

Study with Yolanda Kondonassis

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are answers to many of the questions that I am asked most often. I regret that I am not always able to immediately answer each email that I receive directly, but I hope that this document will help clarify issues that arise most frequently.

For all questions not covered here, please contact the admissions office at either The Cleveland Institute of Music or Oberlin Conservatory. Contact info can be found on my Teaching Page at www.YolandaHarp.com.

1. How do I schedule my audition?

If you are applying to CIM, your audition must be scheduled through the CIM Admission Office. You will need to attend one of CIM's official audition days so that you may participate in testing and other activities. Please note that all listed audition days may not be harp audition days, so please check with the admission office to make sure that harpists will be heard on your requested date.

If you are applying to Oberlin, your audition must be scheduled through the Oberlin Conservatory Admissions Office.

If you are applying to both CIM and Oberlin, I ask that we meet at both institutions for two separate auditions. Not only does this give us more time together for discussion and getting acquainted, it provides an opportunity for you to become familiar with both campuses and learn about the culture and opportunities at each. I always try and schedule auditions at both schools on the same weekend to facilitate this opportunity for those applying to both schools.

2. What will my audition be like?

Auditions are scheduled for approximately twenty to thirty minutes each so that there is plenty of time for listening to prepared repertoire and getting acquainted. A harp-applicant orientation session is also scheduled on audition days at both CIM and Oberlin. At the session, I will give an overview of the programs at both CIM and Oberlin and there will be time for Q&A. Please note that both students and parents are welcome at the orientation session.

3. Is there a harp that I can use for my audition?

Yes. CIM and Oberlin own an assortment of harps, several of which are made available to auditioning applicants. A warm-up harp will be available for your use in a nearby practice room one half-hour before your scheduled audition time. The admission staff will let you know where to go for your warm-up.

4. Is there a harp I can use for practice before or on my audition day at times other than my scheduled warm-up?

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide harps for practice at times other than your scheduled warm-up period just prior to your audition. School-owned harps and practice facilities are in constant demand by currently enrolled students and must be reserved for their use. We suggest that you plan to arrive no earlier than the day before your audition so that practice time will not be such an issue. Applicants are also welcome to audition on their own instruments, but CIM and Oberlin are unable to provide storage or practice space. As a touring harpist myself, no one understands better than I do how stressful it can be to have limited access to a harp. Know that I understand the limitations of traveling without a harp and listen with an awareness that you may not have seen a harp for a couple of days.

5. May I send a tape instead of auditioning live?

In cases where students live outside the U.S., or when extreme circumstances exist, I do allow applicants to audition with a video. Audio tapes without a video component will not be accepted. Please include a spoken introduction on your video, telling me a little about yourself and your background. While videos are accepted in special cases, it is always to the applicant's advantage to schedule a live audition.

6. May I schedule a visit and lesson with you prior to my audition year or date?

I do my best to accommodate anyone who wishes to schedule a lesson in the year(s) or months prior to an audition. I cannot, however, schedule a lesson with an applicant in the days before or on the day of an audition. Since I receive so many requests for lessons from out-of-town students, I have created a system of scheduling periodic "Open Teaching Days." If you would like to learn more about Open Teaching dates and availability, please contact my assistant at YKAssistant@gmail.com. My fee for a one-hour lesson is \$150. If you are applying or have applied to either CIM or Oberlin in the current year's cycle, the lesson fee is waived.

7. What repertoire is appropriate for my audition?

I ask that all applicants prepare the following repertoire for their auditions: 1) The Advanced/Professional Warm-Up from my book *On Playing the Harp* (available from Carl Fischer Music, most harp retailers, or my website - www.YolandaHarp.com) 2) Two memorized solos of contrasting style and 3) One orchestral excerpt of choice. *Graduate audition repertoire must include at least three orchestral excerpts.

Music may be used for the Warm-Up and the orchestral excerpts. There are no other guidelines regarding repertoire other than the expectation that music prepared should accurately reflect the applicant's level and ability.

8. I know that harp students at CIM and Oberlin are trained in the Salzedo tradition of technique. I have not been trained in the Salzedo method up to this point. Do you accept such students and/or is this a problem?

I encourage students of all training backgrounds to audition. Applicants should keep in mind, however, that technical training is an essential part of a conservatory education since one's technique is a critical tool in achieving artistic results. Students who come to CIM or Oberlin

from other traditions of study must be open to making technical adjustments that are appropriate to individual needs and are informed by the Salzedo method of playing.

9. I am planning to major in another field at Case Western Reserve University or Oberlin College. May I still study with you?

Unfortunately, I only have time in my schedule to teach conservatory students who major in Harp Performance. However, it is often possible to arrange lessons with CIM's preparatory harp instructor or in Oberlin's Secondary Harp Program.

If you choose to attend Oberlin Conservatory as a double major in another field (in addition to Harp Performance), then you would certainly study with me and be required to complete all the requirements of a Harp Performance Major as well as the requirements of your other major.

10. Are scholarships available?

Yes. Scholarship awards - both merit-based and need-based - are available at both CIM and Oberlin. To qualify for either type, you must complete the financial aid paperwork with your application and submit it by the indicated deadline. Final decisions on financial aid awards are made by the financial aid committees at both schools. My involvement in this process is limited to recommendations only.

11. If I do not own my own harp, is there an instrument I can use at school?

Yes. Both CIM and Oberlin own a variety of good harps that may be used on a full-time basis by students who do not own their own instruments. However, if a student does own a good harp, it is strongly suggested that they bring that harp with them since school harps are also used for ensembles and access can be limited during heavy periods of orchestra rehearsals and concerts.

12. What is the difference between the Cleveland Institute of Music and Oberlin Conservatory?

Since all harp majors at Oberlin and CIM study with me privately and have a weekly harp class with me, the harp education at both schools is very much the same. The harp department syllabus and repertoire requirements are the same at both schools, and the music and academic course requirements are very similar as well. While both institutions have excellent facilities, the primary difference between CIM and Oberlin is probably the most noticeable in terms of atmosphere and environment. The Cleveland Institute of Music is located in an urban atmosphere in the heart of an area called University Circle that is also home to The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Cleveland Orchestra, Case Western Reserve University, and several other museums, hospitals, and cultural institutions. Oberlin's campus is situated in a lovely small town with a collegiate, campus-oriented atmosphere. After visiting both campuses, most prospective students tend to have a pretty good idea of where they would feel the most at home.

13. What are some of the accomplishments that your students have achieved?

I am very proud of my current and former students' accomplishments. My students have won Silver and Bronze Medals at the USA International Harp Competition, Grand Prize and Division Prizes at the ASTA National Solo Competition, First Prize in the American Harp Society's National Solo Competition (Advanced Division), the American Harp Society's Grandjany Prize and Anne Adams Prizes (multiple winners), Lyon & Healy Awards (multiple winners), First Prize in the WAMSO Young Artists Competition, First Prize in the Friends of The Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist's Competition, First Prize in the Corpus Christy National Young Artists Competition, and First Prize in the Midland-Odessa National Young Artists Competition. My students repeatedly win auditions for all the major summer music festivals, including National Repertory Orchestra, Pacific Music Festival, National Orchestral Institute, Festival Hill at Round Top, Texas Music Festival, Monteux, and Spoleto, among others. In addition to holding faculty positions in prestigious institutions around the world, my students have won Principal Harp positions with the New World Symphony, The Melbourne (Australia) Symphony, The China Philharmonic, The Buffalo Philharmonic, The San Diego Symphony, The Sarasota (FLA) Orchestra, The Chicago Lyric Opera, The Pittsburgh Opera, The Oakland (CA) Symphony, the Youngstown (OH) Symphony, The Tacoma (WA) Symphony, The Baton Rouge (LA) Symphony, and The Spokane (WA) Symphony, to name a few.

14. What is your philosophy of teaching?

Playing the harp well is very important to me. Teaching my students to play the harp well is equally important to me. I strongly believe in a disciplined, creative, and organized approach to making progress and reaching one's potential.

I approach technical concerns from the viewpoint of the Salzedo technique and by applying common sense and experience in each situation. I approach musical concerns in a "whole-thinking" manner through many means. The two elements of the equation, technical and musical, must be thoroughly and attentively cultivated in order to achieve great results. Teaching and learning are opposite sides of the same coin and, as in any effective partnership, success depends on good communication, trust, and mutual respect.

For a more detailed discussion of my philosophies on playing and teaching, please refer to Part I of my book, *On Playing the Harp*. For more information on my background, recordings, and publications, please visit www.YolandaHarp.com.