

- **harp.com**--home of Lyon and Healy harps' string and music contingent, based in Salt Lake City, UT.
- **vanderbiltmusic.com**--Vanderbilt Music Company, harp specialists based in Bloomington, IN.

Your instructor may also provide copies of music to get you going, and can order music for you to simplify the process.



Q. How do I take care of a harp?

A. With a little TLC and daily attention, your harp should make beautiful music for you for a long time. The following guidelines should keep your harp in tip-top shape.

-**Tune it daily** and/or before practicing; lever harps to Eb Major, pedal harps to Cb Major (A=440 for both).

-Always **tune with all levers down** (or all pedals up).

-Leave the **levers down** when not playing the harp.

-Keep the harp in a **safe place** in your house . If it is in the line of traffic, it can get nicked and damaged. Reasonably constant room temperature and humidity (70-75 degrees, 50% humidity) will keep the harp's wood in good condition.

-**Do not dust it with furniture polish or anything containing wood fibers.** Use a dry wood-friendly shammy. You can also order special harp dusting brushes and polishes

that are specific to your make of harp.

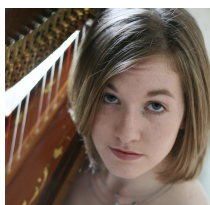
-Transport your harp with its **cover on** in your vehicle. Be sure the **levers are always facing up** (i.e., not the surface against which the harp is resting).

-Always replace strings with the **string gauge and material** required for your harp.

Q. Help! What do I do if I break a string?

A. Breaking strings is a normal occurrence if you play your harp frequently. You can order replacement strings from websites like **harp.com** and **vanderbiltmusic.com**, as well as from your harp's maker. Serious harpists keep an extra complete set of strings in the house, "just in case."

There are many resources to guide you through replacing strings, tuning, and general maintenance. **The best resource, of course, is your instructor!** If it is not possible to get help from this avenue, though, books like **David Kolacny's *Trouble-shooting your Lever Harp*** contain practical illustrations and instructions for how to replace strings and take care of a lever harp.



This brochure was compiled for you by **Colleen Potter Thorburn**, NVCC adjunct faculty member and professional harpist. Colleen has extensive experience performing as a concert soloist, in orchestras, as a chamber musician, in opera pits and musical theater productions, and even (once) with Kanye West. She holds a Master of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music, where she studied with harpist June Han, and a Bachelor of Music in harp performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, studying with Ann Yeung.

If you have questions about signing up for lessons, acquiring a harp, or other concerns, please **contact Colleen** at **cthornburn@nvcc.commnet.edu**.

On Playing the Harp at NVCC

2011-2012



Perhaps you are intrigued at the thought of learning to play the harp, but are a bit hesitant to take the plunge. **This brochure is for you!** In it, you will find helpful answers to many of your questions about finding, renting, and caring for a harp (they're not always as expensive or as large as you may think!).

Q. Why play the harp?

A. The harp is fun! Unlike many instruments, which take months and years of instruction before delivering a gratifying sound, the harp sounds lovely from the start. It is easy to make pleasing sounds, and with a bit of practice you will be able to create all kinds of special sound colors that are unique to the harp. Glissandi? Harmonics? Playing close to the soundboard? Bring it on!

The harp also allows you to have **maximum tone control** over the vibrating string, without a piano's hammer or violin's bow interfering. Playing the harp helps you obtain **supreme motor control** and **encourages creativity**. Learning to navigate the layout of the strings and read harp music also reinforces **music theory** knowledge.

Q. What kinds of music can I play on the harp?

A. The harp is one of the most versatile instruments. It is commonly used as a solo and orchestral instrument in classical music, but it is also widely played in churches, for weddings and background music, in chamber groups, in jazz, in Renaissance and folk music, and in music therapy programs. It is sometimes even featured in rap music! Music of all kinds has been written and arranged for the harp, so no matter your musical tastes, you are bound to find music you can play and enjoy on the harp.

Q. What kinds of harps are there? What should I play?

A. The harp is one of the oldest instruments in human civilization and has existed in some form in just about every human culture. The renowned Irish harp, the Spanish and Paraguayan harp, and the Chinese harp are just a few of the different harps connected with a cultural musical tradition. The **pedal harp**, with 47 strings and 7 foot pedals, is the largest harp around today and is the harp of choice for symphony orchestras.

Beginning harp students in the US and Europe commonly choose to play a **lever harp** of some sort. The number of strings on a lever harp varies from 22 to 36 or 38 strings. You should look for a harp with at least 30 strings and sharpening levers on most (if not all) strings. Used instruments should be in good condition (no bowed soundboards or crooked necks) with a nice sound quality.



Q. Where do I find a harp?

A. There are many music outlets and harp stores in New England that offer harp rentals and sales. **Harps International** in Burlington, CT, provides rental lever harps by reputable French and US harp makers for as little as \$50/month. They also provide rent-to-own programs. **The Harp Connection** in Salem, MA, is a bit further away, but also provides rental lever and pedal harps. Your NVCC harp instructor currently rents a 36-string Pratt lever harp (pictured above) from Harps International.

Q. How do private lessons at NVCC work?

A. Sign up for Music 183: Applied Lessons, harp option. For one credit, you will receive 12 half-hour lessons throughout the course of the semester for \$20/lesson, payable in advance to the instructor. Lesson times are negotiated with the instructor and will likely be on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for the Fall 2011 term.

Beginning lessons consist of exercises to build technique and gain comfortability at the harp. Students also learn pieces that show off different harp effects. Students have the option of participating in a jury performance at the end of the semester, in which they can get feedback

from the wider NVCC music faculty on their musical progress on the harp.

Q. How will I practice if I can't afford to rent an instrument?

A. You will progress faster if you have your own instrument. If it is not feasible for you to personally rent an instrument, though, a harp will be made available for NVCC harp students to practice on at the school. It can be signed out from the Music Department (A504) five days a week between 10am and 4pm.

Q. What additional supplies do I need to play the harp?

A. In addition to the instrument itself, you should plan to own the following items:

- **Tuning key** for the harp (usually included)
- **Cover set** (usually supplied free with rental)
- **Music stand.** Wire stands are available cheaply at most music stores, starting at \$20.

You may also find an **electronic tuner** helpful for tuning. You can get one for \$30 at most music stores. Look for a guitar tuner that is calibrated to A440.

Q. Where can I find harp music?

A. While some CT music stores carry a limited supply of harp music (Sam Ash Music, the Foundry in New Haven, etc.), you will find unlimited resources at your disposal if you order online: