

Harp Study with Yolanda Kondonassis

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are answers to many of the questions that I am asked most often. I regret that I am not always able to immediately answer each email that I receive directly, but I hope that this document will help clarify issues that arise most frequently.

For all questions not covered here, please contact the admissions office at The Cleveland Institute of Music. Contact info can be found on my Teaching Page at www.YolandaHarp.com.

1. How do I schedule my audition at CIM?

Your audition must be scheduled through the CIM Admission Office. You will need to attend one of CIM's official audition days so that you may participate in testing and other activities. Please note that all listed audition days may not be harp audition days, so please check with the admission office to make sure that harpists will be heard on your requested date.

2. What will my audition be like?

Auditions are scheduled for approximately twenty to thirty minutes each so that there is plenty of time for listening to prepared repertoire and getting acquainted. A harp applicant orientation session is also scheduled on audition day at CIM. At the session, I will give an overview of the harp program at CIM and there will be time for Q&A. Please note that both students and parents are welcome to attend the orientation session.

3. Is there a harp that I can use for my audition?

CIM owns an assortment of harps, several of which are made available to auditioning applicants. A warm-up harp will be available for your use in a nearby practice room approximately one half-hour before your scheduled audition time. The admission staff will let you know where to go for your warm-up.

4. Is there a harp I can use for practice before or on my audition day at times other than my scheduled warm-up?

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide harps for practice at times other than your scheduled warm-up period just prior to your audition. School-owned harps and practice facilities are in constant demand by currently enrolled students and must be reserved for their use. We suggest that you plan to arrive no earlier than the day before your audition so that practice time will not be such an issue. Applicants are also welcome to audition on their own instruments, but CIM is unable to provide storage or practice space. As a touring harpist myself, no one understands better than I do how stressful it can be to have limited access to a harp. Know that I understand

the limitations of traveling without a harp and that I listen with an awareness that you may not have seen a harp for a couple of days.

5. May I send a tape instead of auditioning live?

In cases where students live outside the U.S., or when extreme circumstances exist, I do allow applicants to audition with a video. Audio tapes without a video component will not be accepted. Please include a spoken introduction on your video, telling me a little about yourself and your background. While videos are accepted in special cases, it is always to the applicant's advantage to schedule a live audition. ***Please Note: COVID-era policies are different than those detailed above. Video auditions (as opposed to live auditions) will not affect outcomes in any way.***

6. May I schedule a visit and lesson with you prior to my audition year or date?

I do my best to accommodate anyone who wishes to schedule a lesson in the year(s) or months prior to an audition. I cannot, however, schedule a lesson with an applicant in the days before or on the day of an audition. My fee for a one-hour, in-person lesson is \$150; my fee for a Zoom lesson is \$100. If you are planning to apply or have applied to CIM in the current year's cycle, the lesson fee is waived. Zoom lessons are the easiest for me to schedule, but whenever possible, I am also happy to meet with students in person.

Please contact me at Yolanda.Kondonassis@cim.edu to request a lesson. For students not within a current admissions cycle, lesson checks may be mailed to Yolanda Kondonassis, c/o The Cleveland Institute of Music, 11021 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106.

7. What repertoire is appropriate for my audition?

I ask that all applicants prepare the following repertoire for their auditions: 1) The Advanced/Professional Warm-Up from my book *On Playing the Harp* (available from Carl Fischer Music, most music retailers, or my website - www.YolandaHarp.com) 2) Two memorized solos of contrasting style and 3) One orchestral excerpt of choice. *Graduate audition repertoire must include at least three orchestral excerpts.

Music may be used for the Warm-Up and the orchestral excerpts. There are no other guidelines regarding repertoire other than the expectation that music prepared should accurately reflect the applicant's level and ability.

8. I know that harp students at CIM are trained in the Salzedo tradition of technique. I have not been trained in the Salzedo method up to this point. Do you accept such students and/or is this a problem?

I encourage students of all training backgrounds to audition. Applicants should keep in mind, however, that technical training is an essential part of a conservatory education since one's technique is a critical tool in achieving artistic results and preventing injury. Students who come to CIM from other traditions of study must be open to making technical adjustments that are appropriate to individual needs and are generally informed by the Salzedo method of playing. My first task with new students (of all technical schools and traditions) is to evaluate an

individual's physical proportions, hand reach, and body use and make customized recommendations. The immediate priority is always to identify sources of unnecessary tension, and to create a strategy for maximum technical results with minimum body stress.

9. I am planning to major in another field at Case Western Reserve University. May I still study with you?

Unfortunately, I only have time in my schedule to teach conservatory students who major in Harp Performance.

10. Are scholarships available?

Yes. Scholarship awards - both merit-based and need-based - are available at CIM. To qualify for either type, you must complete the financial aid paperwork with your application and submit it by the indicated deadline. Final decisions on financial aid awards are made by the financial aid committee. My involvement in this process is limited to recommendations only.

11. If I do not own my own harp, is there an instrument I can use at school?

Yes. CIM owns several good harps that may be used on a full-time basis by students who do not own their own instruments. However, if a student does own a good harp, it is strongly suggested that they bring that harp with them, since school harps are also used for ensembles and access can be limited during heavy periods of orchestra rehearsals and concerts.

12. What is the harp program and the atmosphere like at the Cleveland Institute of Music?

All harp majors at CIM have a weekly, one-hour private lesson with me, as well as a harp class with me. Harp Class Sessions include of a variety of topics and activities such as: Performance Preparation and Psychology, Orchestral Literature, Pedagogy and Technique, Harp Maintenance, Protocol, Collaboration, Approaching Contemporary Music, Stage Presentation, Practice Techniques, The Business of Music, Sight-Reading, and Project Development. I generally have approximately 6-7 Harp Performance majors in my studio at any given time, and the CIM class of harpists is consistently close-knit and supportive. CIM has a large harp room where lessons and classes are held and where harps are safely stored. The room is locked at all times unless a harpist is present and using the room. Practice rooms are available as needed and by reservation. Jury performances are required in the spring of freshman, sophomore, and junior years, as well as full-length Junior and Senior Recitals in the 3rd and 4th years of the undergraduate program; full-length MM1 and MM2 recitals are required in the Master's Degree program. Orchestral and Ensemble work is assigned by me and is designed to distribute opportunities as equally as possible among harpists in the studio. Mock Orchestral Auditions are required each spring, and repertoire is determined by the yearly grid that is part of the harp department syllabus. CIM's atmosphere is professional, high-level, and demanding, and harpists enrolled at CIM are expected to have initiative, personal motivation, and discipline to achieve success. The Cleveland Institute of Music is located in an urban atmosphere in the heart of an area called University Circle that is also home to The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Cleveland Orchestra, Case Western Reserve University, and several other museums, botanical gardens, hospitals, parks, and cultural institutions. CIM students may stay in a new, student-

housing facility next door to the CIM main building; other affordable, independent housing is also available in the immediate area. There are many restaurants and shops on or nearby campus, and there is public transportation to and from the University Circle area.

13. What are some of the accomplishments that your students have achieved?

I am extremely proud of my current and former students' accomplishments. Prizes and competition wins include: Silver and Bronze Medals at the USA International Harp Competition, Grand Prize and Division Prizes at the ASTA National Solo Competition, First Prize in the American Harp Society's National Solo Competition, the American Harp Society's Grandjany Prize and Anne Adams Prizes (multiple winners), The Astral Artists Competition, the Lyon & Healy Awards (multiple winners), the Alice Rosner Prize at the Munich International Competition, First Prize in the WAMSO Young Artists Competition, Grand Prize in the Friends of The Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist's Competition, First Prize in The Ima Hogg National Young Artists Competition (multiple winners), and First Prize in the Corpus Christy National Young Artists Competition. My students routinely win auditions for all the major summer music festivals, including the National Repertory Orchestra, Pacific Music Festival, Lucerne Music Festival, National Orchestral Institute, Festival Hill at Round Top, Texas Music Festival, Monteux Music Festival, Prisma, National Music Festival, Chautauqua, and Spoleto, among others. In addition to pursuing thriving solo careers and holding faculty positions in prestigious institutions around the world, my students have won Principal Harp positions with the New World Symphony, The Melbourne (Australia) Symphony, The China Philharmonic, The Buffalo Philharmonic, The San Diego Symphony, The Sarasota (FLA) Orchestra, The Chicago Lyric Opera, The Pittsburgh Opera, The Oakland (CA) Symphony, the Youngstown (OH) Symphony, The Tacoma (WA) Symphony, The Baton Rouge (LA) Symphony, and The Spokane (WA) Symphony, to name a few.

14. What is your philosophy of teaching?

Playing the harp well is very important to me. Teaching my students to play the harp well is equally important to me. I strongly believe in a disciplined, creative, and organized approach to making progress and reaching one's potential.

I approach technical concerns from the viewpoint of the Salzedo technique and by applying common sense and experience in each situation. I approach musical concerns in a "whole-thinking" manner through many means. The two elements of the equation, technical and musical, must be thoroughly and attentively cultivated in order to achieve great results. Teaching and learning are opposite sides of the same coin and, as in any effective partnership, success depends on good communication, trust, and mutual respect.

For a more detailed discussion of my philosophies on playing and teaching, please refer to Part I of my book, *On Playing the Harp*. For more information on my background, recordings, and publications, please visit www.YolandaHarp.com.

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