

# **Harp Start Book 1**

## **Handbook and Guide**



# Introduction

Welcome to the *Handbook and Guide to Harp Start Book 1*.

This material is provided as extra information that you might have missed at your lesson, or you want to read in advance of learning the pieces in Harp Start. There are little versions of each page for reference, though if you have an earlier edition of Harp Start Book 1, you may detect some small differences as I continually try to improve the book.

There are 3 appendices at the back:

**Appendix 1** is “How to Read Music Notation”, which may be profitably consulted by those with no musical literacy background. It is a harp-centered approach to the subject, and though it scratches the surface, it should get you through the beginning stages.

**Appendix 2** is “Sharps, Flats and Levers”.

**Appendix 3** is “Using the Harp Start Bonus Tuning Reference Chart” which will help you tune your harp and organize your levers.

Some people use this book with a teacher, and others without. The *italic notes* are info for teachers with more detail about how I use the pages, but will be good advice for everyone.

*I use harp jewels in my teaching. They are little stick-on plastic jewels, sometimes known as diamonds ♦. I use them mostly just above the knuckle to be a tactile and very sparkly landing pad for the tip of the thumb. (I don't wrap the thumb around the finger, but relax onto the pointy pillow on the side of, just above, the knuckle. You get a whole sheet for a dollar or so, and are worth a thousand times the price! I send a few home with the students each week and invite them to decorate the front of their binders when they have finished a practice session.*

## Landings Meditation

There are three techniques that seem to work well for developing healthy, happy, strong, and beautifully-playing hands, right from the start. They are “Mitten Hands”, Landings” and “Speed Practising”. The first 2 have their own pages in Harp Start Book 1, and speed practising is incorporated into the practising of many of the pieces.

If you’re working on your own, one of the hardest things to discipline yourself to do is the exercise, the warm-up, the “non-tune” part of your daily work. Yet these little practices lay the foundation for the rest. Take heart, it is worth the effort.

This exercise is called *Landing Meditations*, because that is the feeling we want throughout the playing of these - relaxed, calm, slow, listening, aware, giving your synapses time to make the connections, and really enjoying the feeling of pressing and releasing the strings in a smooth controlled fashion with no mental pressure, no hurry, and no worry about what strings to land on. **The notation has no lines because you are meant to play any note, anywhere on the harp.**

*Although all the parts of this are on one page, I usually do just the first two lines, or even the first line only to get the idea into the hand, and continue the next week. It may take several weeks to get to the bottom of the page. But in the meantime, after line one, you can proceed to the Mittens de blue, blanc, rouge, and then return to this page.*

### The "Mitten #2" one point landing

Imagine your arm gently resting on a table, with your hand cupping an orange that is also on the table. That's a great description of the shape of your hand and arm shape as you play the harp. Now think what would happen if the substance of the orange suddenly disappeared, and you closed your hand around nothing. Or think of making a fist - gently. Bring your fingers flat into the palm, with the thumb going to the ♦ (the jewel) which is a little above the 2<sup>nd</sup> knuckle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger.

Note the shape of hand and arm and bring this whole arrangement to your harp, with your "knocking knuckle" very close to the string. Open 2345 in a loose mitten, and land 2 on any string (thumb stays closed): you're ready to begin.

This meditation is in a rhythm pattern of 3 pulses. The first pulse is for **playing**: press and release the string, and bring the whole mitten into the palm. Beat (or pulse) 2 is for **moving**: move your closed hand to a different part of the harp. Keep your knuckles close to the strings, and your hand closed. Beat 3 is **open**: on the beat, drop your fingers out of the palm and onto the string. #2 curves back toward you, perhaps to your opposite hip. Repeat, in a steady "close - move - open" meditation. Slowly.

### One point landings alternating hands

Begin with 2 hands on the strings as above. Play - move - open one hand, leave it rest there gently, and play - move - open the other. Continue alternating, of course for far more than the 4 bars written. Be relaxed, move all over the harp. Listen to the quality of sound. When does it sound best? Remember to FULLY close.

### Two point landings

Just as a duck would not land upright if one foot hit the water before the other, we land 2-point landings with both “feet” at the same time. The feet are #2 (with 345 beside), and #1 (thumb). Bring closed hand to the strings, open onto the strings in the correct hand shape: check that thumb is pointing up and gently curved forward, #2 towards your chest, with all its buddy fingers alongside, palm (or back of the hand) at 45° to the strings (that is, not flat to the floor, not parallel to the plane of the strings, but half way between), with elbows a bit out to the side to support the lower arm.

Beat 1: close 1 to the ♦. Beat 2: close 2 (with 345) flat to the palm. Beat 3: move closed hand to a new position. Beat 4: open the whole hand, landing 1 and 2 immediately onto the strings.

Note that in all these *Landings* **you may land on any note you like**. As you become more experienced, you can direct your landings. Decide you’re going to land in 3rds, or 2nds, or with your thumb always on a red string. But for the first weeks, concentrate on hand shapes and landings that are truly 2 point, not “one point and then the other”, and don’t worry at all about what notes you land on. Stay very relaxed, and see if you can feel the vibrations of the previous

note under the pad of the finger about to play.

As you become more experienced, you will play the same exercise with #2 leading, thumb following. You'll notice (probably) that it is bit more difficult to play the thumb last, as you are pushing away from you and have no anchor left on the strings. Be careful that as you play you bring the thumb to the hand, not the hand to the thumb.

Both this and the exercise above will eventually be done with each of fingers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

### **Waterfalls**

In *Waterfalls*, we place all the fingers and thumb at once. Lift the thumb from its resting spot and land it at the same time as you do the fingers. Check that it is gently curved and lifted up.

Experiment with different distances between fingers. Remember that the further apart note-wise the fingers are, the closer to a horizontal line the fingertips will lie. When you play 4 adjacent strings, the fingers and thumb should be much further apart in terms of vertical distance. And the opposite is true: the thumb is much more on a level with the fingers when the strings they are on are far apart than will be the case when you play strings that are adjacent or close together.

If you're giving yourself a course in playing the lever harp, come back to this page often, and read and follow the instructions again!

When you can do each hand separately, put both hands on at once, and play all eight notes in a row. Always remember to listen to yourself as you play - after all, the sound is likely what drew you to the harp in the first place.

# Mittens de bleu, blanche, rouge

M. Rummel

Remember to play with "mitten hands" - although you use only finger #2 to squeeze and release the strings, the rest of your fingers move along with them, into the palm, and relaxing out. The hands aren't rigid or stiff, but they do move gently together as if they were in a mitten. Thumbs can be open when landing on the string, but they close to the  $\diamond$  as the 2345 mitten group closes to the palm

Try it with finger #3's, and with #4's and with thumbs (#1's).

The written text on the page says:

Remember to play with "mitten hands" - although you use only finger # 2 to pull and release the strings, the rest of your fingers move along with them, into the palm, and relaxing out. The hands aren't rigid or stiff, but they do move gently together as if they were in a mitten. Keep thumbs on the "X".

We begin with this "mitten hand" motion because we want to develop a smooth, relaxed pull into the palm. When all the fingers move together they are stronger, and the muscles are encouraged to stay relaxed because they don't pull against each other (one open, one closed). We'll need to work on separate motions soon, but we start this way.

**The "♦"** - if you have some of the harp jewels, place one on the side of your finger #2 (your index finger), just above the second knuckle. (the one you knock with when you rap on the door). The ♦ marks the spot where the tip of your thumb should lie in the closed position. **"Closed"** means completed the playing motion and relaxed and at rest. In the piece called *Mittens*, your thumb is on the ♦ all the way through. **"Open"** means fingers open from the palm and onto the strings. I use the beautiful harp jewels to help mark the spot - it is an easy, tactile, and fun way to help remember.

As your closed hand approaches the strings your palm can be at about 45° to the floor. Leave your thumb on the ♦, and drop #2, along with 3 4 5, out of the palm and onto the string with 2 making a gentle curve towards you, the rest of the mitten softly relaxed along side. When playing the string, #2 first presses into the string and then releases into the palm with the others fingers moving along beside "inside the mitten".

The pressing and releasing motion of the finger is fairly flat into the palm. Most of the work is done by the muscles connecting to the "knocking-on-the-door" knuckle. Think of your "fingerprint" going to the bottom of the palm, **not** the nail digging into the centre of the palm.

This piece is also used to start the note-reading process for those new to it. Some beginning readers lightly colour in the blue and red notes as suggested by the title. (for more info, see appendix 1 “How to read music notation” at the back).

If you are an experienced musician you might notice how the pattern of triads is seen on the harp, as this study uses only notes from the F triad. You can use the same pattern of intervals (though different colours) to play other chords. (though you may need to flip levers, it is never too early to start to transpose, as this helps develop the understanding of music as a pattern language. If this is a bit confusing just now, ignore it and go on, but be assured it will make sense by the time you finish Harp Start.)

*Note that students work on this exercise for many weeks, even as they move on to other things. And every now and then we do more “mittens” to remember the action of the hands and fingers.*

## Juliet’s Play

Juliet's play is a little tune that is used to learn many things! Learn it first with mitten #2's, especially if you are new to note reading. You'll likely memorize it quickly – that's a good thing.

Most of the important notes for this one are on the page. When the melody is learned, we begin to play it with 3 fingers - it's like the waterfalls on the landings page, with three notes instead of four.

When the 3 finger version is well established, you can move it around to play in dorian mode (place the hands one up from the note shown) and listen to the effect. Another “verse” can be done with the left hand a 3<sup>rd</sup> up from the right, but replicating the pattern of the RH for a beautiful harmony.

*I'm big on theme and variations, and we begin them right from the start. Students young and old love to learn a new version of their piece each week, till they have a 5 or 6 verse piece to play. I believe it is more beneficial to understanding how music works, to developing a good hand position, to knowing that all the info isn't necessarily on the page, and that making your own version is an important part of being a musician.*

*After the next page with the fifths the whole thing can be played in the aeolian minor by taking it all down a 3<sup>rd</sup>. Satisfying!*

## Open 5ths

*The little marks show the return to the string. Students should play, replace, play, replace. You can do one or many repetitions, but the replace is evenly spaced between the plays, as indicated by the rest.*

When practising these 5ths, notice your hands, arms and fingers. Are your shoulders down, elbow out and wrist relaxed? With a little dip in the wrist part? The thumb and finger have a Romeo and Juliet moment when they play together - they pass, but they do not meet. Crab pincers may meet, but fingers 1 and 3 do not! #2 dangles, low, relaxed, closing in with 3, and relaxing out with it as well.

Studying this page is a good place to begin “squeezes”. We squeeze many exercises and difficult passages to learn them with both fingers and brain.

To use the “Squeeze play”, place hands on the harp as the notes indicate. Relax hands - they should always be relaxed when they're not actually moving through the string plane. Bring your attention to the thumb, gently curve and squeeze it as if to play, but then relax before the finger releases the string. Squeeze, relax, squeeze, relax, squeeze, play. It becomes a chant, and a rhythm of harp work.

Now go to finger 3, on the lower note of the 5th. Squeeze, relax, squeeze, relax, squeeze, play. Replace both fingers (at the same time - remember the landings?) and then squeeze together, relax, squeeze, relax, squeeze, relax, squeeze, play.

As you squeeze you'll be building your muscles, and learning to relax with each stroke. You're trying especially to build the ones that give you a nice arch in the joints from hand knuckle to tip. So squeeze an arch or a curve into your finger shape each time. As you play, be conscious of touching the palm with the 3, and of 1 curving through the string to rest on the upper segment of

2 (on the ♠).

Your mantra - squeeze, relax  
squeeze, relax  
squeeze, relax  
squeeze, play.

At the bottom we have a version of Juliet's Play with the left hand playing the 5ths you've learned above, to accompany the melody. Enjoy your new skills!

## Walking the Trestle

This piece introduces 2 fingers walking the strings, playing and replacing in turn. It also helps to establish the idea of intervals for reading - 2nds and 3rds.

The way we accomplish the playing of this is actually a fairly complicated sequence of movement, but once you have it, your hand will be able to play all sorts of complicated and beautiful music. Pay attention to the details, and practice it very, very, slowly as your brain needs to learn all the details, not just a general effect.

Breaking down the playing of the first few notes of this study give this series of events:

Place 1 and 2 on the strings on A and F. Thumb up and gently curved, finger curved and pointing to the belly.

Play 1, close over the finger, wave back up and replace on G

Play 2, close to palm, replace on E

Play 1, close over finger, replace on F

Play 2, close to palm, replace on D

Play 1, close over finger, replace on E

Play 2, close to palm, relax

Play 1, close over finger

The idea that you place one or more fingers on the strings well in advance of their being used to pluck the strings is called *placing*. Brackets are used to show how to do it.

Here is how it looks with multiple brackets:



In many pieces in Harp Start including this one, I've used a simple long bracket system that implies the interconnected ones. To play notes under the bracket, you place, at once, **as many notes as is possible in one direction, ascending or descending**. Further, if the bracket extends over a series of "ups and downs" **replace in the new direction before you play the last finger of the old direction**. By means of this pivoting action you can follow the "place in one direction" rule and still be sure that at least one finger is always on the string under the bracket. Like much else about the harp, it's easier to demonstrate than to describe.

This study is also used to learn the music terminology of intervals, particularly 2nds and 3rds. On the harp, one can read easily by interval - a staff position up or down is simply a string up or down. For reference, here's the text about intervals from the page:

2nds are the intervals from any one string to the next adjacent string. On the staff, 2nds are written from a space to a line, or from a line to a space. 3rds are the interval from one string to the "next-but-one", in other words, a third will be two strings with one unplayed string between them. On the staff they are written from a space to a space, or from a line to a line.

### About "Dorian"

Dorian is one of the many modes we use on the harp. Modes are a kind of scale. The key signature of *Walking* has no sharps or flats, but the melody has D as a "tonal centre" rather than C, which you might predict from the key signature. When a melody is focussed around the 2nd note of the scale given by the key signature (a good clue is that it ends, and feels finished there) it can be said to be in Dorian mode.

Lots of folk music is written in the Dorian mode, as are contemporary tunes. Perhaps the best known is the Simon and Garfunkel version of Scarborough Fair. A well known Irish traditional tune in Dorian is Chanter's Tune.

You can make your own tunes in Dorian - set levers to key of C, and play, thinking of D as "home" from which you make excursions and return!

## Echo Bay

The subtitle of Echo Bay is "Placing Study". This refers to the idea of placing your fingers all at once, and then using them as needed. Though most students will begin this piece before they have perfected 4 point landings, we begin using those landings as we learn *Echo Bay*. (There is a real Echo Bay just off Vancouver Island, as well as the Cowichan River and the Koksilah Trestle where I live; nearby is Thetis Island. You'll meet them all herein!)

You can learn both hands at once for this piece, and as you do, study the structure. In the first 3 phrases, the *lh* directly echoes the *rh*. Furthermore, each time the descending passage begins in the *rh*, it begins a 3rd higher than the previous one. This makes *Echo Bay* a pretty easy piece to memorize. Speed practising is very useful in this piece; ask me about it if you don't hear me talk about it in your lesson.

Take advantage of the alternating hands, and use the time of not playing to place the other hand. In fact, I suggest you replace on the 2nd beat of the half-notes, so that the *rh* is back on the strings in their next position before the *lh* begins to play, and vice versa.

Variations for musical whizzes or want-to-be's include starting with the *lh* and echoing with the right, as well as playing in different modes. For this, leave your levers as they are, but start the tune on an A instead of a C, and then play every note a 3rd below what is written. Experiment with other starting places as well.

*More things to do - I often challenge students to do a little Bach bit on this piece, and reverse the playing direction of each placing. So the tune will start with the CDEG placing but will be played GEDC. I'm pretty sure if I revise this book again, I'll put that version in first! In Book 2 this piece appears again with a habanera bass part. Teachers could use it to accompany.*

## A la claire fontaine

This wonderful old tune is very simple - it pretty much stays in one chord, and has a very limited range. Yet, there is fun and useful technique to be learned in the various combinations of notes and fingers, and beauty in its 3 phrases. I use it to help develop quick fingers, playing and replacing very quickly.

The most important use of this piece is to study further the idea of placing as far as possible in one direction, and re-placing just before the last note in the direction. I usually call these hinge notes - they hinge the direction up or down and you need to replace as far ahead as you can just before the hinge note.

The *rh* action is what we're studying, and for best results you should learn it with both hands (the *rh* line, that is). Do it in unison, both hands at the same time on the same notes, but an octave apart. When that is well done, try moving the left hand up a third as you did in Juliet. Then try the drone AND the left hand up a third. Beautiful.

The words are somewhat regretful, telling of a love long ago but not forgotten, all by the beautiful clear fountain.

## Triads in F

Triads are an extension of the interval of the open fifth, and they practically define harmony for much of the last 300 years. They are also a most useful tool for developing a good hand shape

and closing technique.

It is often easier to “see” the triads and patterns they make while the notes are going from the top to the bottom, but it is usually easier to play then from the bottom to the top, so that's where you should start. The text on the page tells the story.

The last set of music introduces the arpeggio. Arpeggios are really just broken chords, and they can be any kind of chord. You'll play a million of them during your harping life, and for many people, they define the sound of the harp. So let's get going nice and early! When you've learned the root position descending arpeggio, you can hinge the bottom note and go back up. Or try other inversions as well.

## Joy to the World

*Joy to the World* uses 2 hands to play the melody in most places. What it really teaches is the idea of placing, and even if students are adept enough to play the run with one hand, I help them to use both, in order to practice placing one hand while the other is still playing the previous section. It is truly worth striving for this facility, because it means you won't feel rushed, and when you need a note, it is there under your fingers already. Review the *Waterfall landings* before you begin.

The very harp-ish glissandi begin the piece. The little notes indicate that each glissando (often called “gliss”) is 2 beats long, and starts and ends approximately where shown by the wiggly line. This means the glisses themselves are rather slow, and controlled. They could be played increasing from *p* (very soft) to *f* (loud) by the end of the 4th one.

The “bell scales” are the first start at scales, and form the way I do them for quite a while

*Joy to the World* is also available for sale separately in a 4-part arrangement that includes this version as one of the parts.

## The Water is Wide

*The Water is Wide* continues with the placing idea in *Joy to the World*. This time the hands directly echo each other, similar in motion to *Echo Bay*, however, the melody is more complex.

Begin with both hands in position. Lift your elbows if #4 doesn't come cleanly off the string, and remember to pull into the palms with the fingers, and curl your thumb over finger 2 to the ♦ as its “follow-through”.

As soon as the *rh* finishes its 4 notes, relax, and then replace all at once on the next pattern, even before the left hand plays (or as close to that as possible). Then when the *lh* is finished move to its next position, then play *rh*. In this way we leap frog over ourselves, with the hand being ahead of the ear.

It's not at all easy, but great for the brain, and for the independence of fingers. It's worth taking your time and playing it really slowly until you get the alternating motion, as this technique can be used forever.

Because most of the patterns are 4-finger ones, it makes this an ideal time to stop and look at your whole hand. Is the thumb, while on the strings, pointing slightly up and curved? Is your index finger pointing a little down and a little curved **towards** you? Are your wrists relaxed and not “bumped out” to the ceiling? And, above all, is there any area that you release a little more?

This is also a good time to think of your shoulder and arm tension (and especially of the fact that you don't want any!!). Arms and hands are pretty heavy and if we aren't careful, the lifting of them can bring pain and tension to the neck and shoulder. Here's a way to help avoid this:

There are two ways to lift your arm and elbow. One - lets call it the first - uses the muscles of the upper arm. Try this: relax your arm and then imagine some strings connected to the upper arm and elbow, pulling them straight up to finish roughly parallel to the ground. As it lifts, be aware of the tension or lack of it, whether the shoulder rises, and if the neck or arm muscles hurt.

Try a few times, both arms, and really notice the action and the feeling.

Relax your arms back down. Now try the second way, which is to imagine a small child pushing on your scapula, the bottom of the shoulder blade close to the middle of your back, as you swing your arms freely up. As the child pushes, allow your arm to be pushed forward and up by the motion. Try to end up roughly in the same place as the first version. Pay attention to the feeling in your arm, shoulder, neck. Is it different than the first? You can visualize your scapula as if it is sliding across the back and forward under your arm. Is your shoulder in the same place as it was with the first movements? Notice again the action, and especially any feelings of tension or pain.

You've probably found that the second way gives you a lighter, easier arm, and if we use our back to hold up our arms it can be completely effortless.

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Another way to practice *The Water is Wide* is to do both parts with the same hand - but the *rh* part is done with squeezes only, and only the echo is actually sounded.

This also a good time to back to the *Landings* page and practice all your landings as a daily warm-up for *The Water is Wide*. As you do, think of how you're lifting your arm. The pushing technique - not lifting at all, but pushing forward and up via the scapula - should be the easiest, most relaxed way to get to the landing. Keep your shoulder down and relaxed as you bring your hand into position.

As you move on in the book, keep practicing this one, as we'll be back to it soon!

## Triads in G

More triad work. This time in the key of G partly because I use those inversions to teach *Amazing Grace* which follows this (the melody is largely made up fo the chord in G, in inversion and root position). Take time to learn the G triad page well, and notice that you could apply it to other chords by using the same shape, but a different starting place. Of course, if you don't move levers, you may not have a major chord, but that gives you a good chance to experiment with levers.

The triads of C G F, and Em and Am are used in the *Water is Wide*. You can use the patterns in the two triad pages to make a LH accompaniment. The easiest way is to use a solid or rolled chord on beat one (the last note of each RH placing) Begin with root position chords, or for a challenge and more beauty, make the RH an octave higher and the lh as close to it as possible by using different inversions. Or play the tune in the LH and chords in the RH. For the best sound, use the inversion that has the same top note as the left hand is on. Pretty magic!

## Amazing Grace

*Amazing Grace* is a straightforward piece, which you will likely find easy to learn - a good sign you're making progress and practising well. The fingering is suggested; if you have a teacher, they might suggest alternatives, or you could explore some yourself. Remember that though the brackets may extend across a number of ups and downs, place only in one direction at a time, while connecting all the notes under the bracket by at least one finger.

There are 2 verses on the page: the *rh* is the same for both, but the *lh* is different. The 2<sup>nd</sup> verse has a left hand which is mostly different inversions of the G chord. So if you're playing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion of the RH you might play root or 1<sup>st</sup> inv. In the left to have a beautiful harmonies. In the scale-like passages, the left is copying the shape either a 3<sup>rd</sup> above or below.

## Thetis Island Waltz

This piece was written for a workshop I taught on Thetis Island a few years ago (though it had its first start as the uncompleted Centennial Hall Waltz for my Cariboo Waggon Road Millennium Harper project - altogether a lot of title for a very few notes)! The tune has become one of the

backbones of my teaching studio, with a versatility beyond measure.

Here is its simplest version, a bare outline of a tune awaiting improvisations, chords, and embellishment. When teaching this tune, I often begin with the material that follows it about Chord Symbols and how to interpret them. I play the melody while the students tackle the chord material first. But if you're learning on your own, it makes sense to have the melody under your belt. It is easy - try to commit it to memory before you go on. The first 2 lines may be repeated before going on to the second 2 lines. The *D.C.* which stand for "*da capo*" means go back to the beginning. The *al fine* part means play to the *fine* that you will see at the end of the 2nd line.

Using the above, the most usual form might be:

play first 2 lines,  
play 3rd and 4th line,  
play first 2 lines again.

Notice that the time signature is 3/4 which means the beats come in groups of 3, and, conveniently, each of the dotted half notes gets 3 beats. (More info about time signatures is found in Appendix 2)

Much of the music that is sold around the world is in what has come to be called *lead sheet* format. (This is lead as in leed, not led). Lead sheets consist of the melody line plus a letter or a roman numeral and/or a guitar chord fingering diagram above the staff, giving the harmonization information.

The letter (or less commonly the roman numeral) is called the *chord symbol*. If it is a **C** it means "play any sort of a C major chord for this bar". If you needed a minor chord the symbol would look like this **C min**.

The second line gives you many options for *realizing* the C chord called for in the first bar. They are numbered on this page for reference, and all 8 of them are possible realizations of any bar on the top line that has a C chord symbol above it. Here are some ways of doing it:

Measure 1 - You can always simply play the name note of a chord. If it says **C**, just play a C. (You probably don't want to play C on every beat, but you could.)

Measure 2, 3, and 4 - The next possibility given for your C chord is the open 5th. Played together it is called a *harmonic interval* (bar 2) or a *solid chord*; played separately (bars 3 and 4) it is a *melodic interval* or a *broken chord*. In the 4th bar the rest comes first, and the 5th follows. This can be a really nice effect, especially in a piece like *Thetis Island*.

Measure 5 -8 You can also use triads, or any of the variations on the rest of the line. The thing to do is experiment!

If you look back to *Thetis Island Waltz* you'll see that the first 2 lines have a chord symbol on every bar, but the last 2 lines have symbols only when the chord changes. The latter is the most common way to see it written, but either way it still means "play a C chord at least once in every bar, until you get a different chord symbol."

When you do get a new chord symbol, i.e. G, you need to take your patterns to the new chord. If you are playing only the roots, just play G. The open 5ths would be G and D, and so on.

Play *Thetis Island* with the right hand, and try it first with just the chord name notes (the root of the chord) with the left hand. Now try it with the 5ths. Try any and all, and your own besides. If you have someone nearby who can play the melody, you can use both hands to play the chords, giving you even more options. It is a whole new world!

## Theme from the Symphony from the New World

Dvorak's beautiful theme is given here in quite an accessible arrangement. If you've studied and learned everything up to this point, you should have a pleasurable experience learning to play this one. It uses 2-note chords played in the right hand. Bar 3 and 4 have fingerings noted to show how you cross 1 over and place it at the same time as finger 3 to prepare for the chord. Play this really slowly and beautifully.

The original composition had dotted note, rather than even. If you're an experienced musician you can start out that way, but keep the left in quarter notes.

*After students have learned it as writ, I usually talk about dotted quarters, and because they already know the left hand, it counts them out for them in a great and easy to learn way.*

A four-harp version of this tune, incorporating this beginner arrangement, is available.

## Early One Morning

*Early One Morning*, a beautiful tune worth having in your repertoire, has a very simple *lh*, chord symbols if you want to add more *lh* ideas, and a few common fingering manoeuvres, including a thumb cross in the *rh* that you'll use over and over again in other pieces.

Most of the challenges are in the first line (*rh*). Place all the fingers (4321), then play the repeated #4 note, bringing the tip of the finger all the way into the palm, and then swinging it out again to the string. Curling it in won't work; position your hand so that it swings under from the big knuckle in and out. If you can feel the contact with your palm each time and replace cleanly before replaying, you'll have done it correctly.

After all the 4's, play 3, then 2, but before you play the thumb (1) replace 2 and 3 on the F and D. Play 1, then 2, and then cross 1 over to rest on the C before you play the D with 3 (marked in the fingering on the music as X1 because 1 crosses over while 3 is on the string). Then place the 2 on the B before you play 1 and so on to the end of the line. This is much easier to do than to read, and is an important hand technique, so it is worth really reading this again, and playing step by step until you see how logical it really is

The second line begins the same way but is much easier. Before you play the F (with 1), replace the 234 and play your way down. Don't forget to replace the thumb on the C before you play the B at the end.

The last line is the best. Start with a beautiful 4 finger arpeggio up the harp, replace 2 and 3 before you play the C with the thumb, and then use the finger crossing technique from lines 1 and 2 to scale your way down to the end. You don't use the 4th finger at all in the last line, except for the first note.

*This is one of the rare pieces where I might concentrate on reading the page. After the student is more experienced with being able to play beautifully with a good tone, we can begin to spend more time reading. Although, as if usual throughout this book, I do expect students to memorize to fully feel they have mastered it. Not so much "memorized" but so thoroughly learned that the printing is irrelevant. Memorize as you go is a good way to not be hampered by slow reading skills, and give your brain time to focus on the body movements and finger placing that make beautiful music.*

## Spiders

Practice this very slowly while noticing your hand, finger, and arm shape, and follow the instructions from the page:

Each note must be connected to the previous one like spiders with one foot always on the web. The detailed brackets in the first 4 bars are replaced with a simpler version in the rest of the piece, but they are all played the same way.

Remember that each finger squeezes the string, closes to the palm, relaxes and is replaced on its next note, all before the next finger plays. Slow and steady wins the web!

Try this tune in different keys. Flip the levers necessary and play it in G, and then C

Early one Morning

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If you remember The Friendly Giant playing it on recorder while Rusty played in on the harp you could duplicate this with a friend. A recorder or other melody instrument could play the *rh* part, and the harp could play an accompaniment, using the ideas from the *Thetis Island* page, or the 1-5-1 3-5-1 pattern that you'll learn on the next page. Use the chord symbols above the staff to guide you.

## 1-5-1 and 3-5-1 Chord Patterns

*I've now begun to teach 1 - 5- 1 chords with the LH and starting from the thumb. There is no page yet for this, but will be soon. Descending for more accurate hand action, and LH only for facility in moving around the harp and landing **ALL 3 NOTES together!!!** When that is done, I apply it to **Water is wide** and then anything else the students wants.*

-----

The **notes of a scale** are often referred to by numbers, sometimes called degrees. The starting note (the name note of the scale) is 1, or the first degree, the second note is called the 2nd degree or "2", and so on. The last note is called variously, and both correctly, 8 or 1, because it is has the same letter name as the beginning note, even though it is an octave higher.

One place this system is regularly used is in finding the notes of chords. A triad, or common chord, is made of the 1st, the 3rd, and the 5th degrees of the scale it is named for. A **C triad** has the notes C, E, and G (1, 3, and 5).

In the exercise on page 13, we use this idea to play a variety of chords. The *lh* #4 plays the first degree (or the "1"), the #2 finger plays the "5th" (leaving out the 3rd for the time being) and the thumb plays the octave above the starting note, hence 1- 5 -1.

The *rh* uses a lightly different configuration. Since the *lh* thumb is already on the tonic (another name for the first or name note of the scale), we use the *rh* #3 on the 3rd note of the scale. The #2 plays the 5, an octave above the 5 in the other hand, and the thumb is on the top "1". In the first line we have the F chord, so the 1 note is F, the 5 is C, the top 1 is F again, the 3 (*rh*) is A, the 5 is C and the 1 is F, yet again.

The pattern holds for each chord. G Major uses notes G - D - G, B - D - G. The last line uses s D minor and C Major.

A very important part of this exercise for my students is the little block of fingernail symbols at beat 4 of each bar. They indicate that at beat 4 the fingers should go back on the strings, all at once, before the next hand begins. It is really worth playing this slowly enough that that can be accomplished. Play, play, play, replace, play, play, play, replace, is the steady, slow mantra for this page. Do each line many, many, times before you go on to the next one.

## Brian Boru

Here is a great solo for the beginning harpist, and very old tune, said to honour the Great King Brian Boru who united Ireland in the first millennium. The first 12 bars are warm-ups, getting your fingers ready for the task ahead! The pattern, played from fingers 1 - 4 with with the last note repeated, and all fingers on from the beginning, is used over and over in this tune. Learn to throw your fingers at the strings, with a gap in the right place, so that you can do it consistently.

I can't stress enough how important it is to place all fingers of one hand at once, not finger by finger. Go as slowly as you need to to get this down! Notice how the hand layout is similar, but with the gap in a different place, in the last phrase before the repeat sign. Study the gaps in the B section as well, and you can practise this piece by simply practicing the hand positions with no playing involved. Good for practising at stop signs - from memory!

You'll notice the **A** and the **B** in the music. These letters are commonly used in Celtic and other folk music to indicate the parts of a tune. Here the A section is repeated; note the repeat sign near the end of line 4, which tells you go back to the one with the dots facing forward where the A is and play it again. The little bracket with the **1.** under it shows you that is the first ending. When you repeat the A section, you skip over the A, and go directly to the bar with **2.** above it (the second ending).

The B section has the same ending for both of the repeats. If you were playing for dancing, you might go back and do another set of A's and another of B's - or more!

Whether or not the letters are written in, they are understood to be there, particularly in dance music like jigs and reels.

"How do we do this?" some one might ask about a jig they've been handed.

"2 A's, 2 B's, 2 A's," might be the reply.

## 1-5-1 3-5-1 in E dorian

Page 15 has 2 parts. The first gives you a common chord progression for Celtic, especially Irish, music. The pattern is the same as you learned on page 13. Approach it the same way, replacing all your fingers at once, before the next hand plays.

There are just 2 chords, but the order and repetition is what makes them a *progression*. Try to commit it to memory.

If you have a partner (or a teacher) you can play the A part of Brian Boru with these chords. If you want to do the B part as well, you'll like a G better as the first chord.

-----

The second part of the page uses the same 2 chords, but is meant to be used to improvise. There is a blank bar after each chord. Fill in the gap with a note - any note - and see how you like the sound of it. Then play the next chord bar and try a different note. You may have the most fun by playing the experimental notes with your *lh* crossing above the right.

When you've experimented with 1 note, try playing 2 notes in the gap. There are no right or wrong notes - they're all sound experiments. How many different kinds of sound can you make in the gaps? Can you play 2 notes at once? Which notes sound comfortable? Are there notes that make you want to go on? Relax, make sure that you're using a good hand position and that you replace your fingers on the strings a **whole handful at a time**. Have fun!

## Prospect

*Prospect* is a great pentatonic tune with a million possibilities for harmonization. You have the

simplest, with the plain and repeated F as a drone, as well as the luxurious minors in the second verse, and the descending 5ths which go through all the chords possible in the key of F in the coda. If you have no levers, you really only need to flat the B strings below middle C; there are no B's in the melody.

The melody is played spaciouly, with room for your hand to raise from the strings and pull the sound with it. Rather than long connected passages, this one is 3 or 4 notes and then 3 or 4 more. Play it more slowly than you think.

The left hand introduces crossing finger arpeggios. Study line 3 for *lh*. It begins with a standard 1-5-1 chord but there are 2 more notes added. To play this place fingers 4 21 as usual, then play 4, play 2, and before you play 1, swing your #3 under to rest on the string beside the thumb. Play 1, place 2 beside 3, play 3, play 2. Beautiful! This pattern is used on the F chord and on the G chord in *Prospect*.

Once you're comfortable with the crossing pattern you can see the possibilities for other tunes. Go back and play *Thetis Island*, crossing under only the 2nd finger, but onto to the 3rd of the chord each time. Try it with *Early One Morning* and *Water is Wide* as well.

## Christ Child's Lullaby

This old and beautiful lullaby is often known by its Gaelic name *Taladh Chrìosda*. I've seen as many as 18 verses, and heard there may be 37, interspersed with verses of "alleluia" only. The melody is just two long phrases, and though there are no brackets written in, each phrase should be one long, connected line. Imagine your hands singing it.

As the page text in the book says, there are often varying gaps between the phrases depending on who is singing it. I've chosen a gap of 4 measures, to give time for breathing, and to show the difference between the accompaniment and the melody. Do as you hear it in your head.

The left hand crosses back and forth below and above the *rh* melody. The top notes should stay in the octave above where written as shown by the *8va* on the music, but if you run out of strings on your particular harp, just lower the crossed chord an octave. Keep that part very soft (a chime, rather than a gong!).

If you go on for 18 verses, think of how you could vary the *lh*. Perhaps reverse octaves? Leave out the lower part or the higher one?

## Swallow Tail Jig

Swallow Tail Jig is a Celtic tune which is often considered Canadian in the fiddle tune world, where it sometimes called *From the New Country*, though it is also credited with being Irish. It is adapted here in one of the old ways of wire-strung harp playing, where the main notes are struck in octaves by one hand, and the intervening notes are played by the other hand on strings between the 2 octave notes. The resonance of the main notes builds up the harmonies until the harp is practically playing itself!

Ornaments, quick little notes that decorate the melody, are an important part of traditional playing and can be experimented with in the right hand beyond the 2 instances that are written in. Play the left with a consistent and strong 4-1 octave.

It is easiest to master this technique by first learning the left hand by itself. Memorize, feel comfy and then go on to add the right. If you want to be very authentic, move your harp to your left shoulder, and play the octaves with the right hand! (Truthfully, this is a pretty difficult thing for most people to do!)

## The Cowichan River Valley

The Cowichan River Valley is the traditional territory of the Quw'utsun' people and its bounty has supported them for thousands of years. The river, a designated Canadian Heritage River, is beautiful, 26 kilometres dancing from the lake to the sea. I wrote this study to reflect its ways and to prepare my students for scale passages in pieces like *Pachelbel's Canon in D*, which many begin studying about this point.

The fingerings given are some of many possibilities, but if you are studying without a teacher, it is best to stick with these ones. The trickiest bit is likely the first bar, where you should place all 4 fingers at once, play 432, then replace them while keeping 1 on the C, and play them again. This breaks the "place only in one direction rule", as many advanced techniques do.

The second half features some upper octave work. Make sure that you pull your elbow back so you can reach the high notes easily, rather than crooking your wrist to get to them. Just lift your elbow, and pull it straight back behind your shoulder and it will be easy. Make sure your 3rd finger is placed low as it crosses under in lines 1 and 3.

## Welsh Jig Chord Pattern and Variation

The Welsh Jig Chord pattern comes from Robin Huw Bowen, one of the foremost players of the traditional Welsh Triple Harp. The accompanying patterns are inversions of chords which are arranged to make it easy to move from one to another. Notice the Chord symbols above the staff and see how the chord that is named is arranged. You'll see that the notes of the chord are all there, but in the C and D chords, they're in a different order (*inversion*)

The 3rd and 4th lines have the chords spread in the *rh*, in the bottom - top - middle - top pattern known as an Alberti bass. Domenico Alberti was a composer who popularized its use in the 1700's. Mozart used it a lot, and others since.

The 5th and 6th lines have a double time Alberti bass in the *rh*, against a single speed one in the *lh*. Once your brain gets a grip on this it is pretty easy. Work slowly. These are only some of the possible combinations. You'll note that the chord progression stays the same, only the style of the chords changes. Further, any of the *rh*'s could be played with any of the *lh*'s. Commit it to memory and make up your own practice routine.

## Pwt-ar-y-bys

Pwt-ar-y-bys is pronounced (more-or-less) as poot-air-a-beece. This traditional Welsh jig can be played with the left hand as is written, or with the accompaniment of any of the patterns from the previous page. Make sure of your fingering, and especially make sure to connect and place whenever possible. This will pay off handsomely when you take it up to speed, which is traditionally very fast, indeed!

## How to Read Music Notation

The system of indicating pitch by placing note heads in different locations on a set of lines is a very old one, going back at least 800 years. The music notation we use shows many things about how to play or sing the music, but the two most important to the beginner are:

1. **What** pitch is a note? (where is it in the range of pitches from highest to lowest?)
2. **When** does that note sound? (how quickly does it follow the previous, is more than one note sounding at once, and how are the pulses grouped?)

### Pitch

Pitch refers to the sounds we hear. Each pitch is a particular number of vibrations per second, and is usually expressed as a letter name from A - G. Of course there are many more than 8 possible pitches, so when you get to G, you just start over at A again.

Look at any piece of music written on a 5 line staff. There are always only 2 **possible positions** for each note in respect to the lines and spaces of the staff: notes can be ***in a space***, (i.e. filling the space between 2 lines) or ***on a line***, placed so that the line runs through the middle of the note head.

These 5 lines form a **staff**



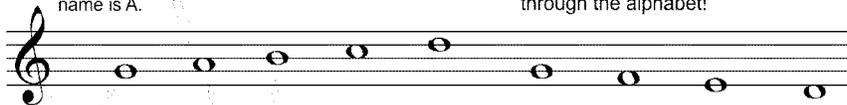
These 2 notes are both said to be *in a space*, because the notehead fills up the **space** between 2 lines.

These last 2 notes are *on a line* because the line goes through the middle of them. The stems tell you about rhythm, but not about pitch.

Each position on the staff corresponds to one letter name, and also to **one string on the harp**. The lowest *on the line* note on the **treble staff** is an E, so the next note up is an F, the next a G, the next an A, and so on.

The next position up from the line of the G is a space. The note name is A.

You can also work down from the G. Move backwards through the alphabet!



This note is a G because it is on the line that the G clef curls around.

A B C D G F E D

There are some guideposts to help you determine pitch. The *clef* (the sign at the left edge in the example above), often called the treble clef, is more “precisely” called the **G clef**. (it comes from an old-fashioned letter G). It marks the note placement for the note G, where the curly bit in the middle curls around the line. This note is always G, and a particular one, the G just above middle C. If there is a G clef on the staff lines, we say it is a **treble staff**.

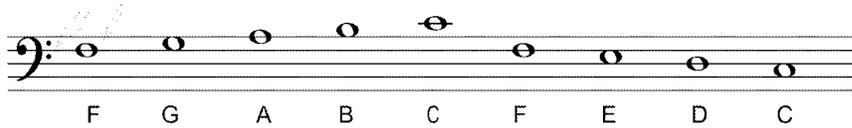
You can count up or down for each note above and below it. When you run out of lines, the solution is to simply draw in little bits of lines where you need them. That’s where middle C is found, on a **ledger line** just below the treble staff. On the staff above you’ll see the D as the last note; one position below it is the C.

The bass staff, governed by the **F clef**, begins at the next line below the middle C line. In fact, the 2 staves were once the Grand Staff of 11 lines, but have been pulled apart for centuries to

make things easier to read. The middle line was eliminated, to be used only when a note is present there. So middle C can be shown in relation to the bass staff or the treble as needed, but regardless of the position, (which staff it is closest to) it is still the same note.

The two dots mark the location of the F. Draw an imaginary notehead with the dots at the top and bottom.

When we reach the B, we've run out of staff lines. If the C is just placed in the air, it is unclear where it sits, so the missing line is drawn in.



The F clef shows an F on the line that runs between the 2 dots. Count up or down through the alphabet to get the others. On the harp, the F is blue, the C is red. If you like a maximal amount of visual information, get out your crayons and colour the F's blue and the C's red in the first few pages of Harp Start, or in these pages of the *Guide*.

### Rhythm and Meter - the Time Function

Music happens in time. You only need to try to sing something with each note having the same length to see how there is no music without the shorts and longs, spaces and repeating patterns of rhythm.

The information about rhythm is given by the shading of the note head (is it open or is it filled in?) and by the stem attached to it, as well as by the flags and bars at the tops or bottoms of the stems.

Note that the stems can point either way, and the direction tells you nothing about the pitch or the rhythm. Stems are just turned up or down for the look on the lines.

The *rhythm pattern* of a bit of music is the combination of individual pulses, notes that extend for a number of pulses, and/or subdivisions of pulses.

The **time signature** at the start of the piece gives you your starting information about rhythm in the way the clef sign does for pitch.



We say this is a "three four time signature"

The top number of the time signature shows how the pulses within the music are grouped. If the top number is a **3**, it means that the steady pulses (also known as beats) come in groups of 3's. Think of a waltz, or say this to yourself:

*Moses supposes his toes-es are roses.*

Make each syllable the same length, and see where the stressed syllables naturally lie. You'll likely say:

**MO** - ses - sup - **POS** - es - his - **TOES** - es - are - **ROS** - es

which is a 1 - 2 - 3 pattern and is how you can think of any time signature where **3** is the top number. There will usually be barlines which are little guideposts throughout the music, dividing it into groups of 3 beats called *measures*, or more informally, *bars*.

If the top number is a **4**, we have a more square kind of rhythm with the beats falling into groups of 4 like this:

*Watermelon pickle and a bottle of the best!*

Can you see where the stresses lie and how they are grouped? Try this:

**WA**- ter - me - lon - **PICK** - le - and - a - **BOT** - tle - of - the - **BEST**.

Whenever the stress is every 4 beats, you'll see a 4 as the top number in the time signature and the measures will be groups of 4 pulses.

The bottom number shows you what kind of stem/head configuration is assigned to one

pulse. When there is a 4 in the bottom of the time signature it means that a “quarter (¼) note” gets one pulse.

A quarter note looks like this  or this  (the direction of the stem is not significant).

Given the above, *Watermelon pickle* could be written like this:



and the *Moses supposes* like this:



(Note the little barlines before each stressed note/syllable.)

You will have noticed that the last note of *Watermelon* is followed by 3 squiggly marks called **quarter rests**. They are the silent equivalents of quarter notes. You’ll see their use if you imagine a repeat sign at the end, meaning you go back to the beginning and say it again.

If instead of being silent, you want to draw out the last *Best* like this: *Be-e-e-est* to fill in 4 pulses, you would write it like this:

 4 quarters make a whole, and this is called a whole note.

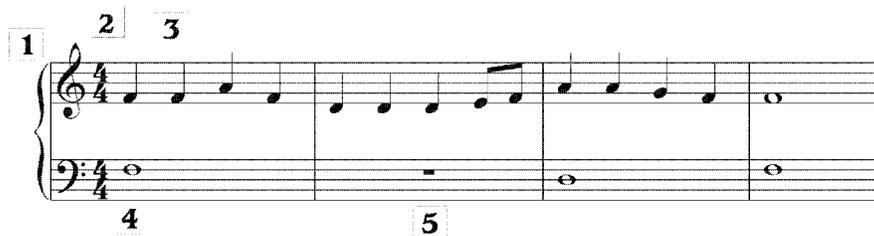
Subdividing the whole gives you a half. This is a half note,  and if the quarter gets one pulse, the half note gets 2 (the whole gets 4).

If you **subdivide** the quarter note you get eighths. They can be written in two ways. Like this:  or, more commonly, grouped like this:



Eighths can be further subdivided into 16ths and further to 32nds and beyond. There is no theoretical limit, but in practical terms you’ll likely not see anything more than 16th notes for harps, at least in the beginner stages.

Here is a line of typical harp music for the beginner. Let’s go through it step by step, in the way you would use to interpret any such bit of music. See if you can tell what each of 1 - 5 mean before reading the “answers” below.



- 1 The treble clef. This sign lets you know that the notes on this staff are primarily from middle C and up. It tells you where G is, and in relationship to that, where all the other notes are.
2. The time signature tells you that the pulses are grouped in 4’s (that’s the top “4”) and that each quarter note gets a pulse (the bottom “4”). It “feels” like Watermelon pickle.
3. In the treble staff the first 7 notes follow the pulses, with the 8th and 9th being a subdivision of the last pulse in the measure. This is followed by a measure of 4 quarter note pulses, and then a whole note at the end. There are no rests.
4. The bass staff tells you to start playing on an F (because of the location of the note head),

and because it is open and has no stem, it lasts for 4 beats (the harp continues to play, but you don't strike it again).

5. This is a whole rest, meaning only silence for 4 beats (or pulses) in the left hand.

A good approach is to play through the rhythm pattern by tapping on your knees, one hand at a time, then eventually, both together. When the rhythm is clear to you, go on to think about the pitch.

The first **pitch** in the treble staff is F (the next position below the G shown by the G clef) The next note is the same pitch, then it skips the G and goes to an A and then back to F. (All in steady ¼-note pulses) The next bar starts with 3 D's, then 2 eighth notes to get back to F. One more skip up to A and then work down to F.

You should try to sing it first in rhythm before trying it on the harp. Don't worry if you don't sing the exact pitches, but think of going up and down from F. Singing the letter names of the notes may help you. Now sing the left hand, bass staff, notes - a **much** simpler proposition!

### Review of the Rhythm basics

In 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, or any time signature with 4 as the bottom number, we give each quarter note 1 pulse or beat.

That means a half note or rest will be double the value of a quarter note: 2 pulses.

A whole note or rest will be 4 pulses

An eighth note or rest will get half a pulse, two of them equal a quarter note or rest.

Sometimes you'll see a dot to the right of a note head. This increases the time value of the note by 50%. In other words a dotted half note = 3 pulses, and a dotted quarter = 1 ½.

All notes have equivalent rests to show silent beats. Here are all the rests:

## Appendix 2:

# Sharps, Flats and Levers

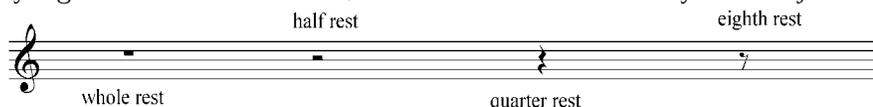
In most music there is additional information at the beginning - a key signature that tells you what "key" the piece is in. For any given note name there exists a note a semi-tone lower called a flat, and one a semi-tone higher called a sharp. So for the note D, there also exists a D flat, and a D sharp, but unlike the piano, not all these notes are available at all times on the harp.

This means to get some pitches you must adjust those strings by some means either *sharp* (#) which is a semitone higher, or *flat* (b) which is a semitone lower. Levers help you do this easily; if you have no levers you need to use your tuning key and with the help of an electronic tuner, get your strings adjusted to the correct pitch.

When there are no # or b signs at the beginning, the absence is still considered to be key signature information. We say it is the key of C major and all strings should be natural (♮). Depending on your harp, you may need to raise levers to get to the key of C, where a string is tuned to a flat.

If there is one sharp in the key signature of a piece, it is on an F. On the bass staff, it is right on the line encompassed by the 2 dots, so it is easy to remember it is an F. On the treble staff it is usually written on the top F line. Count your way up to be sure. This "one sharp" signature is the key signature for the key of G major and a whole host of associated modes. Raise all the F levers and the work is done. If there are 2 sharps, the second one will be C# and the key signature is said to be the key of D major. Raise both C's and F's strings and all is well.

If the key signature shows one flat, it will be a B♭ and the key is F major. You must lower the



B's to get B♭'s. This might be done by lowering the lever of the B strings, but if the strings are tuned to B without the lever being engaged, or if there are no levers on them, you need to adjust the strings by tuning them to B♭. Your tuner will show you! (though beware that some tuners will have A# instead - If you want the whole tuning info package you can download it from the website. My students will have it in their binders)

The hows and whys of this key signature business are endlessly fascinating; they are something you'll have the pleasure of exploring in more detail as you progress through your musical life. The last section, "*How to use the Tuning Chart*" has more detail about this

There are great resources on the internet for learning to read music. Here are a few:

**www.musictheory.net** Just a wonderful set of theory lessons by Ricci Adams. Short and sweet, but pretty clear, with activities and demos.

**www.musictheory.halifax.ns.ca** This is Gary Ewer's site. He has a CD-ROM based course that you can purchase, but on the website under "free lessons" there is a list of 35 or more along with quizzes and the answer sheets.

**www.8notes.com/theory** Little lessons that are easy to do, and cover the basics. As well, there are lessons about playing lots of instruments (though not harp), and free sheet music to download.

There are also some great books. Among my favourites:

**Henscratches and Flyspecks** by Peter Seeger. It takes a singer's approach to music reading, but every single page holds some interesting gem for any learning-to-be musician, and for the professional as well. Wonderful book.

**Making Music for the Joy of it** by Stephanie Judy. Not a theory book, but a guide to 'Enhancing Creativity, Skills, and Musical Confidence'. It is by a fellow Canadian, and rates as one of the most inspiring and thorough books about learning music.

**Music Theory for the Bored and Confused** by David Walden. If you don't mind bad (but funny) jokes that help you remember what you need to know, it's a pretty painless way to learn theory.

## Appendix 3

# How to use the Harp Start Bonus Tuning Reference Chart

Truthfully, I hope you don't need this page at all, but if you haven't explored your levers, and you're new to the idea of keys and music notation, a little explanation might be in order.

We all must tune our harps according to some system or other in order to get music out of them. Normally, we choose a key, and tune to that key with all the levers down, otherwise known as **levers not engaged** or having **open strings**. It's important to protect your strings from breakage by tuning with the levers down.

If you choose the key of C to tune in, you'll use the first column of the chart. Tune your strings to the notes given (C D E F G A B). Find the key you want to play in on the left, and read the instructions in the C tuning column. Many beginners, even with a full set of levers, start with this tuning, but the disadvantage is that you'll need to re-tune strings to play in keys with b's in them.

If you have a full set of levers, and they are functioning well, you may choose to tune your harp to E♭. This means that when your levers are down, you tune your strings to the notes of the E♭ scale: E♭ F G A♭ B♭ C D. In that case you read the E♭ column to find out how to play in various keys. Note that many electronic tuners use #'s (sharps) instead of b's (flats) to name the notes by. If yours is like that, you'll need to look for D# instead of E♭, G# instead of A♭ and A# instead of B♭ when tuning.

Many harps have **levers only on the F, C and B strings**. The most useful tuning for those harps is the one in the middle column, where you tune to the F scale. It is a useful tuning even if you have a full set.

**Note the comment above about tuners - yours may make you do it this way:**

**F - G - A - A# (instead of Bb) - C - D - E - F - G**

Here's an example of the chart in use: You have tuned your harp in F tuning. You look at the key signature on the music you're about to play and find it has 2 #'s. So you look down your chart, see the 3rd section where it says: **to play in D tuning** (aka key of D) and there is a little picture of the key signature. If it matches your music, read across to the F tuning you're in, and do as it says, namely, put the B, F, and C levers up, and you're in business!!

The last column "**this also works for:**" lists the other modes that you can play in with the tuning and levers given in that section. The most common is the Aeolian mode which is the same as the natural minor. So if someone tells you a piece is in D minor you can find it on the chart (it's in the "to play in F" section). If you have the music, its key signature will likely have just one flat.

Mixolydian and Dorian modes are common in Celtic music as well - they and all the rest are also found on the chart in all the common folk harp keys.

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A final word - As I prepare the final version of this for printing, it seems to be a little too much, too many details, too hard. It is difficult to put all the joy I feel in the playing and teaching down on paper - only the work seems to come through. So go easy on yourself. Relax, it is easier than it sounds, and you're doing it for the joy of it; ignore me if you must, and have fun!

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***"Improvisation is the courage  
to move from one note to the next."  
Bobby McFerrin ..***