

CHAPTER 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The word “cadenza” originated from the Italian word for cadence. As baroque music was emerging, it signified a flourish, where the soloist (instrumentalist, singer or continuo player) was expected to improvise briefly with musical and technical virtuosity. Gradually with the further development of baroque and classical music, a longer improvised cadenza was performed during a pause near the conclusion of a movement or aria. It always ended with a long trill to alert the leader or conductor to bring in the orchestra.

Baroque music was written in outline form: melody, bass line and figured bass which indicated the chords and their inversions. Musicians would improvise within this structure by ornamenting the melody and filling out the harmonies. This was standard notation with composers such as Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Bach and Handel. As the custom of composers writing cadenzas became more established, classical musicians gradually lost the skill of spontaneous improvisation.

In this Notebook, harpists are encouraged to create and develop their own ideas by writing and playing.

CHAPTER 2 HOW TO GET STARTED

Baroque music has its own distinctive style and it is important to be thoroughly familiar with this before starting. Listen to recordings on original instruments, particularly the harpsichord. Pay attention to the lighter tone quality compared to modern instruments.

Handel originally wrote the Concerto in B \flat for organ or harp. The soloist would have been expected to make considerable embellishments to the original version. There are several editions for the harp currently available, the most well known by Grandjany and Salzedo. These reflect the musical tastes of their time: every ornament is notated and the cadenzas are long and elaborate. The current trend is for authenticity and adherence to the original style.

Before beginning to compose, make sure you know the actual sound of the concerto well. Play it, sing it, know the harmonies. Identify each theme and new idea in both the first and second movements. As the cadenza comes at the end of the second movement, do not use material from the third movement.