

Make 2012 a Great “Year of the Harp” for You

by Anne Sullivan

The New Year brings with it a host of fabulous possibilities, and if you’re like me, you start thinking about all the new harp opportunities that may come your way. New pieces to learn, new ways to improve, new places to play, new harp friends to meet all present themselves as exciting pathways to being the harpist you want to be. In case you’re not quite as excited at the prospect as I am, let me share some of my ideas with you.

The very first thing that I do when the New Year comes is to file all the music that I played in December and left lying on my desk because I was too busy to put it away. While I’m doing that, my thoughts inevitably drift toward new repertoire: pieces I need to learn for upcoming concerts as well as things I’d like to learn or re-learn. This is the time I choose a “dream” piece, a work that I have always wanted to learn because it speaks to me in a special way. If you don’t have a “dream” piece in mind, a trip through the harp music catalogs, either paper catalogs or online, can give you lots of inspiration. Find yourself a piece of music you love and go for it!

Not enough inspiration in a catalog? Check out the harp music offerings on [YouTube](#), the most amazing resource for discovering all kinds of harp music. In fact, YouTube can be a part of your 2012 harp resolutions. Like everyone else, I am often too busy to go to harp concerts, or concerts of any sort, unless I’m performing in them. But as I always tell my students, listening to music is an essential part of our musical development and if we don’t listen to others play, we close ourselves off to the larger world of music and musicians. And if concerts aren’t convenient for you, YouTube can be the next best thing with its range of performances from formal recitals by established artists to more impromptu videos by students eager to share their success. And don’t feel bashful about posting your own videos or comments on videos you see.

The third component of my New Year’s plan is on my list every year: improving my technique. Once again, all the December performances plus holiday travels destroy my regular, carefully designed practice regimen which always includes technical work. And when my technique isn’t in top shape, neither is my playing. So for me, the New Year inevitably starts with a return to the basics of technique and some tried and true exercises and etudes. I mix up my technical work during the year, but my first aid course for my fingers is Salzedo’s “Conditioning Exercises.” This little set gives my fingers a great workout in a minimum of time, and I know my fingers will get back in shape quickly. And of course, some extra work on scales and arpeggios is a must! You can choose whatever exercises or etudes you like, and ones that are appropriate for your level of playing, but to borrow the Nike slogan, “Just do it!”

One more important point here: consider refreshing more than your fingers. Strengthen your entire [Sensory Triangle](#) with some of the resources on my online “conservatory,” [ARS Musica](#).

And lastly, it is important to remember that each of us is a member of a world-wide community of harpists. This community is there to support us, encourage us and inspire us. Not many harpists where

you live? Then join the online communities. Stay in touch through groups like the [American Harp Society](#) and the [World Harp Congress](#). Both of these organizations have wonderful publications and online resources to keep you connected. And [Harp Column](#) magazine has its own online community and harp forums where you can participate in discussions on every harp topic imaginable. Be a part of the fun – don't try to fly solo!

I hope these ideas will spark your imagination for making 2012 your best *Harpy* New Year ever!