

That's The Way I Understand It - Series

Encouraging Hope For The Adult Beginning Harpist

By Daniel Hooke
danielhookemusic.com

© Daniel Hooke 2014
All Rights Reserved

[Page 2 is blank.] [Staple together in the upper left hand corner the pages of your printing of this document or hole punch the printed document and put it in a three-ring notebook.]

That's The Way I Understand It - Series

Encouraging Hope For The Adult Beginning Harpist

Hello, I am an adult Harpist who began playing the Harp in adult life. I have had many good experiences and successes. This document is written for adult beginning Harpists. The purpose of this document is to convince you that you can learn to play the Harp and have good experiences and successes as I have had. I don't know how good you will get but you can have good experiences and successes. The fact that I have succeeded represents hope for you.

This document is also for you who do not play Harps for your own illumination or for the fact that you are fertile ground for recruitment. Some of you are Harp chauffeurs. You are men who haul Harps around for your wives. Get a Harp and learn to play it. Then you can play the bass line of a piece or music while your wife plays the melody and harmony. Or, just play a rhythmic bass part while your wife plays melody and harmony. You all can make beautiful music together! You may even go on the road. Please don't say, "Ridiculous!" until you have read this document and given it due consideration. I'm serious about this. This document is for you!

Now back to everybody. Have you had moments, as I have had, in which you questioned why you got involved in such an overwhelming task as learning to play the Harp? We adults carry around baggage which young people do not have to hinder or stop their progress. We have adult responsibilities that demand our time and energy. These are real issues which young people do not have. But these are not insurmountable issues of priorities for most of us and I will leave these issues to you to solve as you order your priorities for a duly considered goal of playing the Harp. Also, we have worldly wisdom and skills which young people do not have. Thus, compared to young people, we are much more able to analyze, generate, and articulate issues to ourselves which are really excuses as to why we cannot learn to play the Harp. Enough of this nonsense.

I can tell in two words the secret of my success with the Harp: "**DON'T QUIT!**" Don't quit. You can learn to play to play the Harp! I do not know how good you will get, but you can learn to play the Harp. Don't quit.

I am a retired Band Director and I have helped thousands of people of all ages and abilities successfully learn to make music. Please do not turn on the excuse making machine at this point. "Oh, he is a Band Director. He already knows how to read music. Of course he could learn the play the Harp." Or: "He is a Music Teacher. He knows a lot about teaching and learning and could teach himself to play any instrument." That

last statement is a true statement but it should not come out of the excuse making machine. The fact of the matter is that I learned to play the Harp with a Teacher even though I could have probably learned to play it on my own. A Teacher has a mental image of what good Harp playing should look like to compare with what the Teacher would be seeing in my playing of the Harp. I obviously would not have that image at the beginning. I would have developed an image in due time but having a Teacher saved me years of time in just a very few lessons because the Teacher already had a developed correct image of what I should look and sound like as a Harpist. Furthermore, even if I had that image at the beginning for some reason, it is hard to struggle with playing and learning while trying at the same time to do a thorough analysis of what you are doing. You can not just video yourself to get around this point either, even though a video of your playing may be beneficial, because the “Self” gets involved, too. Others can see things in us that we cannot see at first or even never see in ourselves. Also, a Teacher comes with a wealth of subject knowledge that for much of it we could never ascertain on our own. Get a Teacher to get a good foundation. If the Teacher is not helping you get a good foundation, get another one. It is your life and money.

This has been the logic that I used when recruiting Band students to get them to believe in themselves, see possibilities and hope, and join the Band. Do you know what an animal is - - long, furry tail type thing. There is one important difference between people like you and me, and animals. We can symbolize our experience and animals can't. We use two types of symbols. One type of symbols we use has a definite meaning like words and mathematics. When we say “chair” or “table”, we all know what we are talking about. The other type of symbols we use has an indefinite meaning like music and the arts. When we hear a piece of music, we all put our own meaning into these symbols. Now this means that we can make music just as easy as we can talk - - - unless we are an animal. And, I told the students that I did not see any animals in the room. And to you the reader or hearer of this document, I do not believe that there are any animals examining this document! It's just that we have had a lot of training with talking but not much training in music. And I told the students that I am there to help them learn music to play a Band instrument just as you, the examiner of this document, can get help to learn music and play the Harp by getting a Teacher.

We talked earlier about needing a duly considered goal of playing the Harp. This involves such things as determining with your Maker your Divine purpose for being put on this earth, and how the instrument fits your body. I obvious would not recommend that a person with no arms be a Harpist. But do not turn on the excuse making machine inappropriately. If you think that you are supposed to be a Harpist but it does not seem possible, then think the impossible. I have heard of a blind person playing the Harp. I have seen Bands with students playing instruments when they had handicaps that on first look would make it impossible for them to play the instrument. Beethoven wrote astounding music while he was deaf! I have heard of painters who had paralyzed arms who painted works of art using a brush in their mouths. With this in mind, in an age of computer assistance, even a person with no arms could get something rigged up that was both computer and mechanical, and then play the Harp. With a sequencer it would be

very much like my computer music studio only it would be connected to a mechanical Harp. Your reasons for not being a Harpist may not be as overwhelming as you think.

Do not turn on the excuse making machine when it comes to age either. I was over fifty when I started playing the Harp. Moses didn't get started in life until he was eighty! I know of people in their eighties and nineties who at those ages are regional, national, or world influences in their fields. With age you are able to offer more not less because age adds wisdom and maturity to your human expression: verbal or musical. Don't be like the man who went through life playing by ear but when he got old he mainly fiddled with his beard. Age can be a state of the mind issue more than a state of the body issue.

With more problems to overcome than you likely have, I learned to play the Harp. When it comes to playing the Harp, I am a technique klutz! You likely have more potential for playing the Harp than I did because you probably have good small motor skills. I have large motor skills but not good small motor skills. As a Band Director, my personal major performance instruments are bass trombone and tuba which I can play at symphony orchestra quality. But to play these instruments I did not need small motor skills. To play bass trombone, I only work basically with six slide positions and to play tuba, I only work with three buttons and statistically speaking that third button is used just a small part of the time. These two instruments did not need good small motor skills with one of them needing only basically two fingers and the other instrument needing no fingers. Enter the Harp. Using eight fingers definitely needs small motor skills. At the beginning it seemed like I was playing with my fists and my elbows with my technique skills being so poor. I play piano to some extent. One of the hands goes up the notes on the piano when on the Harp the same fingering pattern goes down the notes. This mixed up my brain. My hands are strong but they are very flexible and uncontrollably collapse in undesirable ways for playing the Harp. I have an arthritic shoulder which restricts my arm range of motion. I have to concentrate very hard to play the Harp. If I have to concentrate on two technical difficulties at once, my brain overloads and I start making mistakes. In graduate school of music in advanced theory class, you had to use the keyboard (piano) to learn the theory and demonstrate your knowledge. This is, of course, a small motor skills instrument. The class was divided for these keyboard sessions into ability groups. My wife was put into the group called "*The Refines*". I was put into the called "THE CLAWS" And, there have been times with the Harp that it sounded like I was "clawing" out the music! Things have come easy for me in life when I set out to do something. Here with the Harp for the first time in my life I had tackled something that was not easy for me. It was terribly difficult and after the first month of lessons, I almost quit. I did not set out to learn to play the Harp. I did not take Harp lessons to learn to play the Harp. I retired to spend more time in writing music. About the time I retired, I got a chance to get my hands on a Harp. I took Harp lessons to learn to make the Harp passages in my computer music compositions sound more Harp-like and maybe to be able to play "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on the Harp to impress my friends. However, I very quickly decided that I could learn to play this mysterious instrument. It was not a pretty sight. There were times in my lessons that after my rendition of a song my Teacher and I would both just laugh at some of the unusual sounds that came out of the Harp at the most inopportune of times. I expect that there were times that my Teacher

watched my playing and it was hard to keep a straight face. But in time, I became a Harpist. The fact that I became a Harpist should give you hope that you can, too!

From a technical skills standpoint, you should now see that you are very likely much more capable of learning the Harp than I was and are even more likely to end up better than I am. The only thing I likely have over you is that I know a lot about musicianship and aesthetics which concerns making music that is beautiful, moving, and stirring with fire as appropriate. Over the years as a Band Director I have organized my learning and observations about aesthetics and musicianship into a layered approach to aesthetics. It has been successful with simple music as well as masterworks with all ages and abilities. This layered approach to music aesthetics is on the website danielhookemusic.com titled "A Layered Aesthetic Interpretation Of Music For The Performer, Composer, And Listener". Don't let the excuse making machine come out here either. "Oh, he knows a lot about musicianship and aesthetics. No wonder he became a successful Harpist. I don't know anything about things like that! (Thus, I can't be a successful Harpist.)"

Here is an image that will help you put into practice a lot of the world's knowledge about aesthetics and musicianship without being able to know or articulate what you are doing. Imagine that you are sitting in a rocking chair with a little bitty baby cuddled up in your arms. There is no one else around. And, you are going to sing to the baby only you are using the Harp to do so. Sing from the heart only use the sounds of the Harp to make your singing. Near the end or before the last statement of the theme do something that makes the music get a little more worked up, as appropriate, for a climax. Then, relax the music to bring it to a closure unless it is a piece that needs the energy to keep building to the end. Do you get the picture? Sing something to make the baby excited about life or to make it giggly or give it peaceful rest. Nobody gives an unmusical performance while singing to a baby. It may be technically lacking - - but it will not be unmusical because it is speaking music naturally from the heart. Thus, play with feeling when you play the Harp! It is possible to overdo this feeling but most of us are more bashful than outgoing and are tempted to be too blah. So, when you play on your Harp, gather up a little baby in your imagination or a member of the audience or even the whole audience in your arms. Sit in your rocking chair, gather up the audience in your arms like a little baby, and sing to them on your Harp.

This is the kind of thinking behind the preceding image. At concert time with the Band students, to pump them up, we recalled the animal and symbols discussion we had at Band recruiting time which was discussed earlier in this document. Then we realize that we can not speak words like Shakespeare but we can still say nice things to our parents and friends. In the same way we are not ready to perform on our instruments in the National Symphony but we can still say nice things to our parents and friends using music. After getting a commitment from the Band students that they will do this, we are ready for some exciting things to happen. We can't control how an audience will react. But, we can create the conditions for something nice to happen. Sometimes things connect and you really get to someone even possibly with an experience that will be remembered for a lifetime. They can be moved to tears, they can be so worked up that their face quivers or they are unable to talk for the emotion of they moment. There can

be standing ovations for musical reasons. They may also be very moved but not visibly show it. They may or may not tell you this later when the emotion of the moment passes. They also may be very moved but not have any physical or emotional manifestations. What we need to remember as beginning Harpists, is that in my experience these moving musical experiences have not been a function of whether it is simple music or masterworks even though masterworks has a potential for potency that simple music really can not duplicate; it has not been a function of ability, that is, it has not been a function of whether the performer has limited technical skills or virtuosity even though virtuosity is desirable and gives us many more music options and possibilities; it has not been a function of age whether young or old even though age gives more wisdom and maturity for the possibility of deeper ministry; in my understanding it happened in all of these cases because it has been a function of the human spirit, an expression of the heart and soul, speaking with a quiet fire and excitement. Even a child can say something from the heart and soul to another human using the word symbols of human expression that is very moving to another human. You may have experienced this. And, likewise, even a child can say something from the heart and soul speaking to another human using the music symbols of human expression that can be very moving to another human. For most of the time, though, successful music is just experiences that are pretty and uplifting. And, these beautiful, uplifting musical experiences are equal in human significance to moving musical experiences. However, if the musicians do not get worked up and excited about the music, how can we expect the listeners to get worked up about the music? Of course, any exhibiting of this being worked up should be done in an appropriate way and it should not be something distracting to the music like a frenzied, wiggling ecstasy. To increase our ability to be a musician, we all need to be desirous of more technique, we all need to be desirous of the ability to understand and play more complex musical compositions. But we should not wait until that glorious day when we have more technique and can play more complex pieces before we perform. Although we may not be a great orator, we can still say something of human significance with the symbols of language words. Although we are not the world's greatest virtuoso on the Harp, we can still say something of human significance with the symbols of music while using the Harp.

Don't let the excuse machine start up again. "Oh, I make too many mistakes to do that." Let's look at mistakes a little bit. I feel the most pressure about mistakes when playing for Church. You're playing in God's Sanctuary. You're playing for God and His Deliver. You're playing for God's holy people. Plus, the Ancient Wise One says, "Man who plays wrong note in Church - - sits in his own pew!" The most important thing about mistakes is: "Don't stop." Don't stop and start over or stop and restart the section. When you stop, you announce to the world that you made a mistake. If you don't stop, usually most people will never know that you made a mistake. If you are playing within your ability and have done your homework, a mistake is not a sin. You don't have to tell the world that you made a mistake any more than you have to tell the world that you have a hole in your coat lining. I use some religious practices to get a little Divine help when I perform so that He can work through me as He wishes. I have a low blood sugar problem. One time when I was in a situation that was more likely than usual to trigger my blood sugar problem, I did not take adequate precautions. When I performed, my

blood sugar dropped, my brain could not operate as quickly, and the mistakes started coming. I guess God took advantage of my inadequate preparation and started playing His own composition through my fingers and, at the time, it was not one of my favorites. But when I finished, people told me how beautiful I had played. People wept because they were so moved. Life can be surprising! Now why should I ruin these people's wonderful music experience and tell them that I blew one all over the ceiling. It would have been an insult to their tastes. I've heard it said that mistakes are God's way of keeping us humble.

We can not escape the frailties of being human - - not even if we are a professional. But we can perform music that is comfortably within our ability and not make our performance so difficult that we are like the high wire acrobat who builds excitement by letting the audience see whether or not he will fall on his face and be killed! We can practice until we know our piece. Thoughtful practice is the foundation of all that you can do. Practice 5 or 6 days a week, same time each day, and it is easier to form a habit. If you miss a day, don't worry about make up practice or it can become a big psychological burden. Just the next day get back into regular practice. When practicing for a specific performance, plan your steps of what needs to be accomplished at each practice session so that you will be ready to perform solidly even if you unavoidably miss the last couple of practices. Surprises of the type do happen. If you are performing with a group, also learn you parts faster than they are supposed to be performed because in the excitement of performance time the group may suddenly play faster than they rehearsed. The best preparation for performance is to develop basic technique so that you do not need much practice to play a piece. Any hard spots you can then learn by drilling on those spots which is called rote learning. Developing technique so that you can easily perform at your level is better than rote learning drill of everything so that you can perform at your level. But rote learning drill is workable. There are many Church choir members in fine choirs that learn their parts almost completely by rote learning at choir practices by having their parts drill into their minds. But again, developing technique to support your playing is superiorly better than doing everything by rote drill. At the beginning of my Harp playing, though, I depended heavily on rote drill. Some things that could lead to mistakes we may not think of at first. Have you worked out your page turns so that you will not get tangled up with needed time to turn the page and end up making a mistake? You may have to tape a sheet of paper to right edge of the right page with enough notes put on that sheet to get to a better place for a page turn or even avoid a page turn. Health issues can lead to mistakes. Learn what aerobic and weight bearing exercise, stretching, balance, and deep breathing for oxygen can do for your brain as well as your bones, your body, your health, and thus your Harp playing. Learn the effect of adequate, regular sleep on your brain. Learn what happens to your brain when your life includes both right brain and left brain activities. Learn about things that you put in your mouth and what it does to your brain immediately, a few hours later, and the next day as it influences your sleep. Also, do not make excuses for bad days. Someone has said that both amateurs and professionals have bad days - - but professionals do not let it show. You can choose this attitude, too. In all your ways you can choose and be prepared to exhibit professionalism regardless of your ability including your dress. A symphony orchestra in bikinis sounds different and gets a different effect than a symphony in formal

attire when you consider the whole human experience. Plan ahead. Be prepared. Dress up.

Let's talk a little more about that rare wrong note and how much it sticks out. Some wrong notes are theoretically impossible to be detected by the listener unless they know the music or are watching a score of the music. The kind of wrong notes that probably stick out the most are wrong notes that lie outside the scale. Wrong notes in the scale make the harmony sound like you are using something like a ninth or thirteenth chord. The Harp is at a great advantage here as compared to other instruments. The Harp has no black keys. Most of the time the only notes that you could possibly play are in the scale unless your pedals or levers are messed up. The piano has black keys which provide notes in the key of C that are outside the scale. If one of these keys is struck in mistake and the underlying harmony does not support it, it sticks out. On a wind instrument this effect is caused by missing an accidental or not looking at the key signature. However, even beginning Conductors have to train and gain experience to be able to hear someone in the group play this kind of wrong note. Wrong notes are more glaring to the performer if he knows that he made a mistake than they are to the listener. The ear and mind tries to organize whatever it hears into musical meaning thus the listener may perceive the wrong note as some kind of melodic device like a suspension, or a passing tone, or neighboring tone, or free tone instead of perceiving it as a mistake. Later on you may learn to create on the spot - - weaving mistakes in using these types of melodic devices.

A wrong note is not the end of the world. Life goes on. However, wrong notes are not to be taken lightly. In some sports if you do things correct 300 or 400 times out of a 1,000, you are a world class player. But in music getting 100% of the notes is just the beginning of making music.

At what ever level we perform, we need to do it well. People in today's world can hear recordings of all kinds of great musicians and this is what you will be compared to.

There are things that stick out more than wrong notes and make you look amateurish. Lack of musicianship really shows even to the untrained listener! The untrained listener can't identify and articulate what is wrong, but they know that it sounds amateurish because in this day and age they have heard so much well done music. In my experience, there are three things that really stick out and make you look like a poor musician. Avoid these problems like the plague!

The first problem that really sticks out is the following: If you have the slightest problem in keeping the beat (also called the rhythm or pulse) of the music, don't play that piece for other people to listen to. The pulse of the music should remain constant unless it is being changed for musical reasons. You can play wrong notes and if you play them in rhythm, most will not know it. However, if you hesitate the smallest amount in the beat or pulse of the music, the whole world will recognize it. The pulse of the music may be one pulse for every measure, it may be something like two pulses per measure, or it may be the same as your counts of the measure. As you learn to play the music, you begin to feel the beat or pulse of the music. In faster music there may be several counts in each

pulse of the music. To maintain the beat (or pulse) of the music, the rule is: Feel the beat! Act like you are marching to whatever the main pulse of the music is. Or, act like you are dancing to the rhythm of the music to help you feel the beat. You must be able to feel the beat of the piece or you are not ready to perform that piece for others. Let the music flow. Give the music motion. Feel the beat as you play!

The second problem that really sticks out, if this idea is absent in the music, is the following: Sing by playing on your Harp. You have got to make your Harp SING musical ideas. Feel like you are singing when you play the Harp only the Harp is your voice. If you just play note, note, note, etc. choppy and don't make the notes sing as a musical idea, it would be like reading aloud by say each letter of the alphabet that is in each word instead of saying words and using the words to say ideas and using the ideas to reach an exciting conclusion or a stirring desired end. You've got to make the music sing!

How do you sing musically? Have a mental image of the music that shapes and punctuates continuous sound. Have a mental image of the music that shapes and punctuates continuous sound.

No one will know if you do not have a mental image of the music in your mind but you. However, you can not function effectively without a mental image because you will not know what you are doing musically, where you are going musically, nor whether or not you did the performance musically correct because you have no image for comparison to guide you musically as you perform and to show musical errors. The listeners will not be able to articulate it but they will have a vague feeling that the performance was very nice but "I would have been just as well off if had I never heard it." How do you gain a musical image of a piece of music? You keep playing it until you know what each little spot sounds like and then you decide how you want to emphasize each little spot to present a balance performance with a suitable climax including an ending with closure or even more climax plus how you want to make a performance with an appropriate amount of quiet excitement and fire. Practice your piece until you can hear every note in your mind as you get ready to play each note. When you talk, you do not say a word until you can hear that word in your mind and hear how you want to emphasize that word. You do not just open your mouth and let whatever comes out exit your lips. Otherwise, what comes out and its emphasis may end up being something insulting to the listener or embarrassing to you. It is the same in talking with music as in talking with words. As you are playing, if you can not hear in your mind what the next few notes should sound like, then if play those notes musically, it was most likely an accident. You do not want to play a note until you have a picture of what that note should sound like in your mind or you can not gauge how you should play the note and musical meaningless develops. This is a skill that will not likely develop in 24 hours. Conductors can learn to form a mental image of a piece but when they conduct, they conduct the mental image that they hear in their minds rather than listening to reality and conducting reality. It is easy at first to substitute the mental image for reality and end up not listening to reality. A tape recording of your practice may help here. Also, listen to then recording several days later and when the Self is more removed to reveal what you really sound like musically. Do

not let the sound quality of the recording devastate you. It is not a sound quality of you in all of your glory. It is very difficult to get a recording that is a high sound quality rendition of how good you really sound like from a sound quality perspective but the recording will be adequate to reveal things about musicianship. Learn to form a mental image of the music you will be performing and then match that image as you perform.

Shape your music performance. You do not talk in a monotone. Do you get very excited when listening to a monotone speaker? Shape your music performance up and down. If you say something really passionately or emphatically, you cannot notate all of that feeling when you write down the words of what you said. The composer is faced with the same problem - - not all of the feeling can be notated. So, the composer has to depend on the musicianship of the performer or Conductor to breathe life into the music! It is possible to be dead while yet alive. In shaping music we are talking about shades of subtle intensity and shades of tiny relaxation which are usually not as much as dynamic levels like going from medium loud (*mF*) to loud (*F*). You make emphasis, etc. When you say, "Where are the boys?" Your voice inflects up at the end of the phrase. If someone answers, "They are outside." The voice of that person inflects down at the end. Make music the same way that you talk - - shaping what you say. Music is quite often written with phrases in this "statement and response" speaking that we just examined with words. Or, it may be something like "statement, statement, and response" or some other variation of this idea. You perform (say) the symbols of music much in the same way that you verbalize (say) the symbols of language words. Sing through the music phrase or idea to make the music talk back and forth in a musical conversation. It may even be talking back and forth in more complex ways such as talking back and forth between the hands. It is possible to play the notes correctly and miss all of this talking back and forth that is part of the design of the piece of music. In addition, as you develop the mental image skill, you will begin to hear what each note is doing - - whether it is resting or going somewhere, etc. An accidental is usually going somewhere. Lean into it a little bit to bring it out. If you learn about traditional harmony, you know that at any given place in the music, the underlying harmony is the triad of 3 notes. All of the other notes in the harmony are likely going somewhere or are used as color notes and should be leaned on a little bit to bring this out. Of course, the first thing to learn to do is to play a chord so that each finger playing a note of the chord makes a good sound. Again, if you know about harmony, the bass note and the bass note of the chord inversion, if that is not the chord bass note, needs to be firm since it provides many overtones to strengthen the rest of the chord. The third of the chord makes the chord sound richer. The fifth of the chord make the chord sound fuller but too much fifth of the chord, unless it is the bass note, makes the chord sound upset. A little more fifth is required to balance the richness of the sound if the bottom notes basically are the root, with the fifth above, with the third of the chord above that. Awareness of these ideas about triad chord notes, color tones, and notes that are going somewhere will affect how loud you will play each individual note in the chord and thus make a very brilliant, colorful sound spectrum. Moving on, if the line of the music goes up, it may be appropriate to lean into it as you go up the notes. The last note of a phrase may be a little relaxed in intensity in many cases to finish shaping the phrase. All of these ideas combine to shape the whole piece of music in layers of shapes in relation to the form of the piece, the climax, and the type of closure - -

shape each measure, each phrase, from phrase to phrase, each section, each part of the major form, and finally put a shape in the whole music composition. These shapes should provide balance in a similar layered manner from phrase to phrase, section to section, each major part of the form to each major part of the form which will give the whole music composition balance which may be the ultimate beauty and aesthetic fulfillment satisfaction to the music experience. No more monotones, please, when surrounded with so many options to help people enjoy music in a humanly significant way.

The part of singing on your Harp whose absence sticks out the most is punctuation and continuous sound, especially continuous sound. First, let's look at continuous sound. Continuous sound gives music beauty and power. Without continuous sound and increasing intensity it is very difficult to get a big build up that is possible in aesthetic art music. The Harp has more continuous sound than you might think. When you pluck a note, the string continues to vibrate plus the other strings join in with sympathetic vibrations especially if the Harp is well tuned. Do not accidentally touch a string and stop the vibrations unless it is musically the correct time to do so or you will lose continuous sound. Singers and wind instrument players need to support their sound with their stomachs or they get a puny, fluctuating sound which does not pass as continuous sound for musical purposes. They need to keep the air flowing with a consistent pressure. The equivalent on the Harp is to make a good, firm snap when you pluck a string so that there is lots of sound and tone so that the string will vibrate with beautiful resonance until the next note is plucked. You can be too soft on the Harp to make good, continuous sound. Make the Harp speak! You can hurt someone's ears in a small room by playing too loudly - - but playing too loud for most who play the Harp is usually not a problem. Harpist often need to play louder than you think in order to make good, resonant, continuous sound with good, big tone just like most wind instrument players and singers need to make a bigger, more resonant sound than they think is needed. You can not fill a large room with sound on a Harp like I can on my bass trombone or tuba - - but you can play loud enough that you are projecting sound throughout the room. That will help make good, continuous sound. Make the Harp sing with continuous sound! Now, let's look at what I am loosely calling "punctuating" the sound into musical ideas and other musical stopping of that beautiful continuous sound. If there is a rest and you are told to mute, the sound stops. To pluck a repeated note, the sound stops long enough to pluck but do not put your fingers on the strings too soon to get ready to pluck the next note and stop the singing. Articulations like a staccato stops the sound as you mute the note to make a staccato. However the main reason that you stop the continuous sound in music is to "breathe" as you do what speaking word phrases. When you speak, you do not say, "Where {breathe} are the {breathe} boys?" Instead you say, "Where are the boys? {breathe}" This concept is also called a phrase in music just as it is called a phrase in words and the punctuating of music into phrases is called phrasing. In words, punctuation shows you where the main breaths should be in order to keep the meaning clear because punctuation can change the meaning of the word phrases. In a like manner correct breathing keeps the notes together in a phrase to collect the notes into a musical idea. But you may say, "I cannot breathe on a Harp." True. So you have to do something on the Harp that has the same effect as breathing in words or the same effect

as phrasing in singing and wind instruments, etc. The first thought would possibly be to mute all of the strings to stop the sound at the place where a singer might take a breath to show a phrase. However, on the Harp this creates an abrupt, ugly effect. So, what can we do to show the first note of the beginning of a new phrase? In organ playing you can make a note appear to sound louder in a string of notes by putting a space before the note you want to sound louder by cutting the previous note short some. In organ playing you put in a space before note in a like manner to show the first note of a new phrase. As we just noted this make the first note of the new phrase sound louder. Thus, this would be a promising possibility to try on the Harp to see if it shows the first note of the new phrase. Indeed this is what happens. To make the first note of a new phrase slightly louder shows to the listener that it is a new phrase. I have much to learn yet about phrasing on a Harp. I will continue to listen to the words of others who play Harp and listen to how they play to hear how they do things. After the introduction, phrases are often 4 measures in length. If there is a pickup, then the end of the phrase is that much before the end of the fourth measure. Wind instrument players and singers sometimes have a hard time remembering to make 4 measures to a breath without which it really makes the music sound amateurish. This is further complicated for them by the fact that it is sometimes necessary to sneak a breath to make it through a phrase but this is not a concern for the Harpist. It might be helpful though for the Harpist to know that one of these sneaked breaths should not be exactly half way through the phrase, or at a bar line, or in the middle of a dotted quarter and eighth note pattern. You can probably start to recognize phrases now. Study each line of a hymn in a hymn book. The music phrases goes with the word phrases. Keep the sound sustained and continuous, with shape, throughout the phrase. Make sure that you sit on the last note of the phrase long enough to give it beauty and meaning before you let your fingers touch the strings to start a new phrase. People hear music in retrospect to make musical meaning of what they just heard. The last note of a phrase properly done does much to give the music richness. In an electronic computer music studio reverb is added to make richness. In acoustic music you need to sometimes add your own reverb by making sure that the last note of a phrase is a sufficient musical length even if it is cut short for a breath. This discussion of phrasing is difficult to describe without being able to demonstrate in sound plus there are many exceptions. Ask you Teacher for help and ideas about phrasing.

Effective talking and balance is the goal. Mistakes in singing on the Harp can really stick out even to the untrained and even when the listener can not identify just exactly what is going on. It comes across to them as amateurish playing.

The third problem that really sticks out is the following: Make sure you Harp is in tune or it really sticks out as amateurish. [It is not that being an amateur is undesirable - - it is just that amateurs can go about matters in a successful professional way. No one group has a lock on making beautiful music.] Regarding tuning, wind players and singers have to continually be conscious of performing in tune as they perform. Once you tune the Harp you generally have that problem taken care of. But, continually listen for a string going out of tune and retune it between songs. I tune by the smallest amount very slightly high so that if string loosens it will go in the direction of being more in tune. This is called being tuned sharp as opposed to being tuned flat (too low). Some

musicians tune high notes sharp to make them sound brighter. Playing various chord arpeggios from the bottom to the top of the Harp is an easy way for me to hear how well I tuned the Harp. Your Teacher can help you with learning about tuning. There was a time when instruments were not the greatest. I have heard that in former times they would stretch the bassoon player's fingers out and that's where they would drill the holes. Intonation, which is playing in tune, had to be terrible. Musical instruments have made great strides in quality. Today's audiences are accustomed to listening to musicians playing in tune and so you, too, must perform in tune.

The website where this document that you are examining will also have the document "How To Sing At Sight For The Singer And Instrumentalist (How To Hear Printed Music In Your Mind)" which tells more about hearing music in your mind (which is one thing that you can compare your Harp to when seeing if it has gone out of tune) plus it contains other comments about music.

Now let's look at selecting music that will be likely to elicit an aesthetic music response. To make good musical experiences you need to use good music. Art music, if well done with some quiet fire and excitement, has a power to move the soul in a way that does not exist in other music. Use music that is art music or closely resembles art music. Of course, art music that is poorly done and is not performed with musicianship and some quiet fire and excitement is very boring and may even turn some people off to art music. I perform music on my Harp that is, but not limited to, classical type art music, sacred music (of a more serious nature in contrast to a more pop nature) including hymn arrangements, Harp standards, carefully selected folk music, and melodious pop music. But I also have heard nice music in types of music that are not of an interest to me to perform. Most all types of music theoretically can have good music. However, art music will have more musical nutrients and nourishment than music that resembles pop music. Art music gets its power by the music forms used and crafted, the harmonic structure as it moves and modulates to different pitch levels that make a significant crafted form, and by the craftsmanship of the music ideas and their development. The craftsmanship of art music is what composers have found to have the potential to give power and moving musical experiences. Pop music often has more of a physical appeal than an aesthetic music appeal especially when it has a very prominent beat, it may have lots of repetition even at the same pitch level which is not used as pedal tone type of classical ostinato, and it may have screaming vocals which tend to attract attention to the performer rather than the music or, in religious situations, to the Deities. The musical nutrients and music nourishment for the soul is potentially higher in art type music. When you consider the whole human experience involved in the music setting, there may be something outside of the music that affects the music. A melodious pop song considered for used in a religious setting may be rejected, not because the melodious music didn't work, but because the words were not appropriate to a religious situation. Many times, though, there are things outside of the music in the total human situation of the music performance that can be harnessed to work for a more powerful music experience. Music does not happen in a vacuum. At the far end of art music, in this general spectrum of aesthetic music response contrasted to physical response, is experimental art music some of which is so intellectual that the average listener can not ascertain its meaning and gain

any musical nourishment from the music. You usually only run into this kind of music in a university setting. There is pleasant pop and then at the far end of pop music there is a kind of hedonistic music that centers in selfishness. Establishments that used this music mixed with liquor you see on the evening news that they have had fights and murders break out on the dance floor and outside the door. Who knows what else happens that does not make the news. Some want and promote music that only appeals to the hedonistic rhythm physical to stimulate them for events like in some ancient pagan temple. Fortunately people have not thought too much about using the elegant Harp in these kinds of far out pop music. The powers-at-be, both secular and religious, want to attract people and some are not concerned about whether they attract them by aesthetic musical appeal or by physical appeal. These powers-at-be may try to pressure you to use music whose appeal is primarily physical but after all it is not up to them to raise musical standards, that is up to the musicians! My approach has been to perform well done art music and music resembling art music with a quiet fire and excitement hoping that the powers-at-be will then not be interested in other music of lesser aesthetic musical appeal. I never have had to leave a situation to find a place to do this but I know some who have. So, how do you select music that is good music if you have never had a college course in music form and analysis? You can probably recognize in music some of the things we just discussed. Choose your music from art music and types of music that resembles art music. Choose music in these types that appeals to you, music that you like, and you will most likely have selected a good piece of music to perform.

Now let's look at applause. Your approach to applause may reveal attitudes that can be very helpful. Everybody enjoys applause when it is appropriate to the situation. It is nice to be noticed and appreciated and to have people recognize the worth of what you are doing. Musicians are fortunate in this way because there are a lot of endeavors in which you do not get this kind of reinforcement. However, consider the idea of playing to minister to people, playing to help people, rather than playing for applause. There are more people out there who are hurting than you might think. All people have tribulations from time to time. Touch their aching souls with good aesthetic music. After you have become comfortable with performing with this attitude, applause would seem empty if you would have not ministered. If you want applause, become a virtuoso. But remember that people applaud virtuosity for its athletic achievement and if you do not make your virtuosity effectively serve a musical purpose the listeners may leave the performance without their hearts and souls being musically touched. Some compositions, especially for concert bands and soloists, just make a show of virtuosity and do little for provide a good aesthetic musical experience. An easier way if you are just interested in applause, is to play fast and end loud, on a really high note, if you can, with lots of fast glissandi. But, you really do not really need applause for reinforcement because an aesthetic music experience is of important human significance for music's sake like reading a literary masterpiece. Some people shun applause for other reasons. There are traditions of not applauding sacred music so that the glory goes to God. Seeking to minister through the music and "thank you" applause of the listeners also helps you with stage fright. If you are trying to help people through your music you focus less on yourself. If you are helping people who are thirsty by serving them a glass of water, you are not wrapped up in worrying about whether or not you will make a mistake by spilling the water, or

whether or not they will like your kind of water, or whether or not they will think you look nice, etc. When helping people is your chosen concern, learn to look happy to be in their presence when performing and this will help connect with the listener plus it helps your attitude. Show your teeth so that even if you have the belly ache, you will look and feel like you are smiling.

What about program design? A somewhat alternating variety of lively and slow music makes a good program as it does with any multi-movement music presentation like a symphony or a suite. The program should be well within your ability. It is sometimes helpful to have a variety of known music sprinkled throughout the program but this is not necessary if the music is good and well done. The whole program seems stronger in retrospect if you end with a Grand Finale concept which is a rousing selection that ends full and loud. At a minimum it should be a selection that ends full and loud. If for some special reason you want a tender, beautiful, quiet piece to end the program; then, your next to last piece should be a Grand Finale type. There are other considerations for program such as the key relationships between the selections. However, the preceding ideas are generally adequate for a nice program of any level of music.

There is one more thing that interested me in playing the Harp and it may be of interest to some of you. It has always been a curiosity of mine as a musician that, in the Bible, David played his Harp for King Saul and an evil spirit departed Saul. What is it about this mysterious instrument? I found that it is not necessarily a desirable thing to play like this because Saul ended up throwing his spear in anger at Harpist David. I have seen the Harp soothe human anguish in situations that I was asked to enter, but these situations for me were fearful because I was not sure that I could emotionally handle them. However, I knew that I could technically do what was needed, I knew what music could do for the soul of people, I felt that I should do it, so I said my prayers and went on in. These were touching, priceless encounters that blossomed. But at this time I do not choose to seek out these emotionally charged situations. Also, in another place, a prophet in the Bible sought a minstrel to play so that he could prophesy. Some believe that the minstrel in this case was a Harpist. Many of us have experienced this use of music in the way Preachers use music in Church Services before the day's message from God which is the sermon which is prophesying.

My personal experience with the Harp has been varied as yours will probably be. It has been charming in the home giving us many fond memories plus I get to play and perform with a world-class Organist. It has been nice to play for family and friends. It has greatly exceeded wanting to struggle through "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" to impress my friends. The Church has given many opportunities, patience, and encouragement to this Harpist - - even when he was struggling. I must say, though, that it has been nice to be able to pull some strings in Church! I now compose music for the Harp which was something that was not even in my dreams. I perform Harp in duet with my computer music studio at times. Other ventures are under consideration. My part-time commercial work is with the elderly and this has led me into situations that I played for the dying shortly before their deaths. I do not know much about Music Therapy or Hospice playing for the dying. Thus, for the elderly and the dying I offer my strength which is music.

Music for music's sake is basic and important to all human souls. So, what is the conclusion of my life with the Harp? I offer the world music by someone who happens to play Harp. I am sure that your persistent efforts with the Harp will give you many nice experiences also.

This document may take some time to digest. But, the ideas in this document are not some deep, mystic language. These are things that children can be taught to do to a sufficient extent that they can successfully execute these ideas appropriate to their level of skills to make a nice musical experience especially under the direction of a Conductor using these concepts. Do not let this document overwhelm you. You do not have to sound like little David on the Harp before you can play for someone. At your level of ability you can say something nice with your Harp to another person.

Get a good foundation from your Teacher. Gather those traits that will make a solid performance of good music regardless of your level of ability. Be ready for some nice things to likely happen. And remember, even in your basic developmental level, you can still do some nice things. I have great confidence in you that in someone's life you can influence the course of music history - - probably in your part of the world. If not, perform somewhere where they will accept your influence.

Did you ever question yourself about the fact that your technical skills are not as high as many in the mainstream Harp world? That is probably the biggest problem I had in reaching the point where I would call myself a Harpist. To me it was a matter of professional pride with which I had to deal. There are many things in life that I can do really well and several of them are in music. Why, then, am I spending time doing something in which my technical skills are not as high as many engaged in that endeavor? That question has really bothered me. But it would be ludicrous to stop. For the fact of the matter is that there is a place for me in the Harp world, and there is a place for you, too!

The purpose of this document has been to give you hope that you can learn to play the Harp and have good experiences and successes as I have had. If I have not given you this hope, I have failed and I apologize. However, the good news is that there are many people out there offering you hope that is real. For you see, the process of successfully looking for hope and the process of successfully learning to play the Harp are both the same: Don't Quit.

The Harp goes all the way back to the fourth chapter of Genesis. To take a trip through life as a Harpist is one of the most unique, fantastic rides in all of human history. It is a ride that soars up into the clouds, high above the mountaintops, and descends into the depths of human souls. Enjoy the trip!

Come on, let's go play the Harp.

That's The Way I Understand It - Series

See the website danielhookemusic.com

Concerning Music Documents in "That's The Way I Understand It - Series": Read all of the music documents to get a picture of what has worked for the writer.

Concerning Religious Documents in "That's The Way I Understand It - Series":

These religious documents are **An Advocate** for interpreting the Bible the way Jesus of Nazareth interprets the Bible. Jesus will honor the Bible if we use it the way He interprets it. ... Jesus our Savior believed the Bible as He interpreted it; so we know that what the Bible says about diligently seeking God and Jesus will be rewarded and honored in some way. Hebrews 11:6; John 14:15, 21; 15:4-6; I Sam. 2:30.

Bible Lessons For Those Who Want To Be Better Informed About This Famous Book

Do you know what the Bible really says and what it offers? Do you know what are some of the main issues in a Bible interpretation position that is **An Advocate** for interpreting the Bible the way Jesus of Nazareth interprets the Bible and what kind of Biblical understanding it offers? Requires a few minutes a day of reading. Uses documents from **That's The Way I Understand It - Series**. [Another approach to the materials in **Studies In Biblical Christianity, A Self-Directed Course Of Study**.]

THE BIBLICAL GOD IS A REWARDER

Are You Informed About Where Biblical Christians Are Coming From As You Make Decisions?

Bible Rewards from God.

A Case For Art Music To Be The Core Of The Church Music Program

Persuasion to help us not to lose the great depth of Worship that is possible with a particular kind of music assuming that it is properly done.

An Easy Bible Reading Plan

Do you know what the Bible really says? With a few minutes a day you can read the entire Bible. The readings are divided into episodes to make your reading more logical and easier.

Encouraging Hope For The Adult Beginning Harpist

Encouragement for adult harpist. Discussion of musicianship for any musician and for many who are not musicians.

The Essence Of Teaching

Provides the professional teacher or the parent as teacher with a momentary reflection on the natural process of teaching hopefully with a more comprehensive, helpful look at teaching.

The Welcoming Committee For The Second Coming

A study in Biblical prophecy and the end times of earth time. **{Help to save you time in figuring out Bible Prophecy.}**

How To Sing At Sight For The Singer And Instrumentalist (How To Hear Printed Music In Your Mind)

Just what the title says. For the professional and the amateur. Get a copy of this document for each member of your performance organization especially if it is a singing group. Drill on it at the beginning of each rehearsal should pay good dividends.

That's The Way I Understand It - Series (continued)

Instant Sunday School – A Ten Year Verse-By-Verse Trip Through The Bible

Requires very little preparation time for a person to lead this group study. All of the work is already done for you. Thus, it is an easy Bible Study to present. This Bible Study goes through the Bible verse-by-verse alternating from time to time between the Testaments. This study can also be done as an individual study. Please see the document for more details and uses. Do you know what the Bible really says to help you discern error and grow? *"Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it." Luke 11:28*

IS THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST CENTRAL TO HUMAN HISTORY?

Has anyone ever told you about Biblical Christianity? Do you know some of the issues about the Bible and Bible interpretation including the issue of is God a rewarder? Uses "The seven last words of Jesus Christ". Uses the story of the thief on the cross beside Jesus. The thief on the cross bad-mouthed Jesus severely. Then, in less than a few hours he converted. What happened? Why did the thief convert? Sinners can be forgiven and redeemed by God. **An Advocate for interpreting the Bible the way Jesus of Nazareth interprets the Bible. {Help to save you time in figuring out the Bible. }**

A Layered Aesthetic Interpretation Of Music For The Performer, Composer, And Listener

A new look at music in human existence. For anyone who makes music at any level and for anyone's enjoyment of music. Not as complex as the title might imply. The principles in this document have application to all of the arts.

A Mathematical And Computer Analysis Method For Catching A Sniper, Etc.

An inexpensive, simple to use tool for law enforcement to identify the law breaker in serial, multiple incident law breaking situations. For law enforcement professionals.

The Pattern Of Prime Numbers

Plus A Prime Numbers Formula

The Pattern of Prime Numbers. For the mathematician. Contains information on macro writing thus making it also for the computer person.

Studies In Biblical Christianity

A Self-Directed Course Of Study

Provides a Picture Study, a Linear Study, and Additional Studies that should go far in giving you the opportunity to examine the explanations, clarifications, and reasons in the view of a Bible interpretation position that is **An Advocate for interpreting the Bible the way Jesus of Nazareth interprets the Bible** to see some of the issues in Biblical Christianity for an introduction or review. Uses documents from **That's The Way I Understand It - Series**. [Another approach to the materials in **Bible Lessons For Those Who Want To Be Better Informed About This Famous Book.**]

A Quick Look At Biblical Christianity

Do you know why Jesus of Nazareth is important? Do you know what He claims His purpose is? Do you know how He supports and interprets the Bible? Compare your answers with this document. Many people who know that Jesus is important have never really investigated Biblical Christianity. Many people are restrained by peer pressure (both social and professional), threat of death, etc. from investigating Jesus of Nazareth or from investigating Biblical Christianity. This is a good document to use to begin your investigation of Biblical Christianity. This document could have also been titled "The Intellectual Basis Of Belief And The Belief Basis Of Intellect".