

## Teaching manifesto, Maria Christina Cleary, harp

*Goals of teaching: to enrich the individual (student) by being involved in one of the unique human activities that employs the left and the right sides of the brain contemporaneously. To benefit and enrich society by using the most powerful language of communication: music.*

*How to achieve these goals: individual enrichment occurs by encouraging each student to become an innovative and reflective artist, that first thinks in a critical way and consequently can transmit their thoughts to others through teaching or performing. This means that the approach is multi-faceted, interdisciplinary and contains both a practical and an academic part, as much as a rational side and an emotional side.*

*How to train critical thinking in an artist: critical thinking in musicians requires that the student participates in a life filled with music by playing an instrument or several instruments, but that they can also sing, dance, compose or improvise, conduct, and read and write music. Other important factors include understanding the physical aspects of playing an instrument and the relationship between the human body and the instrument (Feldenkreis method, Alexander techniques). The role of gesture and corporeal movements are also considered.*

*These practical activities can be combined with academic reflections using Informed Practices (IP), a methodology which puts music within a context. This includes aspects like structural analysis (fundamentals of theory, harmony, counterpoint, solfège, contrapunto alla mente) but also Rhetoric, Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art. A discussion of the role between the performer and the composer, or the role of a modern improviser are also part of IP, as much as cultural and societal contextualisations and, gender studies.*

*How to transmit art, or be a modern communicator through music: The role of being a future music teacher or a performing musician means to embrace other arts, like dance and theatre, but also to consider the role of music in society in general, especially with respect to the health benefits of music. The career possibilities where music can be the centre are myriad, especially when a musician employs critical and creative thinking in order to develop new career paths. Areas such as the psychology of performance, performance skills, reciting with the voice or instrument, expressing and verbally explaining Art are all part of any musical education.*

*Teaching a repertoire of over one thousand years, where each population and geographical area developed a different type of harp, are challenges for any teacher of harps. Unlike other instruments, each harp has a repertoire that is delineated geographically and historically and often cannot be interchanged with another harp. The first piece for a European harp is published in 1546 (Alonso Mudarra, Tiento in Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela, 1546), but the harp was extant since the 8th century and probably before. Repertoire before 1546 can be derived by extra-musical components like researching performing situations, archives and inventories of instruments in European courts.*

*From this sort of research, a “probable” repertoire can be identified. For example, the 14th century Faenza Codex for keyboard is a collection that can be played on the harps of the time, one being the single-rowed harp with a hexachordal or modal tuning. The 17th-century Italian arpa doppia repertoire is inorganic and awkward to play on a non-chromatic harp (e.g. Gregorio Strozzi, Capricci da Sonare Cembali et Organi, Op. 4, Napoli: Marescotti 1687). The music of Louis Spohr was conceived and written for harps with a single-action pedal mechanism and these works are not possible on the later double-action pedal harps as Spohr conceived them.*

*However, some common aspects do link these various instruments, one being the multi-functionality of all harps as melodic instruments, harmonic instruments and percussive instruments. Understanding the compositional processes, either written or in realtime (improvisation), are inherent parts of any harpists’ lives. This can also include arranging and the art of transcribing.*

*In contemporary music, I enjoy working with composers and sound artists to adjust scores for premiere performances and recordings. I am especially attracted to the fact that the compositional, interpretational and performing processes are intertwined and that I, as the performer and interpreter, can be part of the compositional process. These experiences can then be applied to any style of music of the previous centuries.*

*Alternative tuning systems from modal, micro-tonal and non-Western tuning systems and alternative musical notation from the Ars Nova, 17th century partiture, or contemporary spatial notation also link all styles and epochs of music. Alternative tuning systems and musical notations open our ears and eyes to look at music in a different way. Similarities in techniques can be found between different sorts of harps, where articulation (fingering) and, for example, the choice of pedals result in certain musical outcomes.*

*Artistic research, where a research question arises from a specific aspect of playing or teaching, is a necessary part of any 21st-century artist’s career trajectory. My own academic career includes a doctorate, the first monograph on harp pedalling in the world. This research resulted from a genuine performing dilemma, when I was confronted with pieces by Louis Spohr that seemed impossible to play using my technique of that time. Over the last few years, I have completely changed my pedalling technique and most importantly my approach to pedalling, where pedalling is now an inherent musical gesture and rarely a mechanical one.*

*As a teacher, I can propose individual programmes for students, at Bachelor and Master’s level, re-enforcing the strong points of a student and offering encouragement to work upon the weaker aspects, using whatever method that is effective with a particular student. With respect to artistic research, I can propose themes or research, especially of an interdisciplinary nature and can supervise and guide research, encouraging innovative ways to research, think and write.*

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