowles

- Available through ASTA's bookstore at [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com).

*On Playing the Harp*

By Yolanda Kondonassis

- A practical and clear guide with basic information for beginners.

### **Harp Care, Maintenance, and Repair**

*A Guide for Harpists: Care, Maintenance and Repair of the Pedal Harp*

By Carl Swanson

- A thorough how-to guide for pedal harp repair. Includes information about how to select a used harp.

*Troubleshooting your Lever Harp*

By David Kolacny

- A user-friendly guide for troubleshooting common maintenance issues of lever harps, and a guide for replacing strings.

### **Harp Notation and Scoring**

*Harp Scoring*

By Stanley Chaloupka

- A thorough explanation of standard harp notation for pedal and lever harps.

*Writing For the Pedal Harp* (includes CD)

By Ruth Inglefield and Lou Anne Neill

- A guide to pedal harp notation and effects.

### **Harp History**

*Harps and Harpists* (includes CD)

By Rosalyn Rensch

- This is the most complete source of harp history which is currently available. Includes detailed bibliographies for each historical topic.

*Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Harpists*

By Wenonah Milton Govea

- An insightful overview of the most influential harpists from the past two centuries, containing brief biographical information and works-lists.

## Ensemble Repertoire Resources

*AHS Education Project 2000* ([www.harpsociety.org/resources/education2000.html](http://www.harpsociety.org/resources/education2000.html))

- Contains a graded list of repertoire for school ensembles (grades 1-12) and publisher information

*The Harp in the Orchestra: A Reference Book for Harpists, Teachers, Composers, and Conductors*

By Beatrice Schroeder Rose

- Offers suggestions for standard orchestral harp excerpts, and practical advice for the orchestral harpist.

*Principal harp: A Guidebook for the Orchestral Harpist* (includes CD)

By Sarah Bullen

- Includes fingerings and enharmonic re-spellings for standard orchestral harp parts and several cadenzas.

## Harp Method Books

*Complete Method for Harp*

By Henriette Renié

- Offers an in-depth analysis of technique, as it relates to solo and orchestral repertoire. These two volumes are intended as a resource for harp teachers, rather than students. Includes drawings for the articulation of various techniques, and several orchestral excerpts. Exercises range from beginner to advanced levels.

*Harp Olympics, Preliminary Round-Stage 4*

By Susann McDonald and Linda Wood Rollo

- A playful approach to exercises, theory, and solos which appeal to younger students. This method purposefully avoids specific discussion of technique, so it may be used with any teaching method. At the end of each "Stage," students must complete a "Marathon" test before entering the next stage.

*Method for the Harp*

By Lucile Lawrence and Carlos Salzedo

- A thorough discussion of harp technique, including several photographs. Fifteen Preludes at the end of the *Method* demonstrate various techniques. Emphasis is placed on new effects of the twentieth century and specific hand and arm position for execution. Preludes are of an intermediate Level.

*Metodo per Arpa* (available only in Italian)

By Maria Grossi

- Although this volume is available only in Italian, its organization clearly pertains to the establishment of new techniques individually. Clear photographs are included, but a teacher would need to specifically describe these techniques to the pupil. Exercises of a beginner to intermediate level by Grossi and Pozzoli are included.

*Thumbs Up!*

By Kathy Bundock-Moore

- Beginning method for the adult or college-aged beginning harpist.

*Universal Method for the Harp*

By Bochsá and Oberthür

- This Method approaches harp playing from a theoretical point of view, beginning with a discussion of rhythm and the notation of pitches upon the staff. A discussion of body position is included in addition to Forty Progressive Studies for the Harp by Bochsá. Exercises are of a late intermediate level.

## **Beginning Solo Harp Repertoire (in addition to the above Methods and Etudes)**

*ABC's of Harp Playing*

By Lucile Lawrence

*Beginner's Harp Book, Vol. 1-2* (available with DVD)

By Phyllis Schlomovitz

*Colorful Adventures for the Harp*

By Bonnie Mohr

*First and Second Harp Books*

By Betty Paret

*Fun from the First, Vol. 1-2*

By Samuel Milligan

*Graded Recital Pieces, Vol. 1-5*

By Susann McDonald and Linda Wood-Rollo

*Old Tunes for New Harpists and Thirty Little Classics*

By Mildred Dilling

*Pop n'Easy Collections (Nutcracker Ballet Selections, Children's Favorites, Popular Classics, and Popular Holiday)*

By Eleanor Fell

*Suzuki Harp School, Vol. 1-3* (with CD's)

Adapted and Arranged by Mary Kay Waddington

*Tiny Tales, Vol. 1-2*

By Carlos Salzedo

### **Some Retailers of Harps, Music, Strings, and Accessories:**

Lyon & Healy Harps: 800-621-3881, [www.lyonhealy.com](http://www.lyonhealy.com) and [www.harp.com](http://www.harp.com)

Salvi Harps (Harp World): 888-420-4227, [www.harpworldinc.com](http://www.harpworldinc.com)

Venus Harps: 773-278-4810, [www.venusharps.com](http://www.venusharps.com)

Vanderbilt Music Company: 800-533-7200, [www.vanderbiltmusic.com](http://www.vanderbiltmusic.com)

Melodie's Music (in Houston): 800-893-4277, [www.folkharp.com](http://www.folkharp.com)

### **Sources for Finding Used Harps:**

*Important Note: Always view used harps in person before purchasing.*

Lyon & Healy Harps (Certified pre-owned): [www.lyonhealycpo.com](http://www.lyonhealycpo.com)

The Harp Connection: [www.harpconnection.com](http://www.harpconnection.com)

*The Harp Column* (classified ads online and in publication): [www.harpcolumn.com](http://www.harpcolumn.com)

*American Harp Journal* (classified ads in publication): [www.harpsociety.org](http://www.harpsociety.org)

**AHS Education Project 2000**  
**Listing of Published Harp Parts for School Ensembles (Grades 1 –12)**  
**Compiled by Wendy Kerner Lucas for the American Harp Society**  
**Available at [www.harpsociety.org/resources/education2000.html](http://www.harpsociety.org/resources/education2000.html)**

Name of Piece	Composer/ Arranger	Publisher and info	Orchestration	Ensemble Level	Lever or Pedal	Harp Part Level
Adagietto From Symphony No. 5	Mahler, Gustav Arr. C.L. Gruselle	Highland/Etling A div. Of Alfred #17350	String Orchestra, Harp	3-Medium	Either	2
Andante	Guilmant Arr. Conley	MSB Publishing #CB178	Concert Band	3-Medium	Pedal	4
Berceuse and Finale from Firebird Suite	Stravinsky/ Isaac	Warner Bros. #CO00137	Complete Orchestra	2-3 Medium	Pedal	3½
Carol of the Bells	Leontivich- Wihousky Arr. Hayman	Carl Fischer #C167	Full Orchestra	4-Medium Advanced	Pedal	3
Celtic Suite	Fishburn, Kathy L.	Wingert-Jones Music, Inc. #303032	String Orchestra 8-8-5-5-5-Harp	2-Medium Easy	Either	3
Dance of the Tumblers	Rimsky- Korsakov, arr. S. Dackow	Ludwig Music LLE-89	Full Orchestra (also available Str. Orch.)	2-Medium Easy	Either	2½
Elegy	Beckham	Wingert-Jones Music, Inc. #10403227	String Orchestra 8-8-5-5-5-Harp	3-Medium	Either	3½
English Suite	Fishburn, Kathy L.	Wingert-Jones Music, Inc. #3030122	String Orchestra 8-8-5-5-5-Harp	3-Medium	Pedal or adv. Lever	4½
Fiesta Processional	Ward, Robert	ECS #7.0122	Concert Band	2-2½	Pedal	4½
Finale from Symphony No. 2 in C	Tchaikovsky, Arr. Sandra Dackow	Ludwig Music LLE-79	Full Orchestra	1-Easy	Either	3½
Four Abstractions (2-4)	Ward, Robert	ECS 2,3: #7.0231 4: #70232	Concert Band	2-3	Pedal	4
Glorious Sounds of Christmas	Arr. Dwight Gutafson	Highland Etling 18290	Full Orchestra	4-Medium Advanced	Pedal	4
Greensleeves	Traditional, Arr. Marcia Dickstein	Fatrock Ink, Distributed by Theodore Presser #494-01936	String Orchestra, Harp	2-Medium Easy	Pedal	4
Iridium	Stamp, Jack	Kjos #JO-2002C	Full Orchestra	5+ Advanced	Pedal	4

Mission Song	Gazda	Kjos #SO165c	String Orchestra	2- Medium	Either	2
Moscow Nights	Soloviev-Sedoy Arr. Penoy	Kjos #O-1062B	Full Orchestra	4-High School	Pedal	4
Mother Ginger from “Nutcracker Suite”	Tchaikovsky, Arr. Sandra Dackow	Ludwig Music LLE-88	Full Orchestra	2-Medium Easy	Either	2½
O Mio Babbino Caro	Puccini arr. Sandra Dackow	Ludwig Music STRO-61	String Orchestra, Harp	1-Easy	Either	3
Of Fire and Ice	Iannacone, Anthony	ECS #260a	Concert Band	4-5 Advanced	Pedal	5
Overture to Nabucco	Verdi arr. Sandra Dackow	Ludwig Music LLE-80	Full Orchestra Also available String Orch. – STRO-75	3-Medium	Either	3
Overture on Jewish Themes	L. Gearhart	Shawnee Press J 0051	Full Orchestra	3 - Medium	Pedal	2
Overture to Rienzi	Wagner arr. Sandra Dackow	Ludwig Music LLE-91	Full Orchestra	3-Medium	Either	3
The Passing Bell	Benson, Warren	ECS #1302	Concert Band	4-5 Advanced	Pedal	4
Pavane	Fauré arr. Gearhart	Shawnee Press J 0041	Full Orchestra 2-1-2-2 1-1-1-0 Strings, optional Harp	3- Medium	Pedal	3½
Prelude on an Early American Folk Hymn <i>My Shepherd Will Supply My Need</i>	Smith, Claude T.	Wingert-Jones Music, Inc. #3033032	String Orchestra 8-8-5-5-5-Harp	3 – Medium	Either	5
Prophet’s Dance	Mosier, Kirt	Kjos #O-1071F	Full Orchestra	5-High School	Pedal	4
Scenes from <i>Carmen- Suite No.1</i>	Bizet/ Alshin	Warner Bros. # CO 00203	Complete Orchestra	3-4 Medium	Pedal	3½
Three Gymnopedies	Satie, Erik Arr. Megan	ECS #256a	Concert Band	3-4 – Junior High	Pedal	3½
Trepak from “Nutcracker Suite”	Tchaikovsky, Arr. Sandra Dackow	Ludwig Music LLE-78	Full Orchestra Also available Str. Orch. STRO –28 – Intermed.	2-Med. Easy	Either	2½



## CHOIR AND HARP:

A La Nanita Nana	Arr by Roger Folstrom	Mark Foster Music: c/o Shawnee MF0 547	SATB, Harp	High School 4	Pedal	4
Carol of the Manger	Wood, Dale	Sacred Music Press 10/1520 S c/o Lorenz	SATB, Harp, Flute	High School 2	Pedal	5
Crystals	Paul W. Whear Poems: Conner	Ludwig Music L 9153	Treble Voices, 3 Flutes, Harp and Percussion	High School 3½	Pedal	4½
El Rorro (This Babe)	Mexican Carol Arr. Jeffrey Van	Plymouth Music Co. PDW 1001	SATB, Harp	High School 4	Pedal	4
Friendly Beasts	Arr. Lee R. Kesselman	Plymouth Music Co. HL-217	Three Part Treble, Harp	Middle or High School 3	Pedal	4
Frostiana	Thompson, Randall	ECS #1450	SATB/SSA/TBB And Orchestra	4 – High School	Pedal	5
God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen	Jackson Berkey	SDG Press SDG 98-102	SATB, Harp Percussion, Bass	High School 4	Pedal	5
He is Born	Schultz, Donna G.	The Sacred Music Pre 10/1245S c/o Lorenz	SATB, Harp, Oboe and Percussion	High School 3	Either	3½
I Wander By the Sea	Wood, Dale	The Sacred Music Pre No. S-205 c/o Lorenz	SATB, harp, and 2 flutes or recorders	High School 2	Pedal	4½
Il Est Ne	Jackson Berkey	SDG Press: SDG 95 – 101	SATB Chorus, String Bass, Snare Drum, Hp	High School 5	Pedal	4½
Jesu, Son Most Sweet and Dear	Jackson Berkey	SDG Press: E WW 1160	SATB Chorus, Soprano Solo, Harp	High School 5	Either	3-4
Lute Book Lullaby	Henry Kihlken	Carl Fischer	Three Part Mixed: SAB Harp	High School 4	Pedal	4
Sans Day Carol	Stroope, Z. Randall	Choristers Guild #CGA-549 c/o Lorenz	Two part treble voices, harp	Junior High or High School 2	Either	4
Stars are for Those Who Lift Their Eyes	Delmonte, Pauline	Choristers Guild #CGA-117 c/o Lorenz	Unison or SA, Harp, optional cello	Junior High or High School 2	Pedal	5
Still, Still Night	Jackson Berkey	SDG Press: SDG 95-101	SATB Chorus, Alto Solo, Harp	High School 5	Pedal	5
This Child, This King	Daniel Gawthrop	Dunstan House #DH 9401	Chorus, Harp and organ	High School 3	Pedal	3
What Can I Give Him	Barham, Sue & Terry	Choristers Guild CGA 786 c/o Lorenz	Unison Treble	Level – 1 - Elementary	Either	4
What Sweeter Music	Fink, Michael	ECS #2771	Chorus, Harp	High School 3-4	Pedal	4

**Levels of school players – grades 1 - 12:**

**1 – Easy 2- Medium Easy 3- Medium 4 – Medium Advanced 5- Advanced**

**PUBLISHER INFORMATION:**

Alfred Publishing Co.	PO Box 10003, 16380 Roscoe Blvd, Suite 200, Van Nuys, CA 91410 818-891-5999
Dunstan House c/o ECS Publishing ECS Publishing	138 Ipswich Street Boston, MA 02215 800-777-1919 138 Ipswich Street Boston, MA 02215 800-777-1919
Carl Fischer	62 Cooper Square New York, NY 10003 800-762-2328 212-777-0900
Neil A. Kjos Music Company 9800	4380 Jutland Drive San Diego, CA 92117 800-797-KJOS 619-270-
Lorenz 6118  1144	501 East Third Street, P.O. Box 802, Dayton, OH 45401-0802 513-228-  800-444-
Ludwig Music 1151	557 East 140 St. Cleveland, OH 44110-1999 800-851-1150 / 216-851-
Mark Foster Music Co c/o. Shawnee:	49 Waring Drive Delaware Water Gap, PA 18327 800-962-8584
MSB Publishing Co.	PO Box 2219341 Chantilly, VA 20153 703-802-6790
Plymouth Music	170 NE 33 <sup>rd</sup> St Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334 954-563-1844
SDG Press 6169 Shawnee Press, Inc:	c/o Masters Music PO Box 810157 Boca Raton, FL 33481 561-241- 49 Waring Drive Delaware Water Gap, PA 18327 800-962-8584
Theodore Presser, Inc.	1 Presser Place Bryn Mawr, PA 19010 610-525-3636
Warner Bros.	15800 N.W. 48 <sup>th</sup> Ave. Miami, FL 33014 800-327-7643
Wingert Jones Music WJMO	PO Box 419878, 2026 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64141 800-258-

**Dated September, 2004**

# ***A Brief History of the Harp***

## **I. The Ancient Harp**

The earliest harps were probably small ten-stringed instruments, very different from what is often played today. Much of our knowledge about these instruments stems from pictorial evidence from tomb walls, which appeared as early as 4000 BCE. There is evidence that harps played a large role in the religious and secular cultural life of ancient Egypt around 3000 BCE, when the harps were often bow-, spoon-, or spade-shaped, and had six to twelve strings. The instruments and their players held important roles; their music may have accompanied the telling of histories at various functions, or were perhaps used to accompany religious chants. The harps were held in much the same way as today's classical harps, though they were much smaller.

Stories about Irish (Celtic) harps began appearing in literature around the 12th century. Celtic harps emerged in two forms, according to historians: "one greatly bold and quick, the other soft and pleasing." The first refers to a metal strung harp which was unique to the Irish culture during the medieval period. The latter refers to a smaller triangular harp, strung with braided horsehair. Later, it was strung with gut strings and would become the ancestor of today's concert harps.



## **II. The Western European Harp**

The greatest difference in form between ancient harps and those used in Western Europe resulted from the addition of a string arm and a pillar (or column) to the soundbox of earlier harp models. The earliest representation of this modification in European harps stands as late as the 14th and 15th centuries, when harpists were often depicted as angelic figures or as the center of attention in fashionable court-like settings.

As harp construction continued to adapt to current musical trends between the 17th and 18th centuries, a great deal of experimentation with different types of harp construction and stringing occurred. Through such experimentation, cross-strung harps and triple-strung harps developed, as musicians continued to adapt to the developing repertoire. In the 1720's, by Jacob Hochbrucker in Bavaria made the greatest advancement for the modern harp. He created a hook-and-pedal mechanism, which allowed the harp to produce two pitches per string. The pedals were called "single-action," as they could only change each string by a half step. By moving the pitch-alteration mechanism for changing sharps and flats from the hand-operated levers to the foot-operated pedals, harpists were allowed greater freedom in repertoire, and virtuosic players soon emerged.

This development opened an entirely new world of chromatic literature for harpists of the time. The popularity of the instrument spread to Paris, where it was adored by members of the French court and the fashionable society. Even Marie Antoinette played the harp. Thus, harps from this time became exquisite works of art, ornamented in the rococo style with gilded carvings on the columns and hand-painted flowers on the sounding boards.

### III. The Development of Chromaticism and the Double Action Harp

During the late part of the 19th century, several experimental harps, such as the Pleyel harp emerged, which was described as a *harpe chromatique sans pédales*, or a chromatic harp without pedals. This model resembled the cross-strung style of harp that was famous during the Renaissance in Spain. This Pleyel harp became popular in France and Belgium, and one of the most notable compositions for this style of harp was Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* of 1904. The pedal harp transcription of this work, made by Henriette Renié, holds an important place in harp repertoire.

Harpists and harp makers continued to develop the mechanism and sound of the harp. During the early 1800's, Sébastien Érard began to experiment with an earlier mechanism of pedals, created by Georges and Jacque-Georges Cousineau in 1782. The Cousineau harp used two rows of "crutches" to shorten the vibrating harp string. The Cousineau harp used two rows of pedals with seven pedals each, totaling *fourteen* pedals. In 1810, Érard devised and patented his double-action harp, which used a system of seven pedals, each with two notches for the "double action," whereby each string could create three pitches (flat, natural and sharp). Érard's mechanism has been slightly modified, and is still in use in pedal harps today.

### IV. Modern Advances for the Harp

Beginning in the 1980's the harp showed signs of following a new age of technology. The electric harp is one of the newest advances, for it allows the harp sound to be electronically synthesized and distorted, in much the same way as an electric guitar or piano. With a pick-up microphone on each string and a processor, the variety of sounds that can be produced is nearly endless.

