

Deborah Henson-Conant's Tell Your Story with Music

It's about CONNECTION ... not PERFECTION

As adults, when we play music, we aren't doing a 'recital.' Our *effectiveness* and *impact* has very little to do with our specific skill level, or how 'well' we play a specific piece -- and everything to do with *how we use* our skills and talents - whatever they are - to CONNECT with listeners and *share* the experience of life that is unique to us.

More and more, as musicians, we have the opportunity to combine story and music -- whether it's introducing ourselves in performance, telling a story from our lives, creating library programs, playing in *personalized situations* for friends or clients, in livingrooms or therapeutic situations - and even in speaking engagements.

Our own speaking voice can make a connection to history, personal experience - even to the stories of others - and when we *combine* our voice with music, the impact is so much stronger. The music provides a context, an atmosphere, a moment to reflect.

This workshop uses the 7 principles from my 'Strings of Passion' program to give you a foundation and a set of idea-tools for telling YOUR story with music - any music you love.

Who's DHC (Deborah Henson-Conant)?

I'm Deborah Henson-Conant, also known as "DHC." I'm a composer/performer and I'm also a coach and mentor to creative harpists.

I help impassioned harp players express themSELVES with their instruments by teaching them the fundamentals of how music 'works' and how to improvise, arrange and combine their harp playing with other things they love - from singing and storytelling to cooking or writing.



"I just realized that I can play a really gorgeous improv and nobody will know how simple it is!" *Nell Morris*

I'm an impassioned creative artist ...and so are you!

My career spans nearly four decades and includes awards and opportunities I never dreamed I'd have, like getting a Grammy Nomination, or having my own music special on PBS, touring with a major rock band, or performing my own original symphonic works with orchestras like the Pittsburgh Symphony & Boston Pops.

"I have a strict classical background. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I could improvise! This brings it all together in a way that I can relate to." *Sally Walstrum*

For me, it all comes back to knowing how music *works* and then connecting to how it can work *for me* to express my own most authentic creative voice. That's what I love to help YOU do, too.

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fn: SHF-DHC-PlayWithFreedom-PlaySheet.indd

String 1: IMPULSE What is the story you want to tell?
String 2: STRUCTURE The story itself provides the structure. What is it?
String 3: CHARACTER What are you (and we) doing, seeing, hearing, feeling in this story? You don't have to construct music to express a particular aspect of character, but allow that character to infuse what you're playing.
String 4: ROLES - Use an understanding of roles to help you change 'scene,' physically engage or involve the audience in becoming part of the story.
String 5: PRACTICE & PRACTICES - How to practice this
String 6: DECONSTRUCTION - Simplify all this. Remove the details and make a simple blueprint you can follow and spontaneously alter.
String 7: LIFT-OFF - Let go of doing it perfectly and connect

String 1: IMPULSE
The desire to do, be, have, touch

String 2: STRUCTURE
Simple, flexible internal structure supports freedom of creative expression

String 3: CHARACTER
The flavor, dynamics, colors, textures that give an expression the greatest effect of *being itself*

String 4: ROLES

- A. Leadership and followship
- B. Knowing the role you play (ex: bass, accompaniment, melodic), knowing when/how to switch roles - how to predict the cleanest time and how to communicate the switch
- C. Role as Archetype creates a connection to expressive or performance abilities you don't 'normally' have

String 5: PRACTICE

- A. Being bad to be good
- B. What is a creative practice?

String 6: DECONSTRUCTION
Remove details to reveal essential structure & support reinvention

String 7: LIFT-OFF
We lift off when we let go of what is holding us down, and launch with full intent exactly as we are.

QUESTIONS to ASK
[Write your questions here]

Learn more about the Strings of Passion at StringsOfPassion.com

Warmup Bluesy Storytelling Intro

Deborah Henson-Conant

(Can also be used as an accompaniment for jazz-like RH noodling)

Use these for Storytelling: Try telling a story in the space. Can you keep the rhythm going in your head while you do that? Don't obsess over the syncopation - just get the *feeling*? What would help? (snapping your fingers?) Does it matter (to you, or your story, or the 'feel') for you to keep that rhythm? NOTE: The "x" notehead indicates "Slap Bass" - it just means you let your hand hit the strings and make a rhythmic slap sound as you reach for the note. It's just an option, not essential. Don't obsess over it - this is ALL about feeling.

Swing

NOTICE: The LH remains the same while the RH pattern starts on different notes (you can go up the scale, or just starting it on different notes and you can use either RH pattern - with or without the embellishment. NOTE where the RH and LH connect (and when each is on its own) NOTE: the accents and the staccato note - but don't worry about those aspects of character until you feel comfortable with the general movement. NOTE: the rhythm swings as if it were *skipping* instead of walking!

Swing

Alternate "More Space" Accompaniment: Notice that you can leave more space in the left hand - you can improvise melodically in that space - just keep counting - think of your RH as a melodic *single-line* metronome - avoid playing chord - go for the FEEL and the RHYTHM

Swing

A few Alternatives: #1: Breaking the first chord can make it *easier* to get the rhythm #2: Stopping, or damping the first chord can give it more character #3: You can add a higher part of the chord

Swing

General Thoughts & Questions:

- What can you do to enhance or change the *character* of this warmup?
- What are some of the places & ways you can use it?
- How can you keep the idea but alter the STYLE
- What can you do to make it *easier* to pull off? Let your fingers fall into patterns that help maintain the rhythm - for example, by breaking the first LH "chord" as in the first example in the 3 alternatives above.

Nightingale (Distilled)

(Slow Waltz Tempo)

Introduction (talk or play during the fermati)

Melody (A Section)

Think about the *words* when you play this so that you give it the phrasing and character of the words

FINE

Melody (B Section)

DC al Fine

Improvising Section

A few variations you can use: You can play this as many times as you want. You can shift it by an octave, you can leave the top note of the first 3 patterns out - and probably many other variations. You can create a kind of modified 'Rondo' by playing the 2nd 8 bars of the Melody A-Section)