

Scintillating baroque..



.. Serious **fun**



Director from the Continuo
Andrew Lawrence-King
Early Harps & Research

www.TheHarpConsort.com

Early Opera &
Historical Productions



Action! Action! Action!

Shaping the Modern: What is the Meaning of Historically Informed Performance?

What is Early Music? Can we ever be Authentic? Does historical musicianship damage our personal integrity as performers? Aren't modern instruments and modern techniques just better, anyway? What space is there for Emotions in Early Music?

Discussions about and within Historically Informed Performance range from high philosophy to the tiniest details. But how many modern Early Music habits are actually supported by period evidence?

What were the priorities back then? What matters to players and audiences today? How can historical information influence our playing of the modern harp?

Andrew Lawrence-King asks a panel of Early Harp specialists to discuss their personal views, the current consensus, and the outlook for the future of Early Music on the harp.

SCRIPT

Let me begin by introducing our panel members. I'll then say a few words, and we'll immediately get going with the discussion. We'll give the panellists first go at the questions, but I'll also open up the debate for comments and questions from the floor.

So, our panel....

I'm Andrew Lawrence-King, I play early harps and direct baroque operas all over the world, and I'm a Visiting Researcher for the Australian Centre for the History of Emotions. The Centre has investigators at the major universities all across Australia, as well as roving researchers like me working internationally. With a highly collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach across a wide range of Performance, Arts and Humanities subjects, the Centre asks what 'Emotions' meant in Europe in the historical period 1100-1800, and how a better historical understanding might shape modern experience here in Australia. So this present encounter between historical harps and modern-day players happily and appropriately links the World Harp Congress with the world's largest humanities project, the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions.

And here we go....

Shaping the Modern: What is the Meaning of Historically Informed Performance?

What is Early Music? Can we ever be Authentic? Does historical musicianship damage our personal integrity as performers? Aren't modern instruments and modern techniques just better, anyway? What space is there for Emotions in Early Music?

Discussions about and within Historically Informed Performance range from high philosophy and grand visions to the tiniest details. But how many modern Early Music habits are actually supported by period evidence?

What were the priorities back then? What matters to players and audiences today? How can historical information influence our playing of the modern harp?

My role today is to ask provocative questions for our expert panellists to discuss and all of you to consider and debate. Tomorrow evening, I'll be performing Spanish and South American baroque music as *El Maestro di Norte* with The World Harp Consort. On Friday morning I will speak about my own take on Early Music: *How did it feel? A history of heaven, harps and hearts*, and I'll be teaching at the Sydney Con on Monday.

But today, my job is to be umpire, to make sure everyone has a fair chance to speak, to be a kind of Agent Provocateur, and/or Devil's Advocate, and sometimes to ask challenging questions, in the hope of stirring up a lively, passionate, but highly civilised debate. Let's keep contributions short, so that there can be lots of to and fro, and many people can speak. Let's aim to open up productive questions, rather than seeking to close subjects down with narrow answers. Let's feel free to disagree with each other, but in a spirit of mutual respect: let's leave room for others to disagree with us too!

So to get the ball rolling, I'd like to ask each panellist to answer in one sentence: in your own historically informed work: **What are your top three priorities?**

Follow up

- Where do those priorities come from?
- How do you adjust those priorities in different situations, dealing with research, your own performance, teaching, and reaching out to modern audience?

Extend

- What is Early Music? (What defines the repertoire that you play)
- Can we ever be Authentic?

Challenges

- What's the evidence for this? (Where does this come from?)
- How do you do this in performance?
- How do you teach this?
- What about the Audience?
- How is this different from normally accepted 'best practice', amongst musicians in general?
- What do you do that is un-historical? Does it make a difference?

0945 Historicism & Emotions

- Does historical musicianship damage our personal integrity as performers? Isn't it false or artificial to perform according to some old recipe, rather than your own instincts? Isn't it limiting to your freedom as an artist to be constrained by historical style?
- Aren't modern instruments and modern technique just better, anyway?
- Is there any space for Emotion in Early Music? (or is it all 'academically controlled')

1015 Shaping the Modern

- How can all this specialist stuff about Historical Harps be beneficial for players of modern harps, of various kinds? I'm thinking of players of modern double-action pedal harps, Celtic or lever harps, South American harps etc.
- How does all this connect to other Historical disciplines (drama, literature, art, history, philosophy etc)
- What would you say to someone wanting to start off in your particular field?

1045 Audience/reserve question

- Are there any new questions you'd like to open up, from the audience?
- What do you hope for from the next generation of Historically Informed Performers?

1055 Final squib

I'm not going to try to sum up all this fascinating discussion, rather we've time for just one more question, to each of our panellists.

I'm hoping we can make this like a fireworks display, with one last flash and bang at the end, a final squib. So let's have short answers please, so everyone has a chance to give their last words, and score a sound-bite.

- (I warned you that I was going to play Devil's Advocate and Agent Provocateur ...)

Isn't all this Early Music stuff a mammoth waste of time and effort, just one big distraction away from the real job, which is to concentrate on playing the standard repertoire superbly well, and to play music relevant to present-day audiences?

Thank all our panellists Thank the organisers of the World Harp Congress for giving some space to the seven centuries before the invention of the double-action harp, as well as to the couple of centuries afterwards. Thanks to all of you for being here, listening, speaking, perhaps even thinking too! I hope we'll see each other again at other Early Harps events over the next few days.