

# The (im)possibility of performance with(out) fear

## Part II: Pendulum, Fish, and Eagle's Arm

BY ELISABETH POMÈS



Last month's article focused on "knowing the enemy": witnessing the nerves and their manifestation before coping with them. This month's article will focus on coping with nerves on a physical level.

### TENSION

When a situation is stressful (in our case a performance, concert, audition, exam.), we tend to do two things: we hold our breath, or we breathe very shallowly. Either way, our body tenses up. Whenever I give a workshop, I always ask "where do you feel tension in your body?" and invariably the answer is in the neck, shoulders and in the back.

So I would like to offer here a few exercises and techniques to alleviate tension.

### EXERCISES

Some useful exercises you probably already know, such as head rotation, shoulder lifts and shoulder rotations. But let's try an exercise specifically to release tension in the neck: **the Pendulum.**

*Drop your chin to your chest. Slowly turn your head to the left and then to the right as you breathe deeply in and out. Feel the stretch at the back of your neck.*

This exercise can easily be done waiting in the wings (where the simpler the better).

### NECK, SHOULDERS, BACK, CHEST

One result of tensing the neck, is that the shoulders go up and we round the back and collapse the chest. An exercise that will help with this is the **Eagle's Arm:**

*Bring the left elbow over the right and intertwine the arms until palms come together.*

If your hands don't meet, hold a belt, sock or small towel in your right hand and grasp it with your left hand at a comfortable height.

More

...Peros Music Studios artistic and business side of music in Canada to work with artists to make their projects a success.

### THE ONTARIO

#### FOLK HARP SOCIETY

President: Angelica Ottewill  
Phone: (416) 494-4919  
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Marty Moore, (416) 469-3567.

The Ontario Folk Harp Society was formed as a chapter of the International Society of Folk Harpers and Craftsmen (ISFHC). Its mission is to promote the music of folk harpers and the work of harp makers, both amateur and professional. To that end, we have sponsored two harp festivals and numerous workshops, featuring such prominent harpers as Sylvia Woods, Kim Robertson, Tina Turin and Mary Anderson.

Although many of our members play Celtic music, we encompass a wide variety of styles such as classical, Latin medieval, renaissance, sacred, jazz and even Jewish music. Our harp newsletter keeps members informed of upcoming events and is also a good place to advertise a harp that is for sale or rent.

Monthly harper circles are a good place to meet other harpers and jam with them. Some are mini workshops where you can learn more about harp technique, repertoire, or history.

## Our Members Write ....

### MUSICA VIVA

Musica Viva makes a practice of commissioning Canadian chamber music gems, their latest Halifax's Scott Macmillan's Suite for their newest CD, bringing Musica Viva into the Celtic tradition, and featuring the exciting violin playing of Cape Breton's Natalie MacMaster. Announcement of CD launch concert in the next *wholenote*.

### PEROS MUSIC STUDIOS

Peros Music Studios' latest project is a CD called *Songs My Mother Taught Me* featuring Joan Watson, associate principal french horn of the TSO, to be released on April 4. CBC Television's *The National* will broadcast a profile of Ms. Watson in March, including clips of the recording session.

### TORONTO

#### SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Canadian Embassy in Moscow recently phoned the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to inquire about the TSO's most recent recording of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love for Three Oranges*, (the latter is apparently all the rage in Moscow). The Canadian Embassy has purchased copies of the recording to distribute as

gifts and to Moscow critics.

### UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT

#### MUSIC & ARTS SCHOOL

University Settlement Music & Arts School has a flourishing CHAMBER MUSIC PROGRAM, directed by Peter Stoll. The current session ends on Sunday, March 8 with an informal concert at 2:00pm. The next six-week session begins on March 28 - registration deadline March 20. All instruments, levels & ages. For information call Annette or Cindy at 598-3444.

### ELMER ISELER SINGERS

Dr. Elmer Iseler, considered the dean of Canadian choral conductors, has recently received two awards. On January 31 he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters by University of Toronto Chancellor, the Honourable Hal Jackman. In December, the Royal Conservatory of Music honoured Dr. Iseler by naming him as Fellow of the Royal Conservatory.

### LIVING ARTS CENTRE MISSISSAUGA

Daniel S. Donaldson has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the

Living Arts Centre, effective March 1998. Mr. Donaldson brings with him an extensive background in the arts, including the General Manager positions of The Centre In The Square, Kitchener, the Kitchener/Waterloo Symphony, the Oakville Centre and the Kelso Music Centre.

### TORONTO

#### SCHOOL OF MUSIC

William Shookhoff and David Warrack will direct the Toronto School of Music's Summer Opera and Music Theatre School. The School, located at 366 Bay Street, can be reached at 416-366-6699.

### CHEAPSEATS A HIT

The Canadian Music Centre's David Parsons tells us that this season 125 students have taken advantage of the CMC's New Music Pass. The \$10 Cheapseats pass allows students to attend any of the 90 eligible events for \$5. Spearheaded by the Canadian Music Centre and Continuum, it involves 15 new music presenters. Call 961-6601 for information.

Next "members write" deadline: March 20



Now, with your hands together this way, move your arms — from side to side; up and down; circling them in one direction and then the other.

Finally, repeat the whole exercise, this time bringing the right elbow over the left and intertwining the arms until palms come together.

This is one of the only exercises that will open the upper back and release tension stored there.



**FISH**

Another exercise I find extremely helpful and use a lot is The Fish (adaptation of a yoga pose)

Sit in a chair with your spine erect. Your two feet should be firmly planted on the floor.

Hold the sides of your chair as in the illustration.

Inhale and, pushing on the chair with your hands, lift the

chest towards the ceiling bending the torso backwards.

Exhale and slowly come back to your starting position



**RELEASE BY BUILDING**

Another technique I find very helpful is "tension release." You build tension in a group of muscles, increase tension and then release. Creating tension actually exaggerates the feeling of release, which is what we want to highlight. Let's try one example: create some tension in the hands by

making a fist, squeeze the fists, increase the tension, hold it for 5 seconds ... let it go, and take a breath. You can repeat this exercise with tensing shoulders, arms and so on. Rather than being overwhelmed with tension, these simple techniques help you act and be in control of the situation.

In next month's article we'll look at some more breathing exercises as well as how to use the mind efficiently to eliminate mental blocks.

*Elisabeth Pomès is an award-winning soprano, a voice teacher and a certified yoga instructor. She has created a series of classes called Performance Awareness and a workshop called Performance Without Fear which she presents at the Glenn Gould Professional School (Royal Conservatory of Music).*

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EASTERN ONTARIO

**PROGRAM GUIDE**

**MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY**

- 5:30 am **The Morning Show**  
Bill Anderson and David Franco
- 10 am **Morning Concert**  
Kerry Stratton
- Noon **News Package**
- 12:15 pm **Luncheon Date**  
Arlene Meadows
- 1 pm **Musically Speaking**  
Catherine Belyea
- 3 pm **Potpourri**  
Terry Campbell and David Craig
- 7 pm **Sounds Great**  
Michael Lyons
- 11 pm **Nocturne**  
Arlene Meadows
- Midnight **Nightwatch**  
Colin Fox

**SATURDAY**

- 5:30 am **The Saturday Morning Show**  
Bill Anderson and David Franco
- 12:10 pm **Luncheon Date**  
Arlene Meadows
- 1 pm **Saturday Supersounds**  
Kerry Stratton and John van Driel
- 5 pm **Anything Goes**  
Arlene Meadows
- 7 pm **Give My Regards to Broadway**  
John van Driel
- 8 pm **Your Saturday Night Favourites**  
Michael Lyons

**SUNDAY**

- 5:30 am **Gloria**  
Richard Gale
- 9 am **Music for Sunday**  
John van Driel and Kerry Stratton
- 12:10 pm **Luncheon Date**  
Arlene Meadows
- 1 pm **Music for Sunday**  
John van Driel and Kerry Stratton
- 5:15 pm **Concert in the Park**  
David Craig
- 6:00 pm **Sinfonia**  
Alexa Petrenko
- 8 pm **Canadian Showcase**  
Terry Campbell
- 9 pm **Sunday Night at the Opera**  
Catherine Belyea

TIMELESS  
*Radio*