

Harp Therapy

An Ancient Instrument Comes of Age

by Anita R. Quick

In the annals of history, the harp is known as an instrument of angels, gods, and humankind. From Apollo's lyre to a shepherd named David, stories are told of the harp's power to soothe and heal. Edgar Cayce predicted that sound would be the medicine of the future, and today, harp therapy is the focus of a growing interest in the power of music to promote healing, harmony, and well-being.

How does harp therapy work? It is believed that a phenomenon called "entrainment" (which allows other harp strings to resonate when a single string is plucked) works in the body on a cellular level. The high water content of the cells carries the resonance of the music and our bodies seek a natural state of harmony. Just as copper vibrates most closely to the human vibration in gemstone therapy, the harp vibrates most closely to us. Some healers consider its music the equivalent of white light.

Various programs across the country are studying the effects of harp therapy on patients with cancer, autism, mental illness, and more. Raphael Weisman, a harp maker from Questa, New Mexico, has always known of the healing power of the harp. After studying early instrument making in England, he moved to the United States and in 1986 began his current business, Harps of Lorien (named for the Tolkien home of the Elves). His creations range from massive concert harps, to therapy harps, to his "Little Minstrel", a small harp that requires no training and can be played by anyone.

Raphael envisions the harp used in homes and schools, hospices and healing centers - both to promote healing and to raise the consciousness of the planet. "The harp," he says, "is an instrument of peace. You don't play a harp going to war."

Raphael crafts his harps with care and dedication, putting prayers and mantras into these instruments of healing as he makes them. He is currently seeking to expand his website and distribution so that more people have access to the power of the harp.

Attending harp therapy conferences has allowed him to meet others who share his enthusiasm. One of these is Amy Camie, a St. Louis-area harpist who became aware of harp therapy when she sent a recording of her music for a friend, Pat Clark, to use during hospice visualizations. Pat's response inspired Amy to learn more about music as therapy and to record her CD *New Love - Awaken to Yourself*, a beautiful collection of harp arrangements adapted from Narada piano artists like David Lanz. (Amy also has a Christmas CD and a single CD release of her lullaby "I Will Always Be with You," written for children after Sept. 11 and recorded with vocalist Bridgette Cossor). Amy has personally witnessed the power of her music with her father, who remains cancer-free since 1997, when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Harp therapy ranges from active to passive: actually playing the harp, listening to a harpist, or listening to harp recordings. In a pilot study program designed by Dr. William Cooper, breast cancer patients listening to Amy's CD *New Love* experienced positive changes in brain wave activity within four minutes, reducing stress, which impairs the immune system. In 2002, Amy established the not-for-profit Scientific Arts Foundation, whose mission is "to support research that will expand our understanding of how creative art, healing art, and fine art impact the healing process."

The Scientific Arts Foundation is currently engaged in fundraising to research the effects of harp therapy on newly diagnosed breast cancer patients receiving chemotherapy. Donations are tax-deductible. For more information, visit their website at www.scientificartsfoundation.org. To learn more about Amy Camie or to order her CDs, visit her web-site at www.healingharp.org. In Chicagoland, Amy's music is available at Inner Self, Westfield Shopping, 74 Old Orchard Shopping Center, Suite F74, Skokie.

Those interested in period stringed instruments or in harps used for storytelling or harp therapy can contact Raphael Weisman through his website www.harpsoflorien.com or phone toll-free 877-273-8009.

Anita R. Quick, a Reiki Master / Teacher and Crystal Healer, is a part-time staff member of Southwestern Illinois College and the author of the "Medicine Wheel Work Book". She sees clients by appointment at Living Insights Center in Clayton, Mo. (less than a block west of St. Louis's Forest Park at 6361 Clayton Road).

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