Pedagogical Strategies for Managing Music Performance Anxiety on the Harp

by

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Abstract

Music performance anxiety (MPA) is a common problem among the community of music performers, affecting the performers themselves mentally or physically, as well as the quality of the performance (Salmon et al. 2005; Cox 2014; Brotons 1994; Osborne and Kenny 2005). While most musicians are susceptible to MPA in some fashion, harpists can suffer from distinct forms of anxiety that result from challenges that are specific to the instrument. Music performance anxiety manifests itself in the psychological, affective, emotional, cognitive, somatic, and behavioral aspects of the performer; essentially, it has an all-encompassing effect on the performer. Because of the many factors involved in MPA, to achieve a balanced approach to music performance anxiety, teachers need to strategically develop a comprehensive program that utilizes different teaching philosophies for different students. This program includes but is not limited to getting to know the student, selecting appropriate music for their level, encouraging techniques that conform to the harpist's body structure, and nurturing relaxation methods. The teacher should also have realistic expectations, based on their own experience and research, of what might happen during a performance and be able to provide the harpist with ways to prevent and solve problems.

Key Words: Harp; Music Performance Anxiety; Pedagogical Strategies

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Introduction

When a harpist walks out of the practice room and onto the stage, it means they have left a 'safe zone,' and it is time to show off the music plus their charisma and brilliance on stage. It also means, however, that the harpist will face the audience, the stage, the lights, and the many unknowns that may come with performance. Consequently, anxiety or nervousness may not start the moment they step on stage. Personally, from the moment I leave the practice room, wheeling my harp towards the concert hall, my hands usually start to go cold.

The practice room is a 'safe zone', I believe, because it is a quiet, independent, undisturbed environment that belongs only to the practitioner. As musicians, we repeat the same things day after day, year after year, in our niche, and some of our behaviors fall into the realm of habit. When we break our routine and leave the practice room to go on the stage, we may have stage fright or anxiety. The effect of these feelings on musical performance is negative, but worse, they may have a cascading effect in the player's mind. Hypothetically, if a person performs in a state of anxiety for a prolonged period, coupled with poor performance, will they begin to fear performing after one, or a few, bad experiences? Will they carry over their previous failures into their next performance?

There is probably no way we can make MPA disappear from our careers forever. Fortunately, we can find ways to reduce performance anxiety as well as find ways to balance fear with excitement. Theoretically, when the performer is rewarded with a

successful performance, then the brain's programming changes, and the pleasant memories of the performance help to reduce the impact of negative experience.

Defining Music Performance Anxiety (MPA)

What did we call this phenomenon before the concept of music performance anxiety was introduced? I clearly remember the first time I entered a guzheng competition when I was growing up in China. I was inexperienced, unaccompanied, listening to each excellent guzheng player warming up in the waiting room, standing there alone, holding my instrument, not knowing what to do. This was probably the first time I ever felt music performance anxiety, but I did not know what it was. All I knew was that I was so nervous: my hands turned cold, my mind went blank, and my memory of the pieces I had prepared seemed to disappear in an instant. A staff member noticed my nervousness, and, before I went on stage, he told me, ‘‘It’s okay, no need to be nervous, just treat the judges like a cabbage.’’ The phenomenon of MPA has only been studied relatively recently in China, having been noticed by some musicians around the 1980s. Prior to this time, music performance anxiety was usually described or indicated by the term "tension." What that staff member said stayed with me for a while and gave me a lot of courage, but, progressively, it stopped working. As I got older and had more opportunities to perform, judges and audiences stopped treating me like a child and started asking for eye contact, verbal communication, and musical introductions before the show. This made my feelings about performing even worse; it was at this time that my teacher introduced me to the concept of music performance anxiety when I was seventeen years old.

But what is music performance anxiety? According to psychologist and music researcher Dianna Kenny:

> Music performance anxiety is the experience of marked and persistent anxious apprehension related to musical performance that has arisen through specific anxiety conditioning experiences and which is manifested through combinations of affective, cognitive, somatic and behavioral symptoms. It may occur in a range of performance settings but is usually more severe in settings involving high ego investment and evaluative threat. It may be focal (i.e. focused only on music performance), or occur comorbidly with other anxiety disorders, in particular social phobia.[1]

This is in line with my perception of MPA, which can manifest itself to varying degrees in the form of emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral symptoms in performers. The context in which Kenny mentions that anxiety arises is even more thought-provoking, because while Kenny has defined Music Performance Anxiety, the symptoms manifest themself differently in every performer. As such, Kenny provides us with a range of profiles, and the specifics need to be experienced to try to discover which symptoms one may observe. Some of the things that can happen include making your brain overactive, resulting in an inability to concentrate; it may manifest itself physically, making you feel weak and powerless; it may make you afraid to perform and not feel the joy of performing; and it may make you lose confidence and always doubt yourself.

[1] Kenny, Dianna. 2016. *Music Performance Anxiety: Theory, Assessment and Treatment*. Lambert Academic Publishing: 9.

Whichever of the above symptoms may appear, our imaginative brains, active minds, and strong desire to perform probably aggravated them. Ironically, these characteristics are often categorized as essential for musicians.

The Effects of Music Performance Anxiety on a Variety of Musicians

Marie Asner mentions in her research that voice students experience performance anxiety, not only because of mental aspects but possible dietary issues as well. In her study, she states that "students should avoid milk or cheese products several hours before singing. In many individuals this produces phlegm ("post-nasal drip") and a full, uncomfortable feeling in the throat. which leads to throat discomfort."[2] This will have some effect on breathing. Unsurprisingly, when a vocal performer becomes unexpectedly ill during a performance, musical performance anxiety can appear. Breathing is therefore extremely important to the vocalist, as it controls the vocalist's articulation and phrasing, and loud breathing can be embarrassing for the vocalist.

In the journal *Psychology of Music,* there is an article on anxiety in flute playing. The author mentions the problems of posture and control of the facial muscles in flute playing, which can be physically fatiguing for the player. As the author says, "Muscle tension may occur due to either the physical demands of playing the instrument, from excessive playing time without rest breaks, or due to the complexity of the music being

[2] Asner, Marie. 1987. "Overcoming Vocal Performance Anxiety." *American Music Teacher* 36 (4): 40–41. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43547289.

performed even in the absence of music performance anxiety."[3] Given the commonality of such instruments, this problem exists for most wind players. Their mouths and facial muscles are finely tuned to the demands of their instruments. It is not surprising that playing for a long period of time and having to make sure that the breath is sufficient would result in tension.

Pianists seem to have other reasons for anxiety during their performances. When attending a piano performance, observers will notice that pianists often keep a handkerchief on the piano or on the piano bench to wipe their hands between performances or before they start to perform. According to Katie Zhukov, "one of the common symptoms of anxiety is excessive sweating of hands that may cause slippage off the keys during performing. Preventative measures such as wiping hands and the keyboard prior to playing, using talcum powder or alcohol-based wipes can help to dry hands."[4] This problem is a common one, and a solution is proposed to help the pianist avoid slipping.

The violin is a very familiar stringed instrument, and the acoustics it produces when first learned and played may not be entirely enjoyable. Since the violin has no keys or frets, it is important to practice intonation when learning the instrument.

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[3] Kenny, Dianna T., James M. Fortune, and Bronwen Ackermann. 2011. "Predictors of Music Performance Anxiety during Skilled Performance in Tertiary Flute Players." *Psychology of Music* 41 (3): 308. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735611425904.

[4] Zhukov, Katie. 2009. "Overcoming Performance Anxiety for Piano Students- How to Apply Research Findings in Your Studio." *Semantic Scholar*, January: 5.

Being subjected to the harsh demands of intonation for a considerable period, violinists may be conditioned to always maintain a questioning attitude towards their own intonation. Kato Havas has pointed out in her book that the fluidity of music causes it not to be static like a painting to be admired. Some changes in postural behavior may affect intonation as well as the fact that violinists often doubt themselves with the question, "Am I in Tune?"[5] When this behavior becomes a habit, it will inevitably affect the mind of the violinist. Not believing in yourself when performing is not a good habit as the prerequisite to shine on stage is inseparable from self-confidence.

Frequent Factors in Music Performance Anxiety

When musicians are struggling with music performance anxiety, it is highly desirable to find a way to work through or reduce it. Getting to the root causes of music performance anxiety will help musicians deal with the issue at its source. This approach does include subjective factors like a lack of practice leading to anxiety caused by musicians knowing they are not perfectly prepared; at the same time, some objective factors cannot be ignored.

The presence of an audience is among the reasons for MPA. We as performers would always like to see a positive enthusiastic audience reaction. It can be encouraging to the musicians and have a positive effect on the mentality of the artist for future

[5] Havas, Kato. 1992. *Stage Fright*. Bosworth & Co. Ltd.

performances. It is worth noting that the audience does not control everything, and their reaction may depend on their emotions on the day of the performance. Perhaps they are interested in what the show is about; they could also be there to support their friends but not interested in the music, amongst other factors. As a harpist, I have experienced seeing audiences sleeping, audiences focused on their cell phones, or audiences persistently coughing in my recitals and orchestral work. Although some of these behaviors are not intentional, they still have a negative effect on me.

The high expectations of parents and teachers can affect the mindset of the student performer. For example, in Baksh and Martin's study, it was noted that students reacted negatively when faced with high expectations from their teachers, thus becoming immune to the teacher's high expectations and losing the pursuit of their goals.[6] Also, in a study by Kaplan and other researchers, it was shown that high expectations from parents can cause children to become sensitive and feel emotionally neglected and distant from their parents.[7] Carrying pressure beyond what they can bear contributes to a feeling of being threatened, which will lead to fear of the scenario even before the performance. Judgment is an important process in learning, as is getting different suggestions, understanding your music from the evaluator's point of view, and discovering details that you have overlooked in

[6] Baksh, Ishmael J., and Wilfred B. W. Martin. 1984. "Teacher Expectation and the Student Perspective." *The Clearing House* 57 (8): 341–43. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30186281.

[7] Kaplan, Diane S., Xiaoru Liu, and Howard B. Kaplan. 2001. "Influence of Parents' Self-Feelings and Expectations on Children's Academic Performance." *The Journal of Educational Research* 94 (6): 360–70. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27542347.

practice. While over-judging and high expectations simultaneously do not have a positive impact, however, I strongly agree with Vanessa Cornett's statement, “do remember the teacher-student relationship is private, intense, trusted, Meanwhile, the authority of the teacher is able to counteract the high expectations of the student from their family. Don't forget that students are vulnerable and often susceptible to teachers they idolize.”[8] Notably, some high expectations are not clearly defined, but rather repetitively enjoined. This redundancy can lead students to become overly competitive and thus more fearful of negative comments as they try to live up to their parents' or teachers' expectations.

Some musicians are not naturally prone to MPA but have had some unfavorable experiences that lead to a psychological shadow. In Cambray and Carter's psychological research, it is stated that psychological shadows are unconscious aspects of personality that are inconsistent with the ideal of the self, leading to self-resistance and projection of shadows with which the self is in conflict.[9] Awful experiences can be hurtful for humans and can lead to fright, concern, or anxiety about similar behaviors afterward. For example, soldiers who have witnessed the brutality of the war can suffer from PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). They may need psychological intervention to recover, or the memory can haunt them

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[8] Cornett, Vanessa. 2015. “Mental Skills and Music Performance: The Teacher’s Role.” *American Music Teacher* 64 (4): 29. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43543801.

[9] Cambray, Joseph, and Linda Carter. 2004. *Analytical Psychology: Contemporary Perspectives in Jungian Analysis*. Hove; New York: Brunner-Routledge.

permanently; executioners also need psychological treatment after their work, or their brains will be affected. These are two extreme examples, but they parallel what musicians feel: how can the brain be in a functioning state after experiencing a terrible event and having to go back to it? As doctors Howard and Crandall state,

> PTSD has expanded from its original wartime definition to include all people, not just soldiers. It can result from a single or prolonged life-threatening event. Memory can bury itself deep in the mind and, for years afterward, torment the person with all kinds of strange unexplained feelings."[10]

Memories can suddenly stab you when you least expect them. For example, my brain was paralyzed by a leg cramp that came along with a rapid heartbeat during my first performance, after which I had a long period of time where I would unconsciously recall this bad memory during performances or in non-performance situations. Even in daily life, this memory would inexplicably pop into my head, thus causing me to judge whether or not I was a qualified performer.

The causes of music performance anxiety are varied, especially when each person's experiences, education, thoughts, and other factors are different. Some anxiety is hereditary, meaning that anxiety has appeared without being influenced by other factors. In China, highly sensitive people jokingly refer to themselves as having a 'glass heart'. This population is usually more sensitive and fearful of judgment; they can be unprepared or over-prepared which can be psychologically challenging; they

[10] Howard, Sethanne, and Mark W. Crandall. 2007. "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: What Happens in the Brain?" *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 93 (3): 5. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24536468.

may have extremely low self-esteem or high self-esteem perhaps amplifying the negative effects of Music Performance Anxiety; and more. When harpists are going through these situations, Music Performance Anxiety can become an even greater burden.

The Effects of Music Performance Anxiety on the Harpist

The effects of Music Performance Anxiety on the harp can be devastating in a sense, the classic example being, "I know my pedals or my hands are in the wrong position, I know where I am in the music or the score, but I have no way to get my hands or my feet back in the right position" It may sound silly, but such a situation is common with harpists experiencing MPA, especially harpists who are just getting to know the pedals. The harp is played with both hands and feet, with seven pedals controlling the sharps, flats, and naturals. After long periods of practice, the harpist's ear is sensitive to pitch; the correct tone is etched in the brain. Thus, when a wrong tone appears, the harpist will realize within a moment that something is wrong. They may doubt their ability to return to the correct playing position.

The brain's memory is also affected by MPA. Although this situation is not specific to harpists, it should be noted that harpists' memory includes hand and foot positions as well as the music itself. Some players are lucky enough to be able to pedal correctly under the influence of MPA and play without showing that something is wrong with the phrase. They simply replay the section with the expectation that muscle memory will bring the music back to the right place. As noted in John Paul

Ito's research, it is stated that 'muscle memory' is a development that focuses on automaticity, where the musician moves away from the conscious need for attention and visual monitoring and moves control to muscle memory. For example, the repetition of music in terms of rhythm, technique, slow practice, etc. constitutes the development of automatism, also known as 'muscle memory.'[11] On the other hand, the integrity of the music is difficult to ensure when the harpist is faced with simultaneous pedal and memory errors, as well as muscle memory that does not work. MPA's effect on memory also has a chance of causing the performer to skip measures or confuse similar segments. For example, in a typical sonata, there is an exposition, development and recapitulation. When the recapitulation is played, a memory lapse may lead the harpist back to the exposition section. The result could conceivably be a repetition of the whole section or an attempt to return to the recapitulation, depending on how the player's brain perceives what is happening at the time; it is impossible to predict what the consequences will be. As mentioned, PTSD has the potential to arise in this situation, and an unpleasant performance has the possibility of being imprinted in the player's brain.

Harpists have some similar problems as pianists. Pianists may have sweaty hands that cause their fingers to slide on the keyboard due to nervousness; harpists have problems with sweaty hands that cause them to slide on the strings. For pianists, the solution is to wipe their hands with a handkerchief to ensure that they are dry and to

[11] Ito, John Paul. 2011. "Repetition without Repetition: Bernsteinian Perspectives on Motor Learning for Musicians." *College Music Symposium* 51. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26513068.

wipe the keyboard with a special maintenance tool to keep them dry. Obviously, harpists can also wipe their hands before they start playing to achieve dryness, but, with the harp strings, it is more difficult. Strings are made of three materials: nylon, gut, and wire. Due to the unique nature of the material, it is necessary to use dedicated cleaning wipes for daily care, but these wipes do not guarantee that the strings are dry. In addition, the harp is played in a position where the harp is held in the arms with the palms of the hands either downward or toward the center (depending on the technique used by the harpist). Either technique requires a 'sticky and bouncy' relationship between the hand and the strings to ensure the sound effect. Unfortunately, with lubricated strings and sweaty palms, the fingers play like the wind blowing through leaves, at which point the player's ear transmits a signal to the brain that it interprets as hearing something it does not want to hear.

Finally, there is the effect of MPA on the muscles. In Rudolf Hoehn-Saric's research, the effect of anxiety on muscles is mentioned, a phenomenon known as 'muscle weakness'.[12] Again, this is not unique to harpists, but tense muscles can be particularly problematic due to the posture of the harpist. For example, advanced repertoire that requires a significant number of pedal changes in consecutive bars will be impossible to execute for a performer with a cramped leg. Being able to hold back from vocalizing emotions caused by the cramp is already difficult.

[12] Hoehn-Saric, Rudolf. 1979. “Anxiety: Normal and Abnormal.” *Psychiatric Annals* 9 (9): 11–24. https://doi.org/10.3928/0048-5713-19790901-05.

In addition to the impacts on the harpist mentioned above, there are many other significant possibilities, such as rapid heartbeat, blurred eyes, cold hands, etc. These symptoms may not be unique to harpists, but they create problems that are very specific to harp playing.

Music Performance Anxiety Exists in Different Segments of the Population

Music itself is diverse, including genres such as classical, popular, jazz, folk, etc.; the categories of playing include solo, chamber, orchestra performances, etc. The people who play music also vary, with different ages, genders, heights, body shapes, and performance experience.

In Boucher and Ryan's anxiety investigation of 66 young musicians, only 25% of the anticipatory anxiety was at a more desirable level, with the remaining children having moderate or severe anticipatory anxiety.[13] Anticipatory anxiety refers to the fearful or distressing anticipation of something in the future, which is simply the fear that something bad will happen or that something will not go well. Anticipatory anxiety has been shown in studies by Chua and other researchers to be a complex

[13] Boucher, Hélène, and Charlene A. Ryan. 2011. "Performance Stress and the Very Young Musician." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 58 (4): 329–45. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40961658.

combination of future-oriented cognitive states, negative emotions, and autonomic arousal.[14]

Sokoli and colleagues' research on classical music students presents statistics on how different ages, genders, and majors are affected by MPA when performing classical music. They conclude that the oldest person is more prone to anxiety; women and instrumentalists are more likely than men and vocalists to be anxious and to feel catastrophic.[15]

Based on the data above, it can be demonstrated that MPA is distributed among different populations and has different effects. It is impossible to avoid the possibility of anxiety in musicians; as mentioned in the survey, female performers may be more sensitive to anxiety in classical music than male performers, but this does not mean that female performers do not have the right to participate in the study and performance of classical music just to avoid anxiety. Similarly, instrumentalists do not have to give up their instruments for fear of anxiety. Therefore, being aware of anxiety in advance can help an individual choose an approach that maximizes the strengths of the performer during the learning process.

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[14] Chua, Phyllis, Michael Krams, Ivan Toni, Richard Passingham, and Raymond Dolan. 1999. "A Functional Anatomy of Anticipatory Anxiety." *NeuroImage* 9 (6): 563–71. https://doi.org/10.1006/nimg.1999.0407.

[15] Sokoli, Erinë, Horst Hildebrandt, and Patrick Gomez. 2022. "Classical Music Students' Pre-Performance Anxiety, Catastrophizing, and Bodily Complaints Vary by Age, Gender, and Instrument and Predict Self-Rated Performance Quality." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (June). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.905680.

The Importance of Selecting Repertoire

Music performance anxiety can come from inappropriate repertoire choices, such as a difficulty level that does not match the performer's level, or a score that uses a large number of techniques that are the exact opposite of what the performer is learning. From my perspective, choosing music that best fits the player is the first step toward helping that performer. The choice of pieces usually is the teacher's responsibility or influence; therefore, a teacher's knowledge of the student is essential. Certainly, as players, we also need to explore how to choose music for ourselves through self-understanding. Understanding the student or oneself can be the focus of helping to choose an appropriate piece of music. As a teacher, one needs to get to know the student comprehensively, focusing on details such as maturity, height, hand size, finger length, and the ability to recognize musical notes, as well as observing the student's personality, preferences in musical genres, ability to express themselves, listening to the student's ideas, etc. Musicians who choose their repertoire independently can learn about themselves more directly; they might listen to and look at repertoire that intrigues and inspires them to learn, choose which techniques they would need to play, and then leave the rest to their taste. After these preparations, one can engage in the process of selecting pieces. Thorough consideration of the choice of music can help students better manage the effects of MPA.

The first factor that one must consider in choosing appropriate music is the type of harp played. Commonly, harps are categorized as pedal harps and lever harps,

which are not technically different in their playing skills but mechanically are extremely different. That is why there are different considerations when choosing pieces for students who are learning different harps.

The first question applies to both types of harps: picking a version of the score that is appropriate for that student. Some pieces are not originally composed for harp: they are written for piano, lute, or other instruments, and harpists must transcribe them for their instrument. One example is *Clair de Lune*, written by Debussy for piano, a romantically rich work of pre-intermediate difficulty. Currently there are two popular harp versions, transcribed by Grandjany and Salzedo.

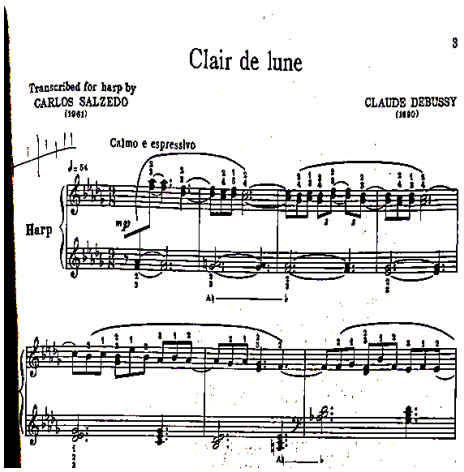

Fig.1, Salzedo's Version

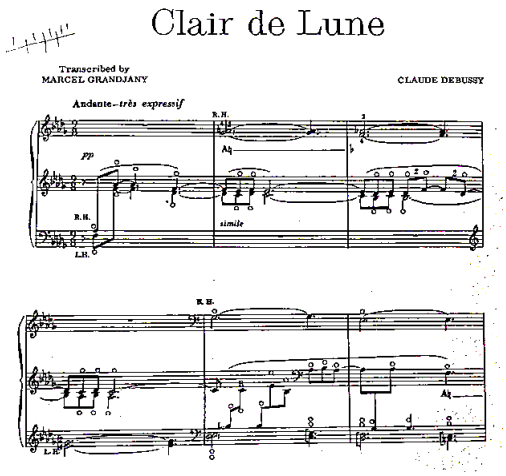

Fig.2, Grandjany's Version

These two images reflect two harpists with completely different interpretations of the piece. Salzedo's version is highly reminiscent of Debussy's original composition for the piano and the sound effects and harmonies are almost identical to those of the

piano. Grandjany's version has a more harp-like softness, with a great use of harmonics. When choosing between the two versions, one should consider:

1) presenting the music and observing which version the student is more interested in

2) considering the length of time the student has been studying the harp and whether they need this work as an opportunity to learn harmonic techniques

3) the student's preferred playing technique

4) the occasions in which the work needs to be performed

These conditions need to be further refined but are helpful in choosing which version is suitable for the student. However, it is worth noting that comfort and challenge are equally important. If one is in a comfortable environment for a long period of time, then inertia may develop and the ability to challenge may be lost, which may lead to nervousness when faced with more difficult music. Challenge also requires a balance, as an excessively high level of intensity may cause the student to stay in a stressful environment for a long period of time, which can create a burden. Therefore, placing the two in a balanced state can be more effective in helping performers combat MPA.

For pedal harp, the first thing to look for is the student's proficiency on the instrument. Do they have any experience learning to use pedals? Are there any favorite genres of music? Is the goal to learn solo or chamber music at the moment?

Do they have sufficient control of the pedals? If they are entering a competition, the competition repertoire catalog will often give choices. There will be three to six choices for music of the same difficulty level. It is useful to play recordings of all the pieces for the student before deciding; if there is no version requirement for the piece to be studied, pick the one that would appeal to the student in the best way. These factors also apply to choosing suitable repertoire for an audition, after considering all the above factors in a more targeted approach.

In addition to the above conditions, make sure that the repertoire chosen is not overly difficult nor unduly easy. Always being challenged pushes the learning process forward, but if it is more difficult than the harpist is comfortable with, then there can be negative consequences such as loss of confidence in themselves. Therefore, gauging the challenge becomes a priority.

Fear of Playing Solo or in Collaboration

The harp is often a solo instrument, and harpists can be expected to perform alone in many situations: concerts, weddings, restaurants, hotels, cruises, shopping malls, etc. Harpists need to be able to independently handle the anxiety they may experience when they are fearful of performing individually.

One thing that is common to all these scenarios is the audience, which is often cited as a key factor in influencing musicians. In Leblanc, et al., experiments with 27 musicians resulted in 17 of them experiencing anxiety due to the presence of an

audience.[16] The best way to deal with the relationship between the harpist and the audience is to start from the player's perspective. Finding the best placement for the harp can be helpful. In a performance situation, the harp tends to be oriented towards 2-3 o'clock, which means that the harp is oriented toward the audience with the column to the right. Then, then the harpist will not have their face obscured by the instrument and they can better show their hands on the instrument. One should observe the venue to be performed in advance, sit down, and pull the harp back to feel where the view will be beside the instrument. The most helpful position is one in which the gaze falls on a steady spot, where it does not interfere with string recognition, allowing the hands to be easily placed wherever they are needed to play. In this case, the harpist can greatly reduce MPA caused by loss of string discrimination or uncertainty about hand position on the string. However, this does not imply hiding oneself from the audience or going beyond the center of the playing space.

In addition to possible anxiety caused by the audience, a rapid heartbeat and shallow breathing are also likely to be present. One solution that everyone knows is deep breathing, but what can be missed is what kind of deep breathing is useful and when to implement it. Regarding the question of when, an appropriate time is before the performer enters the performance space. One should try to avoid taking deep

[16] LeBlanc, Albert, Young Chang Jin, Mary Obert, and Carolyn Siivola. 1997. “Effect of Audience on Music Performance Anxiety.” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 45 (3): 480–96. https://doi.org/10.2307/3345541.

breaths during the performance, as that may interrupt the rhythm of playing and cause other repercussions. One should take one's time no matter how long it takes before starting. McAllister's advice for handling MPA includes the idea of taking a deep breath: "a slow, deep breath when stressed triggers the relaxation response, focusing the mind while calming the body. The most relaxing type is diaphragmatic, or belly breathing, in which the stomach rises slightly on each inhalation"[17] I can personally attest to this idea. A fake 'deep breath' will not have a positive effect; instead, it may prompt increased breathing and cause the body to be unable to calm down, perhaps informing the brain, "I'm done breathing, but I'm still stressed."

Although the harp is a solo instrument, it is often found in symphony orchestras, wind ensembles, chamber music, and other performances that require group cooperation. When teamwork is required, the harpist cannot just focus on their own music. There are things to be aware of including, but not limited to, melodic delivery, articulation, conductor's behavior, turning pages, etc. These require not only complete familiarity with the harpist's own music, but they also require attention to the other instruments that need to work together. Especially in a symphony orchestra, the harp does not play from start to finish; in addition, there is usually a moment when the other instruments are silent, and the harp is featured. This simply means that if a mistake is made, the mistake will be magnified. A more intuitive way to avoid this is to mark on the score exactly which instrument leads the harp into their solo, plus

[17] McAllister, Lesley. 2019. "Adolescents and Anxiety: Five 'Quick Tips' for Performance." *American Music Teacher* 69 (2): 18. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26816208.

listening to a recording of the piece so that the brain remembers what the instrument is playing. Counting the measures and singing the melody of the articulated part in our brain when practicing is also important. All three of these things help our brains to form the proper conditioned reflexes, as differentiated from just being well prepared, which is something one does subjectively. Conditioned reflexes are the workings of the nervous system, according to I.P. Pawlow in "New Researches on Conditioned Reflexes," which states that conditioned reflexes and analysis make up the entire activity of the nervous system, giving instructions to the brain.[18] The brain can still rely on conditioned reflexes to respond subconsciously in the face of performance anxiety, adding a sense of security to the performer suffering from performance anxiety.

As mentioned earlier, during the harp's solos in large ensembles, the other instruments will be relatively quiet, and mistakes will be magnified in this situation. One could address their anxiety and say, “it's okay, no one cares about you, you can do it better next time if you don't do it right.” It's a type of self-talk known as 'inner monologue' which can be effective in reducing tension. In Roznowski's research on performers' inner monologues, it was demonstrated that 'the inner monologue is a "stream of consciousness" or "inner voice" that constantly echoes in your head.'[19] As Dr. Cherney said in his research on inner monologue, positive inner monologue can

[18] Pawlow, I. P. 1923. “New Researches on Conditioned Reflexes.” *Science* 58 (1506): 359–61. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1648601.

[19] Roznowski, Rob. 2013. *Inner Monologue in Acting*. New York Palgrave Macmillan Us.

reduce self-criticism and have a calming effect on nervousness.[20] Of course, it is even more important to practice as necessary, maintain a professional standard, gain experience, and acquire a methodology of your own, which takes time to explore but is not difficult.

Exploring the Mind in Times of Peace

While our brain remembers anxious scenarios as well as peaceful situations, tension is soothed in peaceful situations, which can reduce the effects of MPA. Harpists can think back to moments when they practiced independently without being disturbed, and they can remember this, thus providing a reference for themselves. Was there a moment that produced a particularly satisfying practice session? Take out your phone and record a video to observe what you did. Was there any different finger work than usual? How high was the bench and what distance was it from the harp? How comfortable was the clothing you were wearing? The temperature of the room? After observing these external factors, think about one mood that day. Did something happen that made your brain feel good? Was there anything you ate or drank before practicing? Was it satisfactory for the day's auditory results? Since the sounding holes of the harp are on the back of the instrument, close to the harpist, the player's hearing may be somewhat skewed. A harpist may not be completely sure that the balance of the music is what they want it to be. Whereas the effects of undefined musical balance

[20] Cherney, Kristeen. 2022. "Internal Monologue: What It Is, What It Means, and More." Edited by Heather Hobbs. Healthline. June 13, 2022. https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/internal-monologue#people-without-an-internal-monologue.

may not be significant in relatively small environments, when a harpist performs in a large environment such as a concert hall, off-balance musical effects can surprise the performer, such as an accompaniment overpowering the melody, or a complex rhythmic dialog becoming confusing. Sudden changes in balance can cause nervousness or anxiety. This is one of the reasons why it is important to record during daily practice, where actual hearing can be aided and checked. After thinking about these questions, harpists will probably have a detailed list of answers. The results of the day's practice can be recorded in its entirety rather than just remembered.

Once we have many notes and memories, the next step is to work out how to bring that peace to the performance. Among the conditions above, emotions deserve to be placed first. In an investigation of 87 university students on the effects of mood on performance, it was demonstrated that subjects in a positive mood had greater ability to learn and perform. According to Ingrid Wickelgren, dopamine is the neurotransmitter that triggers feelings of pleasure released by cells in the deeper layers of the brain through certain mediators.[21] The dopamine hypothesis was also confirmed, and cognitive flexibility was increased in the case of positive mood.[22] Protecting one's emotions is an easy thing to say but might be difficult to put into action. When emotions are affected by an outside factor, putting aside that outside

[21] Wickelgren, Ingrid. 1997. “Getting the Brain’s Attention.” *Science* 278 (5335): 35–37. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2894493.

[22] Nadler, Ruby T., Rahel Rabi, and John Paul Minda. 2010. “Better Mood and Better Performance: Learning Rule-Described Categories Is Enhanced by Positive Mood.” *Psychological Science* 21 (12): 1770–76. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40984574.

factor, no matter what it is, is important not just for the performance, but equally for our physical and mental health. If it affects the inner self and the musician, it is essential to relax and keep the harpist mentally healthy. Would some moderate exercise to increase dopamine production be helpful? According to Bastioli and other researchers, exercise does not alter dopamine levels, but rather promotes a dynamic release of dopamine and can help dopamine release to continue to increase.[23] Therefore, moderate exercise will be effective.

Seeing a therapist for help is also recommended. There is a pertinent point in H.A. Gomes de Araújo's research that while there historically has been a stigma associated with therapy, increasingly people have been seeking professional help from psychotherapists to maintain good mental health. [24] This shows that more people have a greater awareness of the importance of mental health and are becoming concerned about the negative impact it can have on them. Harpists affected by music performance anxiety suffer from varying degrees of additional psychological challenges. When symptoms cannot be alleviated personally, the power of a therapist may provide help.

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[23] Bastioli, Guendalina, Jennifer C. Arnold, Maria Mancini, Adam C. Mar, Begoña Gamallo-Lana, Khalil Saadipour, Moses V. Chao, and Margaret E. Rice. 2022. "Voluntary Exercise Boosts Striatal Dopamine Release: Evidence for the Necessary and Sufficient Role of BDNF." *Journal of Neuroscience* 42 (23): 4725–36. https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2273-21.2022.

[24] Araújo, H.A. Gomes de. 1974. "What Is Psychotherapy?" *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 24 (4/6): 449–54. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45114371.

Identifying habits that create peace also applies to dealing with other possibilities. For example, if drinking a cup of coffee makes the performer feel energized and produces a positive effect in the brain, then have a cup of coffee before the performance. Alternately, if drinking coffee causes problems while performing, like the heart beating too fast and not being able to calm down, always remember not to have coffee before any performance.

The Role and Influence of Teachers in Combating Music Performance Anxiety

Teachers play a highly influential role in combating music performance anxiety, especially for students who are unable to resolve their anxiety entirely on their own. When harp instructors need to help their students combat music performance anxiety, it may be important to start with a holistic approach rather than a simple statement like 'relax'. According to Lois Goeltz's research, music teachers can encourage student expression, recognize student diversity, accept that students think that there will be more important things in life than music, de-emphasize winning competitions, be serious about answering any questions; organize teamwork, and help students to overcome difficulties.[25] From my perspective, harp instructors can also be inspired by the situation Goeltz points out to discover ways to help students balance music performance anxiety.

[25] Goeltz, Lois. 1969. "The Music Teacher's Goals." *American Music Teacher* 18 (5): 37–38. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43516466.

Broad cultural and artistic literacy also plays an important part, as music is influenced by many factors, different aesthetic standards, aspects of thinking, and depth of understanding of music. Engaging with these ideas may come easily to the student but may require the teacher's help. For example, how to express music inspired by painting, the influence of geography on the type of music from physical and cultural perspectives, etc. The final point is that teachers need to be aware of cultural differences, which may include differences in family, ethnic group, and artistic perceptions, among others. According to Tyrone Howard's research, a lack of critical reflection on the part of the teacher in the context of cultural differences can lead to academic failure of students, thus understanding and respecting cultural relevance, racial affirmation, and the complexity of social meanings are all important to consider in the face of this situation.[26] When harp instructors have a comprehensive pedagogy and curriculum, they can provide students with a structured approach to balancing performance anxiety.

Students facing Music Performance Anxiety need support from a variety of sources, and obviously, the teacher will be one of these supporters. This support is not monolithic; teachers should approach each student individually. Teachers are like lighthouses for students, guiding them as they seek help from teachers when a problem in their studies necessitates a credible response from them. Given this trust,

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[26] Howard, Tyrone C. 2003. "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Ingredients for Critical Teacher Reflection." *Theory into Practice* 42 (3): 195–202. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1477420.

the support of a teacher could make a student more courageous and interested in exploring the wild and unknown, just as a student facing MPA may not have the capacity for self-efficacy. While self-efficacy refers to a person's ability to engage in a certain behavior and achieve a desired outcome in a given situation, it largely refers to an individual's own sense of self-relevant abilities, as well as to people's confidence or beliefs about their ability to achieve the desired goals of their behavior in a given domain. These are exactly the conditions that musicians need to use to manage MPA. In Anne Petrovich's research on MPA, she states that “teachers can facilitate this second most powerful self-efficacy source by exploring coping skills to help calm each individual.”[27]. When teachers guide or stimulate students to develop self-efficacy, they may be able to make assumptions and judgments about their ability to complete a certain behavior. This affects the students' attitudes in the face of difficulties and the control of emotions, including thinking that there will be a certain change. As students become willing to take on challenges, have good expectations of themselves, and handle events rationally, they begin to develop the ability to cope with MPA.

Music Performance Anxiety is sometimes seen in students who do not have a self-planning approach. Students may feel lost when they do not have any performance or practice experience, and the potential for triggering anxiety by taking to the stage under these circumstances is considerable. Teachers can be planners in

[27] Petrovich, Anne. 2003. “Performance Anxiety: How Teachers Can Help.” *American Music Teacher* 53 (3): 27. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43545189.

helping students. Instructional programs provide students with an additional goal while being able to keep the curriculum on track. Until students are ready to be independent in their decision making, a teacher's program can provide inspiration and assistance in setting both challenging and achievable goals. For example, providing daily practice plans for beginners, determining on a weekly basis the main tasks for that week's study, and completing them the following week; planning concert programs, making sure that scores are memorized 4-6 weeks before the concert, confirming the venue at least four weeks in advance, booking other facilities such as recording, etc. Children's first teachers are their parents. Since imitation is natural, then they will do the equivalent when they are given a teacher who has a plan. With the help of a teacher, a student may be equipped to face MPA with more confidence instead of facing the unknown without a plan.

We cannot expect students who are not trained to deal with MPA to be naturally equipped to address their anxiety. Teachers can take on the role of communicator to provide assistance to students at this time. Ideally, teachers pass on the knowledge and skills they possess to their students, broadening their horizons, enriching their knowledge, and preventing them from facing the dilemma of being in the dark professionally. The poet Han Yu of the Tang Dynasty wrote: "In ancient times those who wanted to learn would seek out a teacher, one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts. Since no one is born omniscient, who can claim to have no doubts? If one has doubts and is not willing to learn from a

teacher, his doubts will never be resolved."[28] Han laid down the importance and necessity of teachers as communicators. When students have the experience, technique, and knowledge imparted by their teachers, they can attempt to circumvent what may be contributing to the development of MPA and improve their playing ability.

More teacher roles can be identified, such as innovator, evaluator, and partner, among others. These roles may not only maintain a good relationship between teachers and students but also promote students' healthy development in music learning. Teachers encounter far more stress than the student does in the teaching process, according to Michael Fimian's research on teacher stress. The sources of teacher stress are varied and include personal competence, conflicting values, social identity, expectations, professional constraints, and teacher-student relationships, among others.[29] It is not reasonable to expect teachers to maintain a positive attitude in response to all these factors– teachers are not robots– but the way and place for teachers to solve their potentially negative attitudes should not be related to students. Finally, performers realize a musical performance, but it also takes listeners. Teachers should be the first to applaud their students.

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[28] Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House. Literary Appreciation Dictionary Compilation Center. 2014. *韓愈詩文鉴赏辞典 Han Yu Shi Wen Jian Shang Ci Dian*. Shanghai Ci Shu.

[29] Fimian, Michael J. 1982. "What Is Teacher Stress?" *The Clearing House* 56 (3): 101–5. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30185531.

Effective Practice Sessions to Mitigate Music Performance Anxiety

The search for relief from music performance anxiety is a long-term study and program. Expecting MPA to disappear completely from a musician's career is not reasonable; it is possible that receiving psychotherapy could be of some help in managing anxiety over a long period of time. From my personal perspective, this would depend entirely on each performer's situation.

Most players will be served by effective practice that is subjective to the harpist. In a research study on practice, performance, and anxiety conducted by Charlene Ryan, Hélène Boucher, and Gina Ryan, 62 pianists were invited to participate in a survey that found that 27% of the participants' parents believed that pianists who performed poorly did so because they had not practiced enough.[30] The parents' thoughts are not entirely wrong, but at the same time, it is not representative of all the musician's efforts. If it happens that musicians play the instrument all day long but find that it does not seem to be helping their playing, then perhaps it is time to consider whether something is wrong with the method of practicing. As Stephanie Prichard suggests in her study on effective practice, she argues that weekly practice requires strategic planning, setting specific goals, and self-direction.[31] I could not

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[30] Ryan, Charlene, Hélène Boucher, and Gina Ryan. 2023. "Practice, Performance, and Anxiety: A Pilot Study on Student Perception of Parental Involvement and Formal Music Lessons." *Music & Science* 6 (January): 205920432211450. https://doi.org/10.1177/20592043221145000.

[31] Prichard, Stephanie. 2012. "Practice Makes Perfect? Effective Practice Instruction in Large Ensembles." *Music Educators Journal* 99 (2): 57–62. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23364288.

agree more with the idea that practice time is part of the equation, as are thinking and practicing strategies, so that when they come together, they become "effective practice." What harpists need to be aware of is finding a balance between prolonged practicing and effective practicing. Strategic practicing can help harpists increase the effectiveness of their practice in a healthy way. According to John Hart's research, the structure, length, and organization of practice time is important for the practitioner, especially how to develop a strategic practice structure. For example, he suggests that practice frequency be based on the difficulty of the exercise, with shorter practice sessions for less complex tasks and longer practice sessions for more complex tasks.[32] When harpists have an individualized practice strategy that works for them, they can reduce their anxiety about the difficulty of the piece and become more confident, thus reducing performance anxiety.

Effective practice for harpists involves both the development of a practice plan and reflection to determine which practice strategies are effective in helping them achieve their goals and reducing practice-induced music performance anxiety.

Harp Playing Techniques

Harp playing technique is an important part of balancing music performance anxiety for harpists. A proper technique can help harpists to have more confidence in their playing when dealing with anxiety. The harp is played with a variety of

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[32] Hart, John T. 2014. “Guided Metacognition in Instrumental Practice.” *Music Educators Journal* 101 (2): 57–64. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43288923.

techniques, by which I mean that it varies for each individual. Even if two students have the same instructor, they may develop different understandings of harp technique to develop new, more appropriate techniques for themselves. The three technical categories that are common in the United States today come from Salzedo, Grandjany, and McDonald, which provide a well-established system for harp pedagogy in the U.S. Salzedo and Grandjany both graduated from the Conservatoire de Paris and were students of Hasselmans, while McDonald was a student of Renié, who also studied with Hasselmans. This lineage makes it evident that the source of study for all three was the Conservatoire de Paris. Despite this commonality, there are noticeable differences in their skills, and this suggests that the same techniques do not work exactly the same for each artist.

The reference for Salzedo's technique comes from his book, *Method for the Harp*.[33] Most of the techniques used by Salzedo involve the use of expressive gestures to produce a high-quality sound on the harp by analyzing the relationship between action and sound; in his point of view, harp performance should both sound and look good. In addition to this, Salzedo requires the harpist to be both physically and mentally relaxed, minimizing the tension and fatigue caused by physical exertion while playing. One can see Salzedo or his students playing with their elbows essentially upward, which he thought would leave the hands free and light. He believed this posture would improve the player's flexibility and agility, as well as

[33] Lawrence, Lucile, and Carlos Salzedo. 1929. *Method for the Harp*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc.

build up the muscles of the upper arm to avoid the harp wobbling. As for the wrist, he required it to be bent inward so that it does not touch the soundboard except when playing in the higher registers. The requirement for the thumb is to keep it high and upright, not bent backward, though it should be fully pressed against the side of the index finger at the moment of playing, and the left thumb should be slightly lower than the right. All fingers should be relaxed in relation to the strings, and playing power does not come from the fingers but from the body, which is why it's necessary to use only the fingertips in his requirements. It is worth noting that those who strictly adhere to Salzedo's philosophy of technique are largely free from tendonitis and have few wrist problems. Various beauty-oriented postures combined with charismatic sounds are the theme of most of Salzedo's techniques. Besides technical issues, Salzedo also addresses the issue of correct sitting height in his book. He has a strict framework for sitting that he considers:

> The correct height at which to sit will be determined in the following manner. Put the harp on the shoulder and on the knees, place both hands toward the middle of the strings, in the middle register of the instrument. The height will be correct if the player feels at ease in maintaining both hands in the position and shoulders down. [34]

This description is quite clear and uses the harpist’s judgment as a check on the correctness of the sitting position. French pedagogies nowadays, however, advocate sitting as low as possible and adjusting the bench to its lowest position.

[34] Lawrence, Lucile, and Carlos Salzedo. 1929. *Method for the Harp*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc.

Based on the study of Salzedo's technique, it is clear that his overall requirements for harpists are somewhat restrictive. This can be a positive factor against MPA, as harpists who are more demanding gain more confidence in their practice routines. According to Jane Magrath and Bill Moore's research, daily practice allows for faster immersion in the task at hand, with musicians' best performances occurring when there are no expectations, fears, doubts, or other cognitive limitations. This is when higher expectations and high levels of in-the-moment performance for daily practice may unconsciously enter the brain, leading to greater trust in oneself.[35] It is also important to be aware of the possible negative effects. If a harpist wants to learn this technique, but has not begun to do so, it will take a considerable amount of time to develop it, allowing one's brain and body a reasonable time to practice, rather than using this technique on a sudden whim during a concert.

The reference to Grandjany's technique comes from his student Ruth Inglefield's book, *Marcel Grandjany*.[36] Grandjany's technique is considered a more relaxed approach to harp playing, generally not encouraging expressive gestures. Instead, he advocates for lowering the elbow, maintaining a flexible wrist, and resting the right arm gently on the soundboard, so that the fingers can move quickly and accurately and can be turned from one position to another with precision. The technical aspect he

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[35] Moore, Bill, and Jane Magrath. 2010. "Playing Your Best When It Counts." *American Music Teacher* 60 (3): 21–25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43549417.

[36] Inglefield, Ruth K. 1977. *Marcel Grandjany*. Washington, D. C.: R. F. Publishing, Inc.

seeks is the development of melodic playing, full sound, and articulate fast passages, which reduces the stress on the brain. Grandjany's requirements for the forearm follow the extension of the joint, which varies depending on the environment; when the wrist is fully resting on the edge of the soundboard, the upper arm needs to be relaxed and the body can be leaned forward to give more freedom to the forearm in a way that avoids producing hard or weak tones. The wrist needs to be kept in a natural position, as it needs to be very relaxed, taking care that it is not bent inwards nor bowed outwards, and the right hand should be gently resting on the soundboard. With the wrist close to the strings, the second, third, and fourth fingers should be pointing toward the chest without too much bending of the little joints, and the ring fingers should be at a uniform level with the bottom of the palm, that is, below the thumb. The tip of the thumb should be angled. The thumb should not be positioned too high on the string. One should stay relaxed while playing– neither the wrist nor the fingers should be tense– but one should save their power until plucking the strings by squeezing the strings with the fingertips and then releasing them. This is not a big movement; that is to say, force comes to be applied to the strings only for a split second, controlling the size and the length of the sound with this pressure, then finish the movement of the wrist lifting up again.

Relaxation is clearly an important factor in managing Music Performance Anxiety. Harpists are likely to create anxiety when they remain tense. When the body is in a relatively relaxed state, it can give the harpist more breathing space. For

example, Grandjany supports the idea that harpists can lean their wrists on the sound board in certain performance situations, which can really maximize the relaxation of the hands for long performances. It is also important to note that if the harpist relaxes the elbows too much, it may affect the speed and flexibility of the movement. When speed and flexibility are affected on stage, music performance anxiety may arise as a result. Even though this is a posture supported by Grandjany, the body is not the same, which can lead to different effects being produced. Therefore, exploring an appropriate angle can help the harpist to face the anxiety of performing music due to the tension in the body.

McDonald provides information on technique and location in her book, *Harp for Today: A Universal Method for the Harp*.[37] McDonald's technique has a lot of flexibility and freedom. For example, with elbows, she disagrees with the use of parallel elbows while also focusing on the shape of the student's arm. She then adjusts the details according to the body structure of each student to keep the technique from becoming heavy. The harpist is asked not to press the wrist against the soundboard, as this would immobilize the muscles, which is vastly different from Grandjany's technique, but not as strict as Salzedo's, which requires a parallel arm position. In terms of the fingers, the second, third and fourth fingers, although they should be angled, should be placed together, just to make sure that the knuckles are straight and

[37] McDonald, Susann, and Linda Wood Rollo. 2008. *Harp for Today: A Universal Method for the Harp*. MusicWorks.

not crowded into each other. The thumb should be away from the strings, and the fingers of the left hand should be more parallel to the strings, with the thumb sticking out less than the thumb of the right hand. It also advocates the use of a lower thumb position rather than fingertips to allow for greater extension. McDonald also highlights the issue of sitting specifically in her book, arguing that the harpist's body should be straight and in an upright position. The right eye should be looking approximately toward the disc of the C string in the first octave. This can be adjusted according to the size of the instrument and the size of the player. Though this is not the same as Salzedo's definition of sitting, they both depend on how the harpist feels.

McDonald's technique seems to me to be a highly effective way of combating Music Performance Anxiety; she is looking for a balance rather than extremes. This technique is always flexible, as harpists can adjust the details to their body structure. However, these adjustments require the harpist to already have had extensive training and a general understanding of the technique, as well as the ability to self-execute.

For each approach, technique changes will be needed for specific sound effects and performances. As a result, playing techniques will appear to be different for various players. The same technique may not be applicable to all harpists. For example, in the case of Salzedo's and McDonald's requirements for seating positions, although the descriptions are not all that similar, when an artist sits down at the harp, they realize that their height requirements are quite similar. Salzedo is more concerned with the overall aesthetics of the player, while McDonald allows for more

flexibility after giving certain limitations. Through exploration of these three common techniques, harpists can integrate or be inspired by them to develop a positive and appropriate technique for dealing with music performance anxiety.

Effective Technique is the Best Weapon Against Music Performance Anxiety

When a harp technique is given a name, it is in recognition of the fact that the harpist who developed it has expanded their influence, and the technique occupies an important and effective place in musical expression. However, careful observation of the technical methodology legacy of harpists shows that the basis for playing the harp was the same. For example, none of them would have applied the pinky finger to the harp. Salzedo specifically mentions in his book that "harpists should not use the fifth finger to play the harp"[38] For pedal harp, they are sitting on a bench and playing with the harp resting on the right shoulder and knee, cradled in their arms, and there is no advocacy for standing and playing pedal harp or playing with the harp resting on the left shoulder. Except when playing special acoustics, such as p.d.l.t. (près de la table),[39] other playing requirements are to play the middle of the string rather than very close to the top or bottom, which is needed for sound effects as well as to make sure that the harpists is able to play at the desired speed and that the performance of the music is not affected by improper hand positions. The use of the parts of the

[38] Lawrence, Lucile, and Carlos Salzedo. 1929. *Method for the Harp*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. p.4

[39] Hugill, Andrew. 2015. "The Orchestra: A User's Manual - Harp Hand Techniques." https://andrewhugill.com/OrchestraManual/harp_techniques.html.

fingers is also mentioned, as they ask harpists to use the side of the fingertips to pluck the strings instead of the first knuckle or the fingernail. The nails are short and clean, thus not causing noise. These technical requirements consist of the basics of playing the harp, simply defined as the knowledge that the harpist is ready to play.

However, there are more detailed technical conditions, for which every harpist will have their own solutions. As Salzedo advocates keeping each hand's thumb up constantly, pressing it against the side of the index finger when playing and then returning it to the upright position. He believes that this way of playing can affect a better sound; however, Grandjany's understanding of the thumb is extremely different, as he pursues a natural state of using it without forcing it to press against the index finger, but just keeping it relaxed after playing. He believes that this way of playing is easier and liberating, without too much movement. However, for harpists, the way that they improve technique is from a teacher. If they don't have the resources to find a teacher, they may learn by imitating a video or by imitating an image. If the harpist learns with the guidance of an instructor, then the harpist's mastery of technique is governed by the teacher, often because the technique is similar to the teacher's playing. If the harpist learns by imitation, then the harpist follows technique as shown in the picture or the video. Regardless, is the technique suitable for different harpists' thumbs? Hands are different sizes, fingers have different lengths and thickness, and flexibility of joints differs, which is the reason for not limiting your hand to just one tradition. One should try different suggestions and methods; more importantly, if it

works well for the harpist's hands, using a technique that works better for the harpist will be more likely to reduce the effects of MPA.

Another area where habits vary is in the harpist's feet. In videos and concerts of various harp performances, careful observation shows that some harpists leave their feet on the pedals they just used, some return their feet to the floor after pedaling, while others return them to a certain pedal to keep their legs comfortable. In Salzedo's book, he highlights the fact that the foot should return to the floor after changing pedals.[40] This habit can help the harpist to avoid stepping on the wrong pedal by keeping the movement to each pedal consistent. I generally agree with this theory but do not always follow it, since in some cases the pedals are complex, and the timing sometimes causes me to forget to go back to the ground. If I suddenly remember that I need to put my foot back on the ground during a concert, I will do it. But if I remember to put my foot down, then the next step is that I will forget which pedal I am targeting.

[40] L.awrence, Lucile, and Carlos Salzedo. 1929. *Method for the Harp*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. p.2-3

Closely related to the harpist's feet are pedal charts, which are commonly available as follows:

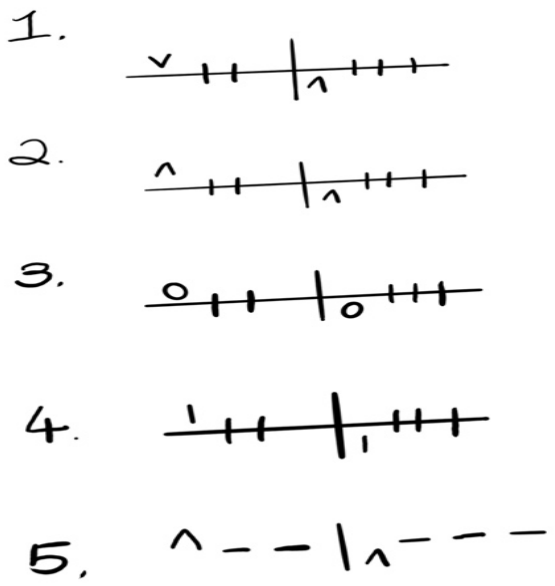

Fig 3. Pedal Chart

They convey the same meaning but take on different forms. When our visualization is accustomed to a particular one the mind follows that habit, and sudden changes may affect the brain's response. Therefore, developing one's preferred habit can help the harpist to have more secure control between the pedals and the feet. Placement of the feet is contentious; selecting the position that is most comfortable for the harpist and making it a habit will be more helpful.

For the arms, Renié believes that they should be flexible in position and cannot be kept raised or tightened all the time, depending on the placement of the harpist's

wrist.[41] This position brings more relaxation to the arm and facilitates rapid movement on the strings when the arm is raised. It does not cause the wrist and hand to be pressed against the instrument in an upright position due to arm clenching; the arm can be lowered when it is necessary to place the right wrist on the soundboard without burdening the harpist's wrist in the opposite direction. The legs are treated in the same way as the arms, as in normal playing conditions our legs are naturally spread apart. When there is a big move, however, it is necessary to merge them slightly to give some support to the harp and to keep the instrument stable in case of excess vibration. It is reasonable to determine the position in which we need to play before changing the position of the arm and leg.

In other words, the harpist has the right to choose the technique that is most comfortable for them without changing the principles of playing. By choosing the technique that is most comfortable for them, harpists can avoid excessive fatigue during long practice sessions and concerts. They can find the most suitable angle from which they can see their hands and the score clearly and without uncomfortably tilting their head. It is important to learn about the various techniques and try them out before deciding what is best for one’s individual situation. It is worth being aware that this is not to imply that harpists are free to do as they please; rather they should choose a technique that suits them and make sure that it is effective. When harpists

[41] Renié, Henriette. 1966. *Complete Method for Harp*. Translated by Geraldine Ruegg. Paris: Alphonse Leduc.

feel confident in their technique and are not overworked, they can greatly reduce the tension and anxiety associated with unsure or uncomfortable technique.

How to Test the Effectiveness of Techniques

Considering the diversity of techniques, there are an increasing number of choices, so choosing the appropriate technique for a harpist also involves testing whether the technique is helpful to both the music and the harpist. The way to test if a technique works is to experiment with it while playing music; the musical effect will tell the performer what works best.

For example, the famous French harpist Xavier de Maistre possesses a high level of skill and a rich, full-bodied sound; he is highly regarded in the harp world. When watching him perform or record, one will notice a distinct downward flinging motion of his left hand. That is, his left hand leaves the instrument completely after playing then flings out naturally downward before returning to the strings. If a harpist wants to experiment with the suitability of this movement, they can try this practice at tempo, which requires time to complete as the movement has a strong expressive character, while the metronome will tell the harpist whether they can control the amount of time available in relation to the music.

Playing an arpeggiated major chord is very common in harp performances, as it helps the harp to express a warm, gentle, and rich sound. The size of a harpist's hand determines the fingering and playing method they need, and whether they need to roll

or pluck the chord, using careful listening to the sound to identify if the technique is working well. For example, when rolling the chord, the harpist has two finger choices in a three-note chord: 1-2-4 and 1-3-4. By comparing which fingers can play the chord evenly and cleanly, the choice should be easily identifiable. In the case of a four-note chord, inevitably all four fingers are used. If the choice is limited because the harpist has short fingers, one may separate the group of dour and have the choice of placing one or two fingers on the string first, then the remaining two or three fingers. Similarly, the cleanliness of the sound will enable us to find out which technique is more effective.

In regard to Salzedo's thumb versus Grandjany's thumb, Salzedo desires the thumb to be always held upright, except for the motion of pressing up on the side of the forefinger when playing. At other times, the forefinger is basically not to be touched. Grandjany refuses to hold the thumb upright, completely relaxing it when it is not in use, and riding on the forefinger is allowed. In general, students will be asked to use one of these as instructed by the teacher as a part of their own training. To make a choice independently could represent a rebellion against the teacher's direction. Whether the fingers are tense and whether the sound is more penetrating is a very subjective judgment. In this situation, some external reference is needed. A musician can use a camera to record a video of the performance. From the video, one can see whether upright or relaxed fingers in the harpist's hand action causes trouble. Since the difference in sound effect between the two methods may not be obvious, a player

may be less sensitive to the sound because of the proximity of the harp. The soundtrack of a video recording can help the musician perceive the performance from a third person point of view.

Other techniques also can be tested using this method. In foot and leg technique, a mirror will be helpful to the harpist for visual reference. Using the palm of the hand for a large muffle or the backs of the fingers for a quick stop when playing short notes can be chosen when needed, etc. All techniques need to be tested for validity, which refers not to the technique itself, but to the effect it has on different harpists. After testing the effectiveness of techniques, harpists can select those that are efficient for them. By using techniques that are effective for them, harpists can add to the probability of mitigating the effects of music performance anxiety in their work.

The Importance of Daily Practice

There is a familiar quip related to music called 'practice makes perfect', which from my personal perspective needs to be supplemented with other conditions: seriousness, efficiency, concentration, enjoyment, etc. I have seen a lot of interesting practice activity while walking through the practice rooms: there are some who are communicating on their phones, some who are listening to a novel or watching a TV show while practicing, others who are playing wrong rhythms repeatedly, and those who are running a whole piece repeatedly. Inefficiency or a lack of concentration while practicing is also found among harpists. Duke et al. have shown in their tests with 17 graduate and pre-advanced undergraduate pianists that even though these

musicians are already competent pianists, they still engage in unhelpful repetition. They also believe that because the next time they play a piece without making a mistake, it means they have practiced well. After the test, the authors concluded that the strategies used in practicing determine the success of their test performance more than how much or how long they practice.[42] This is a very positive example of the need for strategy in practicing. When faced with this kind of practice, it is necessary to consider: 'Is this practice? Yes, but does it help? Creating a plan for daily practice helps to realize 'practice makes perfect' with certain conditions attached.

First, musicians should put down their phones. Music Performance Anxiety may arise through comparisons of oneself to other performers, expecting perfection over any other performance that can be seen on a phone. Practice under any circumstances should not be interfered with by outside factors. This does not mean that practice will be boring, but when it comes to planned practice time, one should not engage with phones, especially if one's self-control is low. This age of information networks has given users a lot of interesting things to view in applications on the phone: TikTok, Instagram, WeChat, etc. can easily distract a person. Playing on a phone is painless and easier than practicing as it doesn't require a brain running at high speeds; however, according to Wacks and Weinstein's investigation into the effects of smartphones on the health of young adults, excessive use of smartphones has been

[42] Duke, Robert A., Amy L. Simmons, and Carla Davis Cash. 2009. "It's Not How Much; It's How: Characteristics of Practice Behavior and Retention of Performance Skills." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56 (4): 310–21. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40204936.

linked to difficulties in cognitive-emotional regulation, impulsivity, impaired cognitive functioning, addiction to social networks, shyness, and low self-esteem. Medical issues include sleep problems, decreased physical fitness, unhealthy eating habits, pain, migraines, decreased cognitive control, and changes in the volume of gray matter in the brain.[43] When harpists are confronted with these negative influences, Music Performance Anxiety can easily arise because of their own mental and emotional negativity. As harpists practice sitting down, setting a schedule for practice sessions as well as time for relaxation is a healthy behavior, including leaving the bench every thirty minutes for a break. Depending on the day's practice, leaving the bench every hour can also be acceptable, but continuous sitting slows the blood circulation and puts more strain on the back. According to Chin and other researchers, being sedentary increases health risks and can lead to an increased probability of cardiovascular disease.[44] If one wants to continue playing the harp in the future, staying physically healthy is one of the most important things for combating music performance anxiety.

Once a plan has been made for the day's practice, it is time to warm up. The importance of the warmup session is to give the harpist's fingers and body time to

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[43] Wacks, Yehuda, and Aviv M. Weinstein. 2021. "Excessive Smartphone Use Is Associated with Health Problems in Adolescents and Young Adults." *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 12 (12): 669042. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.669042.

[44] Chin, Shao-Hua, Chanaka Kahathuduwa, and Martin Binks. 2017. "Is Sedentary Behaviour Unhealthy and If So, Does Reducing It Improve This?" *International Journal of Clinical Practice* 71 (2): e12925. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcp.12925.

wake up. The brain may be ready, but the body and hands may not be ready. Practicing straight through without warming up does not necessarily cause damage, but it can make your practice awkward. A harpist may not have the ability to run the fingers together while practicing across. This refers to practicing scales with both hands at the same time, requiring connection of the four (eight) fingers. The sound can also become dry and tense during practice because of a lack of warmup. Planning a 10-15 minute warmup will activate the ability to follow through with practice. McDonald, Renié, and Salzedo all offer finger-specific warmup programs in their books. The point of a warmup is to help the harpist master control of the body and the instrument in the moment. According to Linklater's research, warmups are more than just a formality; they help the musician establish a connection with the music.[45]

One should practice slowly and systematically. Although advanced-level harpists have the ability to sightread and they can pick up new music with ease, sightreading is not the same as practicing. Looking at the score and playing it once only means that a musician has played it once. There may be little meaning to practicing it, unless the purpose is to practice sightreading which is an equally important skill for harpists. Especially when faced with fast repertoire, the harpist's fingers can muddle through, but the resulting tonal effects, rhythmic accuracy, etc. may be unsatisfactory. For example, when the tempo of a piece is 140, slow practice does not require the harpist to start at 40 or 50, but at any suitable tempo, after ensuring that the tempo of the

[45] Linklater, Fraser. 1995. "Instrumental Warm-Ups to Improve Skills." *Music Educators Journal* 82 (3): 31–34. https://doi.org/10.2307/3398898.

moment is stable, clean, and clear. With systematic stabilization practice, both rhythmic accuracy and sound effects can be more firmly in the harpist's hands, reducing doubts or lack of confidence about instability, thus counteracting the anxiety that can be caused by self-judgment.

There is an interesting phenomenon in daily practice: when playing a whole piece, what should you do if you make a mistake in the middle of the piece? Go back to the beginning? Stop where we are and fix the mistake? Ignore the mistake and keep playing? I will say that nothing is wrong, but depending on what goal is set for you in this part of the practice session, the musician might ask the purpose of running through the piece in its entirety. The musician might address detailed errors in the piece. From my perspective, always going back to the beginning is an unwise behavior; it can help the harpist to become more and more familiar with the beginning section, but to lose confidence in the section causing issues and to waste time. This is probably the biggest problem with repetition. The essential purpose of daily practice is repetition and problem solving. Repetition helps the harpist to improve proficiency and fluency, and problem solving helps the music to be more accurate. Repeating from the beginning without problem solving may just teach the mistake and give the brain the wrong feedback.

Practicing can be free and joyful, within an independent and secure environment, free to experiment with any method, technique, speed, etc., but one element requires certain limits: fingering. The requirement for fingering is for a composed piece and

not for an improvised piece. This is an extremely important point for harpists. One should avoid using freedom in fingering, and when a fingering is determined to be appropriate and effective for you, always keep it. Improvised fingering changes will reduce the effectiveness of your practice routine. One should not just trust the brain and mark the fingering on the score. Consistent practice of effective and useful fingerings allows the harpist's brain and body to memorize the fingerings to prevent MPA that may result from sudden changes in fingering and resulting tension and uncertainty.

Always checking the score can be helpful for harpists to make sure that we are memorizing it correctly, even if it has long since been memorized. Especially for the advanced harpist, there is a lot of music stored in the brain, and it is important to guard against the brain accepting false memories due to inertia. Some examples could include a wrong chord, inverted musical notation, or rhythmic instability. In my personal experience, I may not notice these mistakes in my daily practice, but the surprising thing is that when I perform on stage my brain tells me very clearly "you're playing it wrong" and it makes me feel very nervous and overwhelmed. Therefore, in order to avoid accidents that can cause performers to feel nervous and anxious on stage, always returning to the score during daily practice can help harpists feel more confident in memorizing a piece.

Besides these noteworthy factors, harpists can also customize a detailed daily practice plan to increase their practice efficiency, help self-efficacy, and help reduce MPA caused by practicing.

Learn to Relax Your Mind and Body

When faced with stage fright or music performance anxiety, the commonly heard words of encouragement are: 'relax', 'breathe', 'you got this', etc. from teachers, friends, and family. These are meant as positive and encouraging comments for the performer, possibly relieving some of the backstage tension, but they are short-lived and temporary. Encouragement and help from external sources are important for musicians; however, developing a long-term relaxation approach to combat anxiety is worth considering. Therefore, learning to relax daily can have a significant effect on anxiety. What we need to understand before learning to relax is why we need to learn to relax and what relaxation is. There is some confusion about what relaxation is: does not being tense equal relaxation? Does muscle flaccidity equal relaxation? Or is brain dullness the same as relaxation? These are not definitively wrong or right, but they are one-sided or paradoxical. In “What Relaxation Means for Musicians,” Agnes Wan analyzes what comprehensive relaxation is from several perspectives including muscle manifestation, body awareness, balanced posture, effective breathing, emotional state, and movement efficiency, rather than defining relaxation simply as

the absence of tension.[46] Relaxation does not require the performer's muscles to be in a freewheeling state, which can cause the fingers, arms, etc., to lose coordination and become weak. Conscious attention should instead be paid to relaxing muscle tension that does not contribute to the performance, such as clenched teeth, which can cause the facial muscles to tense up persistently, and to forgetting to breathe well. With certain actions, there may need to be some exaggeration of the performer's movements on stage. Those movements, however, should still be kept to what is necessary, or what is brought from the music, rather than consciously and intentionally over-exaggerated. Consciousness is an important factor in helping musicians learn to relax mentally and physically. When harpists realize that some of their tension, breathing, and movements are abnormal, they can modify this.

There are many ways for learning to relax mentally and physically. Yoga, running, cycling, swimming, abdominal breathing exercises, listening to music, meeting with a therapist, talking to your own brain, etc. will all have some positive impact, but finding what works best for you can yield twice the results with half the effort. The U.S. Health and Human Services Department's book describes the role and effectiveness of breathing, seeing a physical therapist, yoga, exercise, etc., as relaxation techniques, as well as demonstrating many more methods for calming

[46] Wan, Agnes. 2016. “What Relaxation Means for Musicians.” *American Music Teacher* 65 (6): 8–11. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26385977.

anxiety.[47] Harpists can practice any of these modalities. For me personally, self-talk calms me down quickly, whereas after practicing yoga for a while, I found it less relaxing than anaerobic exercise. To achieve the desired results will require time and serious practice. Because of the time and persistence required, one should not place additional pressure on oneself by expecting immediate change.

Help from 'The Mysterious Forces of China'

As a performer who has been plagued by music performance anxiety for years, I have never stopped looking for solutions to combat it. When I didn't have any idea about MPA, I just thought I had stage fright, was nervous and felt some shame that I had been in the performance field for more than a decade and still couldn't present a perfect concert, which seemed like a huge failure. Support from my parents and help from my teachers did help me calm down briefly, but at the same time I realized that I was surrounded by teachers who were suppressing my motivation and self-confidence. I realized that I couldn't change them so I could only try to change myself. The first time I felt the potential of Chinese medicine was when I met an old Chinese medicine practitioner. Just after feeling my pulse, he told me, "Kid, you are thinking too much, the blood and Qi in your body are not smooth." While I was still in a daze, he pressed my wrist and quickly inserted a small needle in a specific place. I did not feel any pain, just a little bit sore. When I did not react, he withdrew the

[47] Office of Public Health and Science, Health and Human Services Department. "Relaxation Techniques for Health: An Introduction." Www.govinfo.gov. July 31, 2011. https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-HE20-PURL-gpo29569.

needle and asked me to take two breaths. Miraculously, I seemed to be able to breathe deep into my lungs instead of getting stuck above my chest. Because these methods cover such a wide range of topics, to explain these approaches, I need to explain some of the relevant background to make it easier to understand.

There is an old saying in China that "Chinese culture is vast and profound", and people who want to test whether the legacy left by their ancestors over the past 5,000 years is true or valid need to conduct thorough research. However, due to the vast amount of cultural heritage and the inability to explore and research it all, many aspects have been put on hold for a period. The result is that some information passed down from generations or by oral tradition is considered dross or superstition.

In modern China, citizens are called upon to believe in science and to reject feudal superstitions, but the *ZhouYi*, as a book on divination, is recognized as important by the state– not only because it combines the wisdom of Fuxi[48], Emperor Wen of Zhou Dynasty[49], and Confucius[50], but also because it encompasses an entire system for a society to function.[51] For example, it provides a code of conduct for

[48] Wen, YiDuo, and ZhaoYuan Tian. 2006. *伏羲考 Fu Xi Kao*. Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.

[49] Editorial Department, China Federation of Literature and Art Publishers. 2014. *周文王 Zhou Wen Wang*. China Federation of Literature and Art Publishers (CFLP).

[50] Inoue, Yasushi, Yong Bao, and Huaiqiu Lin. 2002. *孔子 / Kongzi*. 人民文学出版社, Beijing Shi: Ren Min Wen Xue Chu Ban She.

[51] Zhang, ShanWen, and HuiSheng Fu, trans. 2008. *周易 ZhouYi*. 1st ed. Vol. 2. Hunan: 湖南人民出版社.

people, serves as a philosophical text for governing the country, incorporates economic ideas and social development, etc. In addition to these macroscopic subjects, the finer details include astronomy, geography, tonality, art of war, arithmetic, etc. Tonality as referred to in this context is musical, which is explained in the two trigrams of *ZhouYi* as seen in Figure 3,

Fig. 4, Kun Up and Zhen Down

which explains the role of emotions and in the 'Xiang', which demonstrates the relationship between sound and image. This is the earliest concept of music therapy in Chinese history, where the relationship between the five physical organs and the five elements as well as the pentatonic sounds of phonemes are used to assist in the control and relaxation of the human body and brain. A representative example of the concept of 'Xiang' in Western music is composer John Cage's *4'33".* His composition was influenced by *ZhouYi*, demonstrating Cage's philosophical view of music, where

the essential element of music is not playing but listening.[52] A more detailed explanation of the corresponding behaviors is given in the *黄帝内经 Huang Di Nei Jing* (Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine). This book states that the five tones 'Gong Shang Jue Zhi Yu' correspond to the five elements of 'gold, wood, water, fire and earth', which in turn correspond to the internal organs of the human body: heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys.[53] Gong (Do), which belongs to earth and is related to the spleen, has the characteristic of solemnity and magnanimity, and symbolizes the long summer, which is the fifth of the four seasons of the year, after the summer and before the autumn; Shang (Re), which belongs to gold and is related to the lungs, has the characteristic of soaring and melancholy, and symbolizes the autumn; Jue (Mi), which belongs to wood and is related to the liver, symbolizes the spring, and has the characteristic of refreshing and smoothness; Zhi (Sol), which belongs to fire and is related to the heart, symbolizes the summer, and has the characteristic of joy and enthusiasm; Yu (La), which belongs to water and is related to the kidneys, symbolizes the winter, and has the characteristic of bleakness and sadness.

This traditional Chinese culture has given more images and definitions to music. Depending on the environment and instrumentation, music is no longer singular but a

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[52] Cage, John, Michael Kirby, and Richard Schechner. 1965. “An Interview with John Cage.” *The Tulane Drama Review* 10 (2): 50. https://doi.org/10.2307/1125231.

[53] Zhang, DengBen. 2000. *Bai Hua Tong Jie Huangdi Nei Jing 白话通解黄帝内经 [A vernacular interpretation of the Huangdi Neijing]*.1st ed. Vol. 5. Xian: 世界图书出版公司.

combination of all five elements. As music is recognized as a tool against anxiety, it would be a worthwhile endeavor to help musicians affected by music performance anxiety to relax spiritually and physically through the use of music influenced by Chinese philosophy and medicine.

Spiritual Relaxation

The most famous psychological relaxation from Chinese philosophy is known as '*无为 Wu Wei*', proposed by the famous Chinese Taoist figure '*老子 Lao Zi*' (Li Er). It refers to the realm of "doing nothing without doing anything", i.e., conforming to the natural law of change and keeping things in their natural state.[54] Wu Wei is a significant and difficult balancing act; when one spontaneously tries or does "Wei" the probability of failure is greater. In his study of Eastern philosophy, Edward Slingerland notes that musicians are in great shape when they are in a state of "Wu Wei," but that this state is not easy to achieve, and he argues that attempting to reach this state is often a one-way ticket to failure.[55] It is a bit of a paradoxical theory, the idea of wanting this state but not trying to get into it, because once we try, it's not spontaneous anymore. 'Wu Wei', as the foundation of Chinese spiritual philosophy, guides how to try to relax the spirit on the principle of not trying. The principle of the Five Elements is to follow the balance and development of nature, so the integration

[54] Laozi. 老子, Yang Chen, and Yu. 2017. *道德经全集 / Dao De Jing Quan Ji*. 天地出版社, Chengdou: Tian Di Chu Ban She.

[55] Slingerland, Edward. 2014. *Trying Not to Try*. Crown/Archetype.

of 'Wu Wei' thinking and behavior with the Five Elements can be more effective in preventing the effects of anxiety on the mind.

While previously explaining the relationship of the Five Elements to the internal organs and to music, how the Five Elements can be used to help musicians reduce music performance anxiety needs to be linked to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). More than 2,000 years ago, the classic work of Chinese medicine, the *Huang Di Nei Jing* (Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine), put forward the theory of five tones for curing diseases, which provided ancient Chinese medicine practitioners with a treatment method that did not require acupuncture and Chinese herbs.[56] As the saying goes, 'When a song is finished, the disease is gone, and the person is at peace'. The "*左传 Zuo Zhuan*" also mentioned that music, like medicine, has a flavor and can prevent people from getting sick. The ancient imperial court, equipped with bands and singers, is not simply for entertainment; music there has an important role in cultivating the body and mind to achieve the expansion of the spirit in quietness and temperament.[57]

According to this philosophy, each person's five elements are present at birth and rarely are they perfectly balanced. In addition to one's signature attribute, one should also have four other attributes, although not exactly in even amounts. Some people

[56] Zhang, DengBen. 2000. *Bai Hua Tong Jie Huangdi Nei Jing 白话通解黄帝内经 [A vernacular interpretation of the Huangdi Neijing]*.1st ed. Vol. 5. Xian: 世界图书出版公司.

[57] Jiang, JiCheng, and BoJun Yang. 1988. *左传/ Zuo Zhuan*. 1st edition. Changsha: Yuelu Shu She.

are going to be missing a particular attribute. When the Five Elements of the human body are not balanced, the physical and emotional problems that manifest themselves vary according to the individual, such as worry, fear, pleasure, sadness and so on. Since the operation of the Five Elements is a huge topic, the focus here will be on three attributes that are beneficial in improving musicians' spirits. The emotions musicians experience when anxious about musical performances tend to be worry (corresponding to Gold), fear (corresponding to Water), and overthinking (corresponding to Earth).

Worry is one of the emotions that manifests itself in music performance anxiety. If the emotion that the musician is dealing with is worry, then what needs to be considered is whether they have too much ‘Gold’ in themselves, which can lead to people thinking extremely badly about things and thus creating anxiety. According to the Five Elements' Compatibility Method, the optimistic nature of Fire can remind oneself that things are not so bad. The benevolent nature of Wood can reduce the habit of thinking in self-centered ways, which can also alleviate anxiety. Since fire corresponds to the Zhi sound and wood corresponds to Jue, listening to music that contains Zhi and Jue sounds can help us to revitalize our spirits and soothe our hearts, which feels like a bath for our lungs to comprehensively clean out the dirty exhaust. Representative works include "Moonlit Night of Spring River Flowers" in the mode of Jue and "Hundred Birds Toward the Phoenix" in the mode of Zhi.

Performers who are faced with fear need to consider that it not only affects emotional changes but also harms the body, therefore if we are faced with fear, we need to pay more attention to it. The water attribute is countered by the earth and fire attributes; earth can be used to find the source of a problem by thinking deeply about the nature of the problem and either eliminating it or re-examining one's perception of the problem. Fire can also be helpful, as optimism and positivity are excellent ways to overcome natural behaviors. The music in these two modes, Gong, representing earth, and Zhi, representing fire, is used to combat fear, harmonize the breath, and soothe the mind, and help relax the player's spirit. Typical compositions include "Ambush on All Sides" in Gong mode and "Full Moon" in Zhi mode.

When musicians' thought process is in overdrive it can harm the spleen, causing them to become easily angered and unable to control their temper, which can cause anxiety in the performers. The earth attribute holds our spleen, and to combat this we need to use the principles of wood begetting earth and earth subduing gold to help us find a balance and drain our temper. Wood corresponds to the Jue sound, and the representative work "Gusu Xing" can relieve depression; gold corresponds to the Shang sound, the representative work "Gao Shan Liu Shui" also nourishes the heart and spirit.

In addition to being documented in Chinese history books, Five Elements Sound Therapy and Acupuncture have also been tried among Australian nurses during the COVID-19 epidemic to reduce anxiety and depression. According to Carol Chunfeng

Wang and other researchers. Five Elements Sound Therapy can treat different mood disorders. These two non-pharmacological interventions have been shown to provide value in reducing the burden of mental health difficulties and are safe, sustainable therapies as a complementary modality based on a randomized trial of 36 nurses.[58] According to Evan and Jeffrey Huang, in ten surveys and studies on the effects of Five Elements Sound Therapy on pain and anxiety in 474 patients, nine surveys showed significant reductions in these indicators, proving that Five Elements Music Therapy is effective in relieving anxiety and stress.[59]

Traditional Chinese Medicine is all about treating the symptoms, summarized in the proverb, “One man's meat is another man's poison.” Therefore, the first task for those who want to use the Five Elements Sound Therapy is to determine their own status. Another aspect worth noting is that musicians may not be in the mood to listen to other music before a performance. It is useful to develop a daily habit of taking care of the spirit. That said, those willing to try Five Elements Sound Therapy may need to be patient and accommodating to the length of time it takes. There is a

[58] Wang, Carol Chunfeng, Johnny Lo, Rosemary Saunders, Esther Adama, Caroline Bulsara, Christopher Etherton-Beer, and Angela Wei Hong Yang. 2022. “Light Acupuncture and Five-Element Music Therapy for Nurses’ Mental Health and Well-Being during and Post-COVID-19: Protocol for a Randomised Cross-over Feasibility Study.” *BMJ Open* 12 (4): e057106. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-057106.

[59] Huang, Evan, and Jeffrey Huang. 2023. “Music Therapy: A Noninvasive Treatment to Reduce Anxiety and Pain of Colorectal Cancer Patients– a Systemic Literature Review.” *Medicina* 59 (3): 482. https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina59030482.

disclaimer here that Five Elements Sound Therapy as a traditional treatment is not guaranteed to be effective in reducing anxiety for everyone.

Physical Relaxation

In addition to relaxing the spirit, it is equally important to keep the musician's physical well-being in a reasonable state of working order. The body may not be completely relaxed and free, as it needs to remain active. There are two ways of relaxing the physical body: acupressure and Ba Duan Jin exercises, which are fundamentally different. Acupressure is a fast-acting method that musicians can use to relieve tension in different parts of the body while waiting backstage or during intermission. This is not to say that acupressure can only be used occasionally; it can also be used as part of a daily regimen. The Ba Duan Jin is a complete set of Qigong techniques with a long history, consisting of eight sections, which are divided into Wu Ba Duan and Wen Ba Duan. The martial eight-position standing style, called the Northern School, originated in the Northern Song Dynasty; the name 'Ba Duan Jin' comes from Hong Mai's 'Yi Jian Zhi' of the Northern Song Dynasty.[60] In the Southern Song Dynasty, after Zeng Zao summarized and rearranged the basic techniques in the important book of Chinese Taoism, 'Dao Shu', the basic techniques were shown to be comprehensive and suitable for all groups of people, without the need for special external factors such as equipment and venues.[61]

[60] Hong, Mai. 1997. *Yi Jian Zhi 夷坚志*. Zhong Hua Shu Ju.

[61] Zeng, Zao. 2016. *Dao Shu 道枢*. Central Compilation and Translation Publishing House.

The first task in using acupressure to relieve physical tension that music performance anxiety can cause for a musician is to have some knowledge of one's own body, as acupressure points function differently. While the wrong ones can have a negative effect, even worse than the negative effects, there is an old Chinese saying that Chinese medicine can save as well as kill! Therefore, massaging acupressure points is the limit of what can be attempted by a non-medical professional. You should not attempt to perform acupuncture on yourself. 'TCM Meridian Acupuncture Points' provides explanations of the role of different acupuncture points in the human body and methods of locating them.[62] In addition to using books to learn about the acupuncture points and their effects, participating in a professional course may provide more detailed explanations. In addition to finding evidence of its effectiveness for patients in historical Chinese medical books, acupuncture has also been influential in other regions. According to Matheus and other researchers in the Acupuncture for Anxiety Reduction study, acupuncture not only reduces anxiety, but it also reduces the use of potentially addictive prescription medications and improves the quality of life and performance of daily activities in people facing anxiety.[63]

The first major acupoint of the human body is the BaiHui point, which is the best place to go when the player is feeling unwell or tense, but not sure of the exact nature,

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[62] Hu, JunPing. 2011. *中医经络穴位 Zhong Yi Jing Luo Xue Wei*. 江苏科学技术出版社, Nan Jing: Jiang Su Ke Xue Ji Zhu Chu Ban She.

[63] Matheus, William, Alberto Andrade, and Gyzelle Pereira. 2023. "The Use of Acupuncture to Reduce Anxiety Symptoms." *International Journal of Health Science* 3 (92): 2–11. https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.1593922308115.

be it pain, dizziness, neck tension, etc.

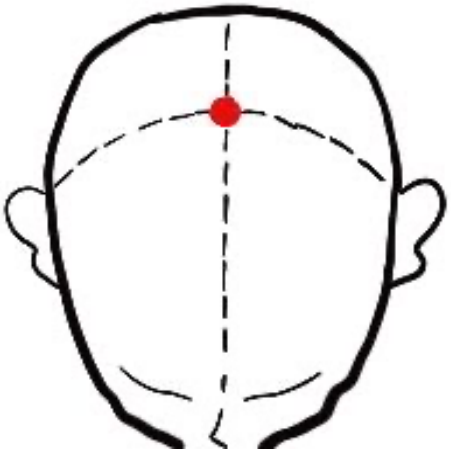

Fig.5, BaiHui Point

The BaiHui point is located in the center of the head, where the meridians converge and control the entire body. Located in the center of the head, the BaiHui point is where the meridians of the body converge and control the entire body. To locate the BaiHui point, go from the tips of the ears upwards and then locate the place where they are connected at the top of the head. As a harpist, tension in my arms and hands disturbs my musical performance and affects technical dexterity in this situation, so rubbing the Shen Men and Nei Guan points would be helpful. These are shown below.

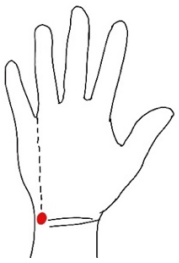

Fig.6, ShenMen Point

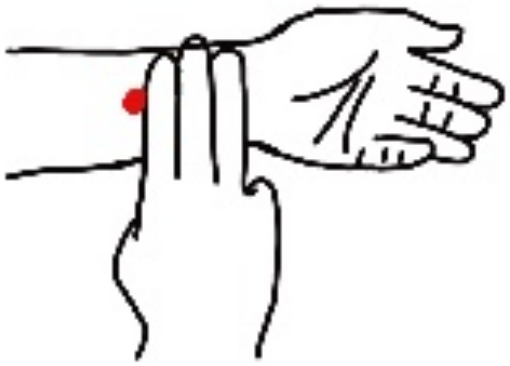

Fig.7, NeiGuan Point

They control the meridians in the arms and can help the player relieve tension quickly. The Shen Men point is on the left side of the palm of the hand where it links to the wrist; the Nei Guan point requires the palm of the hand to be turned upwards, using three fingers of the other hand together to apply pressure where on the first transverse stripe nearest to the wrist-the depression near the index finger is the Nei Guan point. Lastly, the San-Yin-Jiao point, which controls the relaxation of the legs, is essential for pedaling instruments to keep the legs active, as tired or tense legs can cause cramps, weakness, and other issues. Rubbing the San Yin Jiao point to improve blood circulation and clear the meridians can help to alleviate these conditions. To find the

San Yin Jiao point,

Fig.8, SanYinJiao Point

sit in a chair finding the inside of your ankle and place four fingers together, with the little finger on the inside of the ankle and the index finger in the center of the San Yin Jiao point.

As the acupoints control the meridians of the body, perhaps rubbing on these points may cause soreness, or in severe cases, pain. Chinese medicine states that 'if it is cleared, it will not hurt, if it hurts, it will not be cleared.' Nevertheless, it is still important to consider how one feels. In Adrian White and Mike Cummings's research on whether or not acupuncture relieves pain, it was noted that while acupuncture is helpful for pain relief, it is not felt the same way by everyone due to point-to-point

precision and other human factors.[64] This is why older herbalists may feel more trustworthy to patients as their hold on the accuracy of acupuncture points has been honed over the years.

The Fitness Qigong Management Center of China's State General Administration of Sports officially published a study book on Ba Duan Jin in 2018, formally incorporating this traditional Taoist exercise into China's education system. According to this publication, Ba Duan Jin provides a pathway to relaxation for sedentary, fatigued, and stressed people in terms of movement, breathing and intention.[65] Musicians affected by music performance anxiety face the same fatigue and tension in their bodies. This is even more true for instrumentalists, who are sedentary for much longer than the body can tolerate sitting. Incorporating Ba Duan Jin into daily life as a way to preserve the body will help performers to better manage the physical discomforts associated with music performance anxiety. According to Jessie Chan and other researchers on the practice of Ba Duan Jin for the relief of anxiety and fatigue, participants were satisfied with the effects of Ba Duan Jin after three months of intervention. It was found that short-term interventions have a temporary effect but are not lasting, therefore the researchers suggest that 30 minutes of practice per day can have a positive effect on the reduction of anxiety. However, it is worth noting that

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[64] White, Adrian, and Mike Cummings. 2009. "Does Acupuncture Relieve Pain?" *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 338 (7690): 303–4. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20511969.

[65] Yang, BaiLong, and Fitness Qigong Management Center of the State General Administration of Sports (China). 2018. *健身气功 Qigong (Chinese Martial Art)*. People's Sports Publishing House.

depending on one's physical condition, it may cause some limb soreness, therefore the workout needs to be decided according to one's ability.[66]

Ba Duan Jin consists of eight movements, each corresponding to the meridians and internal organs. Through a whole system of exercise, the body will enter deep relaxation while also achieving the effect of protecting the body's health. How to breathe to reduce music performance anxiety is an important point that is often mentioned. The first movement of Ba Duan Jin will be important for the body's lungs, favoring the expansion of the lungs and deepening the breath. According to Moyi Li and other researchers, in a survey of a group of college students, it was shown that Ba Duan Jin effectively helped them improve their cardiorespiratory fitness and endurance, as well as breathing.[67] The fifth movement is the part that I personally find most helpful for physical tension associated with MPA. This movement helps the brain to stay active, strengthens the flow of qi and blood, promotes muscularity, strength, and endurance, and is an important aid in eliminating physical tension and fatigue. From my personal point of view these are very important for harpists, not only to provide relaxation after practicing but also to help the performer's brain to be

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[66] Chan, Jessie S. M., Rainbow T. H. Ho, Ka-fai Chung, Chong-wen Wang, Tzy-jyun Yao, Siu-man Ng, and Cecilia L. W. Chan. 2014. "Qigong Exercise Alleviates Fatigue, Anxiety, and Depressive Symptoms, Improves Sleep Quality, and Shortens Sleep Latency in Persons with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome-like Illness." *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 2014 (1741-427X): 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/106048.

[67] Li, Moyi, Qianying Fang, Junzhe Li, Xin Zheng, Jing Tao, Xinghui Yan, Qiu Lin, et al. 2015. "The Effect of Chinese Traditional Exercise-Baduanjin on Physical and Psychological Well-Being of College Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial." Edited by Maciej Buchowski. *PLOS ONE* 10 (7): e0130544. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0130544.

active and refreshed when needed. The seventh action is for reducing sympathetic tension. Chinese medicine believes that the heart fire is a manifestation of sympathetic nervous tension,[68] and after normal activities, a healthy body may develop sympathetic nervous tension. This should disappear after resting, but if not, it may indicate that it is pathological. Thus, the role of this action is to eliminate abnormal tension.

The physical tension caused by music performance anxiety can negatively impact a musician's health and performance. While TCM acupressure can provide relief in an emergency, Ba Duan Jin can be used to optimize the body's conditioning in the face of physical tension and pain due to prolonged exercise. According to Liye Zou and other researchers in the Physical and Mental Study of Ba Duan Jin, exercise has been shown to be effective in relieving physical tension and may have some positive psychological effects.[69]

Getting to Know Oneself Holistically

Harpists, as performers who use their whole body, need to consider more details than just the musical aspects of performance. Self-awareness is of paramount

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[68] Huang, YuanYu. 2011. *Si Sheng Xin Yuan 四圣心源*. People's Military Medical Press.

[69] Zou, Liye, Albert Yeung, Xinfeng Quan, Stanley Sai-Chuen Hui, Xiaoyue Hu, Jessie S. M. Chan, Chaoyi Wang, Sean David Boyden, Li Sun, and Huiru Wang. 2018. "Mindfulness-Based Baduanjin Exercise for Depression and Anxiety in People with Physical or Mental Illnesses: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15 (2): 321. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15020321.

importance. Regardless of the type of technique chosen, the selection of instructor, the option of exercise and relaxation techniques, etc., the first goal is to identify what the musician needs. Reducing music performance anxiety is a relatively personal thing, as emphasized before. What works for other people does not always work well for an individual.

When using Zhou Yi's knowledge of the Five Elements to relax the spirit, it is understood that each person's Five Elements attributes are innate and unique. The determination of an individual's Five Elements needs to be calculated precisely in terms of years, months, days, minutes, and seconds. If the method is used blindly without sufficient knowledge of one's personal Five Elements distribution, it may have the opposite effect. The Chinese medical work "*伤寒论 Shang Han Lun*," points out the important influence on the human body in the case of mutual restraint of[70] Choosing the wrong Five Element attribute may not reduce the spiritual tension associated with music performance anxiety and may add to the spiritual burden due to Five Element opposites. In Liao's and other researchers' studies on music therapy, it was pointed out that the Five Element system is unique, and it requires recognizing the corresponding body organs before using it to produce a positive effect. Since[71] In

[70] Li, Saimei. 2012. *伤寒论 Shang Han Lun*. 中国医药科技出版社, Beijing: Zhong Guo Yi Yao Ke Ji Chu Ban She.

[71] Liao, J, Papathanassoglou E, Zhang X, Li QN, Gupta A, Lu F, Wu Y, and Frishkopf M. 2022. "A Cross-Cultural Randomized Pilot Trial of Western-Based and Five Elements Music Therapy for Psychological Well-Being." *EXPLORE* 19(4) (1550-8307): 571–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2022.11.001.

both Chinese philosophy and the Alexander Technique, there is the same opinion about the comprehensive knowledge of one's own body.

Research that applies Alexander Technique to harp performance and pedagogy demonstrates that preventing performance mistakes is not a matter of simply relaxing, but a matter of attention balanced with a sense of freedom.[72] Alexander's loss of voice during a performance prompted him to invent his technique. He observed his own movement patterns to find the issue, urging the importance of observing one's own body. He believed that 'relaxation' was not just a matter of saying the word to make the student feel relaxed, but rather, it is a matter of creating an environment that is truly relaxing for the student. This practice leads to unconscious habituation to the 'right consciousness'. Based on the use and tenor of the Alexander Technique, the emphasis on maximizing the effectiveness of the technique in helping with music performance anxiety is based on understanding and observing the physical, emotional, and mental activities of both the performer and the instructor.

It is common for musicians to choose different forms of exercise to help them deal with the physical tension that comes with the MPA, although the choice of appropriate type and form of exercise requires the player to have a thorough knowledge of their own. For example, Tai Chi, an extremely well-known form of

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[72] American Harp Society. 2020. “Applying the Alexander Technique to Modern Pedal Harp Performance and Pedagogy: A Discussion with Imogen Barford and Marie Leenhardt.” Edited by Emily Laurance. American Harp Society. The American E Harp Journal. 2020. https://www.harpsociety.org/harp-journal.

exercise in China, not only promotes the skillful activity of the internal organs, it also improves breathing patterns, helps people concentrate, finds balance, relaxes body tension and regulates the work of the central nervous system.[73] However, due to the difficulty and specificity of some of the movements, it is not entirely suitable for everyone; not everyone has sufficient core strength to squat on one foot while keeping the other leg straight forward, for example. The focus of attention in the study of Ba Duan Jin is that it is suitable for people of all ages, genders, heights, and weights, which means that it does not require people to analyze whether the movement is suitable or difficult to perform. However, there is a downside to this, as mild exercises, like mild medications, take time to take effect.

People who face music performance anxiety are not homogenous– each person is special in mind, body, spirit, etc. Their uniqueness means that observing oneself and finding the most appropriate way to cope is a prerequisite for getting more results with less effort.

Possibilities in Concert

As performers, we must be prepared for the uncertainty of situations that we cannot anticipate during a concert. When these situations occur suddenly, harpists who are not experienced enough in performing may panic because they have no way

[73] Xu, ZhiYi. 1958. *Wu Shi Tai Ji Quan 吴式太极拳* . 1st edition. Beijing: People's Sports Press (PRC).

of coping with them. For harpists with strong performance experience, even though they may already be equipped to deal with an emergency, the performance may still suffer somewhat. In either case, the harpist does not deserve to experience this situation. Anticipating and preparing for possible surprises in advance may prevent performances from being negatively affected.

The Role of Light

Light is one of the most perilous things harpists can face in their concerts but can be easily overlooked. The strings of a harp are made up of three colors: C, which is red, F, which is black or blue, and all the other strings are a near-transparent color. It is quite easy to lose sight of the strings when stage lights are shining. In practicing and playing it is not necessary for the harpist to be constantly aware of which strings they are playing, because, in most cases, our hands and arms have already created muscle memory, allowing the hand muscles to take over the control of playing from the brain. Several things do change when the sightline is lost, however: muscle memory can fail, and the brain can receive danger signals that lead to MPA. I now offer a few suggestions to avoid this situation.

First, one should check the color, angle, and intensity of the lights during the dress rehearsal. The performer should select the mode you want and request that the stage manager take notes to ensure that the lighting is what the harpist expects on the day of the concert. Then there is the position of the harp, where the shadow of the light shining down can likewise affect the harpist's vision, especially from behind,

where the shadow can loom over the treble area. When determining where to set the harp, one should not trust one's feelings or memory. One should use gaffer tape to mark the spot on the stage, thus the performer does not have to worry about whether the harp and themselves are in the right place during the concert.

Stage lighting can affect the musician's performance in addition to setting the atmosphere and producing an artistic effect. *The Moldau*, performed by renowned Canadian harpist Valérie Milot, is an excellent example.[74] Warm lights in a circle envelop her, surrounded by small light bulbs, and with the help of the lights, this nationalistic work becomes even richer and fuller. While this effect is loved by musicians, harpists should be aware that if they need to use lighting to support the performance, they should practice this and prepare in advance. Otherwise, a sudden change of environment can negatively affect the quality of the performance.

Additionally, some colored lights may also require the harpist's attention. Different light colors can cause visual confusion about the strings, and in this case MPA is more likely to occur as the harpist loses unobstructed vision of the harp. Thus, one should think ahead of any lighting issues that will be a concern and try to avoid impromptu changes that may trigger MPA.

Having a String Incident

[74] Milot, Valérie. 2012. "B. Smetana: Vltava (Moldau) - Valérie Milot, Harp/Harpe." Www.youtube.com. September 25, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnYCW8eWqQo.

The harp is not a member of the bowed string family, but it does have strings. Wire-wound strings are used in the lowest parts; 00 octave and 1st octave usually use nylon strings, while the rest of the instrument is predominantly gut strings. Although gut strings produce an excellent sound, they are also fragile. They can break due to cold or hot weather, dry or humid air, uneven contact points with the rest of the harp's body, holes on the sound board covered by rough metal, or quality problems in the strings' production. A broken string on stage is not desirable for any harpist. It may cause them anxiety, nervousness, or embarrassment; the music will be interrupted, and replacing strings in front of an audience may not go well for the inexperienced harpist. To increase the musician's perception of safety and prevent anxiety during performance, it is advisable to plan for preparation and inspection.

The first step is to inspect all the strings in advance and not to neglect the lower bass strings; it is true that they seem strong and not prone to breaking, but it would be highly unpleasant if there were any possibility that the harpist would be required to replace the lower strings during a concert. The best way to check a wire wrapped string is to play it and determine from its sound quality whether the string has been aged or contaminated. Dust and oily substances can enter the string through gaps in the wrapping, which may cause a reduction in the resonance of the string, making the sound less bright and prone to breakage. Usually, harpists decide on the maintenance of their harps according to the frequency of playing. It is a good habit to change the lower strings whenever performing maintenance on the harp, both to guarantee the

sound and to hinder the risk of breaking these strings. There are some differences in gut strings as their condition can be seen, suggesting when they may break. Sometimes burrs appear on the string, and these should not be peeled; sometimes they are twisted near the tuning pin or soundboard, and when the twisting is severe, they are getting close to breaking.

After this first check, it is time to prepare things for the concert. The harpist should keep their string bag, tuning key, scissors, and tuner backstage where they can easily get to them if needed. In addition to these essential items, I once heard a professional harpist mention that he carries a red and a black marker in case a C or F string breaks and he forgets to put a replacement string in his string bag, or the replacement string breaks again after it is put on. The markers can be used to temporarily replace the C or F string by coloring the adjacent string. Hopefully, every harpist will not face the unexpected need to patch strings, as that always takes a moment. Below is an image showing what should be done if a string breaks and the performer does not have the correct replaceable strings, despite being prepared.

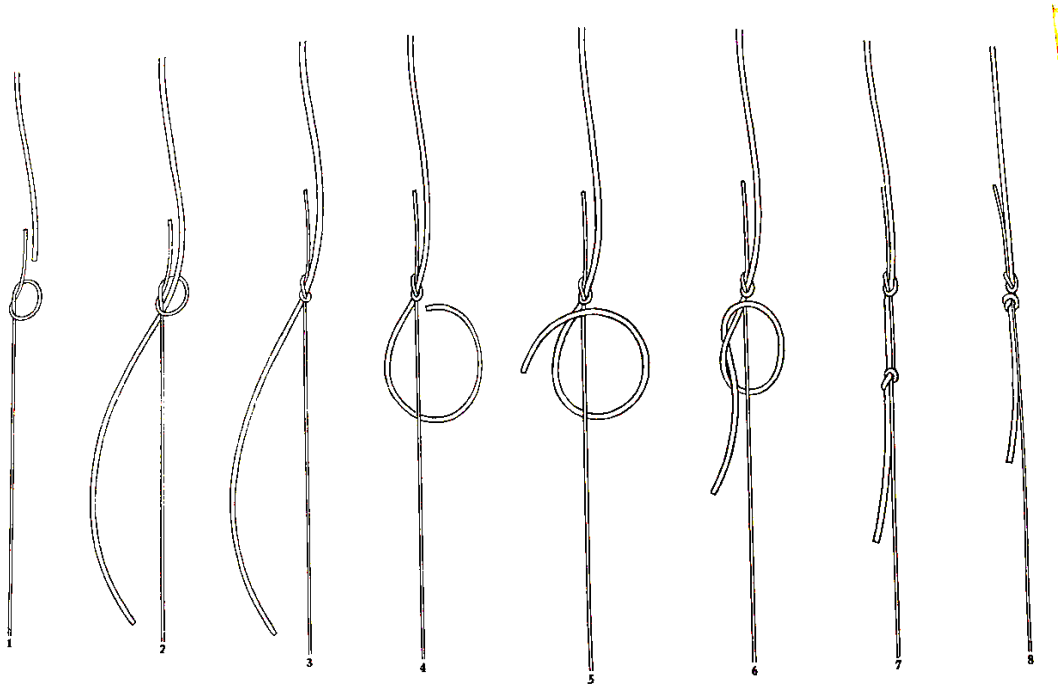

Fig.9, Patch String I

Fig. 10, Patch String II

This is Salzedo's method of demonstrating how to patch strings and suggesting that one clips the ends of the strings after patching to effectively avoid a buzzing sound.[75]

With all these factors considered, there is basically nothing for the harpist to be concerned about. Getting into the right frame of mind is an important part of warding off anxiety, especially if an accident occurs. The inner monologue can come into play in the case of an accident, telling oneself that it's just an experience and not to stress out and not rush. Meanwhile, if the harpist is overly anxious and nervous about changing strings in this environment and is unable to do so, asking the teacher or another student to help with the string change may be an option if possible. Asking for help not only allows the harpist to reduce their anxiety, but it also gives the harpist

[75]Lawrence, Lucile, and Carlos Salzedo. 1929. *Method for the Harp*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc.

time to breathe and calm down as quickly as possible to minimize the disruption for the rest of the performance.

Suddenly Losing One's Memory

The reasons for abrupt memory loss are varied. When it happens during a performance, the harpist should not think about why it happens; the only thing they need to do is get back to the music immediately. The best result in this case would be to just pick up where the memory failure happened without having to repeat the previous measure or section. To exercise this ability, it needs to be put into general practice. One should test the brain in daily practice when memorizing a piece, and then close the score and ask themselves to start from a certain measure on a selected page. This will help the performer to firmly memorize the pedal chart and allow them to start at any part, even if it is not the beginning of the phrase. Another important point to keep in mind is not to let our muscle memory be too free, which can make the harpist's brain relax too much. In their daily practice, harpists are not disturbed by external factors, which is why their muscle memory works very well. One can even practice while doing something else. This does not work in a concert, however, so it is important to get into the routine of always thinking ahead and having the music in the brain. A musician does not just sit down and start playing right away, they give themselves some time before starting a performance. This time could include auditing the music that will be performed. If the memory of the music has still not returned, then one can try an alternate plan.

This alternative does not require the harpist to go right back to where the memory lapse happened, but it can help get the harpist back to the music sooner. In their scores, performers should always have a pedal chart distributed in various places like at the beginning of each section, and not just at the beginning of the piece. Sometimes one can even have a separate pedal chart on each line in more challenging pedal pieces, such as some of J.S. Bach's pieces.

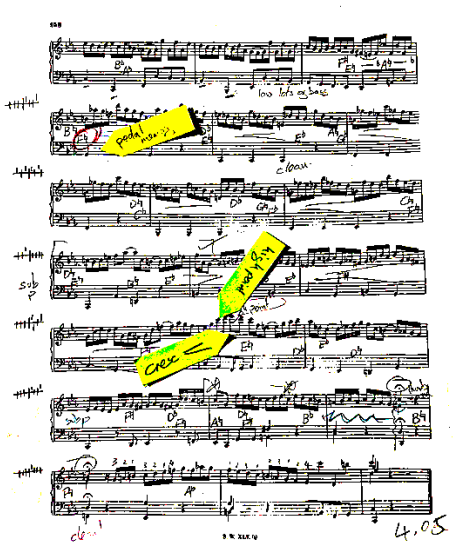

Fig. 11, J.S. Bach excerpt

In addition to using the pedal chart to help the harpist randomize the parts to be practiced during daily practice without having to recheck the pedals from the beginning of the piece, it is also effective in helping the harpist to play from a certain remembered pedal position if one forgets the score at a concert. Usually, the memory will come back to the performer, but if it does not, they should trust their muscles, which have been repeating this music for the past few months or longer, as the

muscles may subconsciously do what they have always done. Besides the pedal issue, fingering will also help. One should make sure that they do not change their fingerings during a concert as such changes will increase the chances of forgetting the score. Losing one's memory on stage can cause MPA, likewise, MPA can cause a player to suddenly lose their memory, as they are closely related. To prevent MPA from occurring, strategic advance preparation can help harpists reduce the likelihood of stress on stage.

Stage Attire Concerns

Performance attire is important for concerts, not only to show the sparkling image of the performer, but also to show the importance given to the concert itself, rather than just taking the stage in casual clothing. Formal and beautiful attire does not make the performer feel as comfortable and free as wearing casual attire– a situation that may contribute to the creation of MPA.

A beautiful pair of shoes could bring splendor to a concert but may also cause some trouble for the harpist. When the harpist is in control of the pedals, they usually keep their heels touching the ground and then they move the angle of the foot to change the pedals. In some complex pedal situations, they will have to lift their foot off the ground to accomplish the pedal change. In this situation, the height of the heel can become a concern for them. Harpists need to practice in their performance shoes in advance of a concert, but there are some issues that cannot be fully resolved by practicing. Trying to move quickly with a heel that is too high can be difficult. Lifting

the leg to meet the demands of pedaling could be nearly impossible; it may also lead to cramping or slowing the required motion. Consequently, testing the height of the heel for use will become a priority. The human body is diverse, so other people's advice may not be suitable for everyone. Verifying the height difference between the harpist and the harp is also important.

The second point is the harpist's dress. Depending on the harp's playing position, performers should not choose a short dress, which is normally to the ankle or even above the ankle in length. Avoid tight dresses or fishtail dresses, which can affect the ability of the legs; also beware of dresses with too long a hemline, which can be perfect for the stage but may cause problems if it wraps around the performer’s legs; in the case of dresses that exceed the ankles, one should be aware of the risk of getting entangled with the heel and getting stuck at the bottom of the pedals, as well as the possibility of slipping if the heel steps on the hemline of the dress.

Sophisticated makeup is also used on stage by harpists, and it makes for pretty pictures and great memories. The small risks associated with wearing makeup, however, are often overlooked by harpists unless they have already been through it. I personally experienced this in a recital. I sprinkled glitter powder around my eyes which really obstructed my vision, especially the bits stuck to my eyelashes. All I could see was a lot of glittery stars as I lifted my eyes to focus on the 1st octave and 2nd octave of the harp. Thinking about any possible negative consequences and trying

out the makeup look which you want is just like testing out whether high heels are comfortable to work in.

Beyond some of these concerns there are other items that can cause minor risks such as fancy jewelry, possible fogging from glasses, etc. Avoiding them, if possible, can prevent accidents, boost confidence, and prevent potentially triggering MPA.

Conclusion

Music has been used as a powerful antidote to anxiety, but it can also be a source of anxiety for musicians. Music performance anxiety, a common problem among musicians, can be detrimental to a musician's mental health. Learning to face up to MPA and protect one's own health can make it possible to minimize or manage MPA. How to balance MPA is something that has been studied and experimented with for quite a while. We do not have the means to eliminate it at this moment, so instead, we need to find a balance. Ideally this balance makes harpists excited and lets them look forward to their performances, instead of being nervous and anxious about them. Experiencing MPA is not a fault, and musicians should not be distracted by guilt if they experience it. One should not be afraid to make mistakes, as we are human beings and not programmed for perfection. There is already enough pressure present in performing, so performers themselves do not need to be adding to that pressure. As a performer, I would say that performing is an enjoyable process and the relationship

with the audience should not be confrontational; the stage and the spotlight are there to accentuate the beauty of the performance.

In this document, based on research on practice, body, and mind, I have demonstrated that there are a variety of ways to work with MPA. Harpists facing MPA should explore understanding themselves to regulate its effects. At the same time, what is proposed here is not a turnkey approach; it requires the musician to design a program based on their own situation. The depth of Eastern philosophy and medicine comes from a long history, and I have described some of the ways it can be helpful in dealing with MPA. I believe that more comprehensive research of this rich tradition will uncover more approaches to regulating MPA.

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