

BACK TO THE HARP

HARP T.L.C.

Give your harp some love. Dust the sound board and use a soft brush to clean around the mechanism. Are your levers moving quietly and smoothly? Check that your pedal felts don't have signs of wear. You should not be able to see any metal! When did you last have your harp serviced? Maybe it's time to book the harp technician.

MARK IT UP

Label/mark all your covers, trolley, tuning key, music stand and harp bench, so that when you attend rehearsals and workshops your belongings are easily identified. If you've changed address recently or are going to University, then you will need to update the information. Put your name and mobile number on all your music so that, if you leave it anywhere, it will be returned to you quickly.

LIBRARY TIME

I usually sort out my music before the holidays; but, if you haven't done it yet, then it's time to clear the desk. Get your music organised into categories. File away copies that you have finished with and get ready for new repertoire.

BE SURE

September is when my harp insurance is renewed. I make sure it's up to date with full replacement value for my instruments. It's essential to check that you are fully insured should an accident happen. Shop around for insurance companies who are used to helping harpists. Some will give a discount if you are a member of a harp organisation.

BE SHARP!

The best pencil to use on music is a 2B one. It's either a 2B or not to be ...

Reserve HB pencils for shopping lists! Any pencils you get as freebies are unlikely to be 2B. Always have the pencil on the music stand for ensemble sessions and orchestral rehearsals.

ERASE MISTAKES

Do you have a good rubber/eraser? Those little ones on the top of pencils tend to leave residue on the page. Just a plain, good quality white one is all you need. Don't take my word for it, ask a Music Librarian!

GO SHOPPING

Treat yourself to a new notebook or two. One for lesson notes and one for practice notes. Charity (thrift) shops often have good choices, so have a browse there. Or get a plain, supermarket one and decorate it with your favourite harpy images or motivational quotes.

STRING CHECK-LIST

Check your strings. Do they need changing? Strings which are fraying, dirty or dry are difficult to tune and don't produce a good sound. New wire strings can make a huge difference to the overall sound of your harp. It's also time to check that you have the spares you need. Liaise with friends and order strings together to save on postage. Look out for special offers too.

PERFECT PITCH

Tune your harp. This seems obvious, but I often find that tuning gets neglected. Get into the habit of tuning every day, and it will get easier to do. Try not to leave it until the day of the exam or concert. And, who wants to hear an out of tune harp anyway?

PRIORITY BOOKING

As school/work timetables come in, then it's time to make appointments for practice. Write harp time in your calendars and make it a priority. Having that reminder helps you keep on track. You wouldn't cancel a doctor appointment; so why cancel harp practice time? It's as important.

IT'S A GOAL!

Your first lesson back with your teacher is a great time to set targets for the year ahead. Think about what you want to achieve in the short and long term. Try not to focus just on exams, or you will be limiting your repertoire hugely. Learn a new piece for fun: research original music for harp (not just arrangements); organise a fun family performance.

YES, PLEASE

There will be many new things starting up now. Look at them carefully. When you commit to a project, make space in your schedules. Set a deadline for yourself, which is a few weeks earlier than the actual deadline. Learn to balance your time, so that you are totally prepared. Look ahead as much as possible, so that you give each piece the same amount of attention. Even five minutes on several pieces is worthwhile.

NO, THANK YOU

It's easy to get overwhelmed with school, work, deadlines, commitments. Think about what you are being asked to do. And that includes what a teacher, parent, fixer, friend or neighbour might ask. Guard your time well. Doing too many things can lead to stress, and means you won't enjoy it or be ready. What is your criteria for committing to the project? Will it work for you and give you fulfilment? Is it the right time to do that exam? Will you perform your best for that project? Whatever age or level, you need to check that you are not putting yourself under too much pressure - physically or mentally.

HARP REBOOT

It can be difficult to get started after a break, so take it step by step. If you are not having regular lessons, consider booking a one-off session to help motivate you for the year ahead. I've opened up my diary for Harp Reboot sessions. They are ideal for those who want extra support. I can help you devise a plan, and get you started on the first step. Don't be shy, just get in touch. eirallynnjones@gmail.com

FIND YOUR SPACE

Make sure you have a creative space to practise in. Do you like your harp zone, or does it need a revamp? Find a little table to have by the harp, with everything you need close by. The view from your harp should be inspiring. Send me your photos so that I can see where you practise!

READY, STEADY, GO!

I'm all set for the new season. I've set my goals for the year ahead and my notebooks are ready. I have a revitalised work space, and I am enjoying the new view from the harp. I am ready. Are you?

© Eira Lynn Jones 2022

www.eirallynnjones.com