



Deborah Henson-Conant's

# Tell Your Story with Music

WORKSHOP  
HANDOUT

**Telling your story with music** is one of the most powerful things you can do.

**When someone asks you to play**, starting with a story can ground you personally, and can change the context of the entire situation from one in which you may feel your audience is judging your musical ability into the magical realm of storytelling.

**Story can completely change people's experience of listening to you**, and can turn the world's simplest song into a triumph both for you and the audience, especially if that story is about your experience of music, or of this particular piece, or of your journey to playing it.

**Instead of trying to impress people with your abilities**, tell a story with music and open the magic of your life experience.

**Start by taking a piece you could play in your sleep** – often one of the first pieces you ever played, and pair it with the story of how you started playing the harp.

**The music for the story** can be as simple as soft glissandi, with the dominant note of the piece as your bass note, or a theme from the piece of music, or one of the snippets I've provided here.

**In this workshop, we'll explore how to find your story and the music to tell it.**

Try this story template from my Blueprints for Creativity Class at HipHarpAcademy.com. Try using a song you know like the back of your hand and apply the formula.

### Story #1: The First Time I Saw a Harp

Beat	Description	What will you play or say:
1	<b>Set the atmosphere</b> & share the theme or feeling of the music	
2	<b>Share the theme</b> of the story starting with "The first time I saw a harp ..."	
3	<b>Play another snippet</b> of music. Example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to first</li> <li>• Next phrase</li> </ul>	
4	<b>Describe the location</b> & why you or the harp was there	
5	<b>Play another snippet</b> of music. Example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to first</li> <li>• Next phrase</li> </ul>	
6	<b>Connect</b> the story with how and/or why you play the harp today & the relevance of this piece to that.	
7	Play the piece	

**EXAMPLE #1: How I started the Harp****PLAY MUSIC**

The first time I saw a harp, I was 13 and it showed up in my livingroom – borrowed from a friend of my mothers.

**PLAY MUSIC**

I thought it was cool, but I didn't like the lessons, and refused to practice - so after 6 lessons they sent the harp back.

**PLAY MUSIC**

When I got to college, the concert band needed a harpist, and those six lessons made me the most qualified candidate. This time I got a different teacher. She saw that I was composer. She had me *write* music to play. And that changed everything.

**PLAY THE PIECE****EXAMPLE #2: How/Why I wrote a song****PLAY PHOENIX THEME**

When my first band broke up, I thought my career was over.

**PLAY PHOENIX THEME**

We had one more gig on the books – and the other two refused to play it. I decided to go out with a bang, to write my own swan song, record it and release it at the gig – and I had no idea what would happen after that.

**PLAY PHOENIX THEME**

I desperately needed hope and so I wrote the song I needed to hear. It's called "The Phoenix" and it was the piece that landed me a record contract and launched a whole new phase of my career.

**PLAY "THE PHOENIX"**

**These snippets are great for telling stories, and setting a mood.** They're from the module about 'Character' in the "Strings of Passion" program at Hip Harp Academy. They're snippets that evoke a sense of character or atmosphere. You can use them to tell your own story by alternating them with your narrative.

Start looking for evocative snippets in the music you play and use them to tell a story about that music.

**Snippet for a Jazzy, Bluesy story**



**Snippets from a simplified version of "The Nightingale"**



**Snippet from a simplified version of "Baroque Flamenco"**



**Learn more about how to tell your story with music at  
Hip Harp Academy**