

## Choosing a Kinder Lyre

Kinder Harp/Kinder Lyre – Choosing the right instrument

I have been making the Kinder **Lyre** now for over 25 years. This kind of Lyre was, and is still, called a Kinder **Harp** quite widely in Waldorf circles. I trained in building early fretted instruments, such as the Lute and Baroque guitar before moving to the Lyre and then the Harp. In that world of rediscovering Early music and its instruments, it was important to be precise in your terminology of instruments. So I renamed the Kinder Harp the Kinder Lyre. Which begs the question, what is the difference between a Lyre and a Harp?

A Lyre has the strings run parallel to the sounding board with a transference or contact point between them, what is usually called the bridge of the instrument. Often there is another place where the string vibration is transferred to the instrument, like a nut on a guitar or violin or the bridges on the piano soundboard over which the strings stretch. The image that comes to mind is the depiction of Apollo, the Greek God of Music, playing his tortoise body instrument with the two curved arms coming out of it and the strings attached to a crossbar between them:

On the harp, the strings protrude out of the soundbox at an angle of 90 degrees along the center line, and stretch towards an arm on which the tuning pegs are attached for tightening the strings. Structurally, this is the main difference between a Lyre and a Harp. The harp is usually much larger than the lyre and has a greater volume because of its larger resonating chamber.

A different kind of sound is produced by each of the above. The harp is strung with metal strings and nylon or gut strings, or some combination, whereas a Lyre is almost always strung with metal strings, because the size and string length is smaller and metal strings are usually required to produce an adequate volume of sound.

The Lyre is often tuned to a five-note or Pentatonic scale, whereas the harp is tuned to the diatonic (seven note, do – re – me...) scale we are familiar with as represented by the white notes of the piano. The Harp also usually has levers or pedals that allow you to play the additional sharps or flats found on the piano keyboard, the black notes as well as the white.

The pentatonic Lyre is configured with the same relationship of notes as the black keys on the piano.

If you are a homeschooling parent and are looking for an instrument to play with your child, the Pentatonic Lyre would be the most likely candidate because it is simpler, quieter and cheaper and ideally suited to the tender sensibilities of a child. It can be played enjoyably without needing lessons and practice. If you are drawn to play the harp, whether for your child or you (or both), you are engaging in a more serious commitment to lessons and practice and a different level of music making. Small non-pedal or lever harps are available quite widely today. Today harp teachers can be found widely all around the world who can get you started and there are many self-learning resources available to help you on the world wide web.

Whatever instrument you are drawn to, it is better to get a good quality instrument that carries a higher vibration so that the resonance you are working with enhances your life. There are many instruments being mass produced abroad with inferior materials and no resonant quality that are very inexpensive. I would say that buying your instrument from a local maker would be the most satisfying.

*Harp of Lorien* produces both Kinder Lyres and Folk Harps of different sizes and levels. The instruments are of the highest quality, produced in the USA of indigenous woods like Cherry and Walnut and the prices are affordable.

Instruments from Europe are often of high quality but are more expensive because of the transportation costs and the higher cost of living in Europe. Returning an instrument you are not satisfied with also becomes an issue when ordering from abroad.

I always recommend having a case for the instrument and make sure the pins that tighten the strings are tightly fitted so the instrument stays in tune. Enjoy your music making,

Raphael Weisman