

Correlation of duration of string vibration on harp and individual artistic expression

One of the main questions harpist addresses in music performance is “How long should I let the (particular) string vibrate?” Harp is the instrument where duration of sound rarely corresponds to music notation (unlike string or wind instruments). It is often compared to piano with permanently employed sustain pedal. The exceptionally long vibration time of metal strings on harp (up to one minute) as well as resonating of other strings complicates this subject extremely. Every small music phrase needs at least several decisions on muffling (arresting of vibration of strings - either individual strings, or several strings at the same time). These decisions are very individual, and their influence on result (performance) is enormous. Still, sometimes it is not possible to implore desired vibration due to the technical aspects - use of pedals, and prevention of string buzzing due to pedal changes, thus the artistic desires need to be correlated to technical possibilities. This opens another point of reaction - making enharmonic changes, and using other strings instead - to obtain desired length of vibration.

Although it is possible to think some of these aspect in advance, when addressing this problem, the research through artistic practice is in the focus. I have chosen Britten Suite for the harp solo, movements Overture, Nocturne and Hymn (St. Denio) for this research. I have consulted very limited literature on this subject that is available, and also, I have analyzed several performances, trying to understand the relation of duration of string vibration to individual artistic expression in correlation to the music notation. Through my own artistic practice, in order to achieve the length of vibration that I have desired I have experimented not only with organized muffling of certain string or several strings, but also with different playing techniques, and positions of holding the instrument. Besides addressing the issue of reducing the time of string vibration, I also needed to address the issue of making the impression that the sound lasts more than it can actually last (for the strings in upper register). While experimented I have created a certain methodology of thinking in order to resolve problems in desired way.



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- Associate Professor at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade.
- Soloist and chamber musician. Performed on numerous concerts and festivals in Serbia and abroad, including performances at the World Harp Congresses in Geneva, Vancouver, Sydney and Hong Kong and at Harp Festivals in Rio de Janeiro, Sankt Petersburg and Zagreb.
- Extensive orchestral experience. Principal harpist in the Opera Orchestra of the National Theatre in Belgrade (1994-2009), and contract harpist for many orchestras in the region.
- One of the founders of the International Harp Festival in Belgrade (2002), Artistic Director of the Festival ever since.
- Doctor of Musical Arts -2016, Faculty of Music in Belgrade.
- Studied two years with Mr. Frank Sternefeld at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.
- Prize winner on several competitions.

- City of Belgrade Prize (1994).
- project management skills.
- Voluntary work with children with Down syndrome, blind and visually impaired persons, and other groups with special needs.