



# The Harp Therapy Journal

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## Hearing through their fingers

by Colleen Politi

Current research found in the book *Musicophilia* by Dr. Oliver Sacks, shows that the human brain has more receptors for music than it does for speech. Through my therapeutic music studies, I felt I had achieved a thorough knowledge and understanding of the importance of the role of music in our daily lives. But recently, the boundaries of my beliefs were expanded beyond anything I could have imagined.

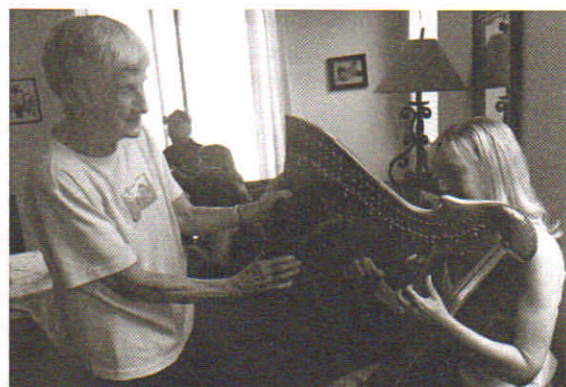
I was invited to play for a group of blind and deaf individuals, at a meeting of the AZ Deaf and Blind Association in Phoenix, Ariz. In preparing for the event, I wondered what I should play, especially for people who wouldn't be able to see me and wouldn't be able to hear my music with their ears.

During my studies toward certification as a therapeutic musician, and in the years of practice that have followed, I have experienced and demonstrated how music can reach the heights and depths of our emotions, how music can carry us to our past, and how it can hold us in the present. I practiced the use of modes, scales, rhythms and improvisation techniques, but, none of this prepared me for the true joy I witnessed that day.

Everyone entered the room to a greeting from interpreters who explained that a harpist was playing for them. Their reaction to the news was obvious delight. A few signed that they had never "heard" a harp before and asked to be brought closer to me. Those who had sight smiled and signed "beautiful." The people who had neither vision or the ability to hear asked if they could touch the harp.

I explained to the interpreter that they should begin by touching the soundboard. One by one, everyone took a turn, their faces lit with delight as they experienced the vibrations. One woman asked to follow my hands as I played. She lightly touched the back of my hands and signed, "Oh, it flows so gently!" Then she sat next to me, never taking her hand from the soundboard. Soon her eyes closed and her breathing slowed as she drifted with the vibrations of the music. Several members inflated balloons and held them in an effort to feel the vibrations of the music. The effect, while slight, was clearly appreciated.

When I paused for a moment, a man asked, "Why has the music stopped? Please ask her to keep playing!" I was enthralled by the realization that these people craved the sounds they could not hear with their ears. They were drawn to the music as much as those of us who are blessed with audition. They were eager to "hear" the vibrations. They wanted to experience the music. They were so anxious to touch the



Colleen Politi plays her harp at the Arizona Deaf and Blind Association

harp, the strings and my hands. There was music and they didn't want to miss a minute of it!

One of the interpreters shared that this was the most peaceful meeting she had ever attended and that typically, there was a good deal of tension, because all of the members desire to "speak," but there aren't enough interpreters to accommodate all of the need. She asked if I might be able to "come again and often!"

The joy of that day was also shared by me. It was wonderful to see how the vibrations of the harp provided such happiness and relaxation. It was an affirmation to witness how my music made a true difference and it gave me a new perspective about all that I had learned in my studies.

I will never again wonder, as I enter a room in a hospital or hospice, whether a sleeping or unresponsive patient can hear me. I will stop wondering if they

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**NSBTM**, from page 19

Program. Many thanks to Bonnie Schmader, CCM, for her work on the council during the last year.

**Non-profit status**

We believe we have met all of the requirements to qualify as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation and hope that we will have approval by fall. ♡

**Canadians**, from page 17

this exciting and developing field in Canada. Since this gathering took place on the West Coast of Canada, it was put forward that our next gathering should happen in the Central or Eastern parts of Canada, though a "destination PDG" site in Cuba was suggested, too, especially if planned to break the long winter blues! We will begin the planning for 2013. The organization is only in its infancy but it manages a website and plans professional development gatherings and is at present referred to as the Canadian Certified Therapeutic Harp Practitioners. For more information, please visit: [www.therapeuticharp.ca](http://www.therapeuticharp.ca). ♡

**Insurance**, from page 14

7. For instrument coverage, is loss to a borrowed instrument covered?

8. What is the claims process?

*What should I expect to pay?*

Professional liability insurance obtained through a professional association is likely to be more cost effective than standard professional liability insurance. Of course, choice in coverage options will affect cost; however, I found reasonable solutions for my needs.

Also, current *HTJ* subscribers are eligible for a \$20 discount from ABMP by sending a copy of the last page of the Journal (which includes the address label with expiration date and the ABMP code#) along with the ABMP insurance renewal. ♡

**Websites**

Associated Bodyworks & Massage Professionals (ABMP): [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com)  
Clarion Associates, Inc.:  
[www.clarionins.com](http://www.clarionins.com)  
Healing Touch Professional Association (HTPA): [www.htprofessionalassociation.com/liability-insurance](http://www.htprofessionalassociation.com/liability-insurance)

**Hearing**, from page 1

will respond to the vibrations that I am sending across the room to them from the strings. I have experienced something that has given me the answer. Music is a powerful force in the quality of our lives.

For another wonderful example of the role music plays in our lives, please research the amazing story of Evelyn Glennie, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music who lost her ability to hear at the age of 12. Even with this challenge, she has become a world renowned percussionist and has taken on the role of advocate for change, encouraging colleges of music, worldwide, to accept students with hearing impairments and deafness. Evelyn reminds us that sound is our daily medicine.

To view a video of Evelyn Glennie's work, visit: [www.ted.com/talks/evelyn\\_glennie\\_shows\\_how\\_to\\_listen.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html). ♡

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