

Faerie Magazine Article: Harps of Lorien

By Mariam George

When traveling through New Mexico one can easily find oneself misplaced. Not geographically; the roads are straight enough, but rather in a more *imaginative* way. With the jagged peaks of ancient mountains reaching into near space it is not so very hard to feel as though you have been transported into a distant and literary landscape. When Raphael Weisman took up residence in New Mexico in the early 1980s, it must have been those mountains and that terrain that compelled him to name his harp business Harps of Lorien, after Lothlórien, the Elven realm in J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings Trilogy.

Raphael Weisman does have a hint of elf in his look, with an oval face and pointed features and an unselfconscious grin, but it is his gift of the craftsman that marries him to the world of magic.

Weisman has traveled the globe, and has resided in South Africa, Israel, England and the USA, though there is no hint of the world-weary in his voice. Speaking with him over the phone from his workshop in Questa, NM, one gets the sense that his world travels have left him with greater than average knowledge and understanding of the world, and particularly of his craft. His voice is kind and personable, and there is eagerness in his conversation that proves his passions more than mere words, though the final products of his labors ultimately speak for themselves.

In a workshop abuzz with activity and creativity, Weisman and his crew hand-craft an assortment of harps and lyres; from the smallest children's harps to the much larger standing professional models, each instrument is created as a piece of art, often with intricate carvings and finishes that set them apart from factory created instruments. The smoothness of the finished wood and the gently curving lines of the bodies of the harps are tactile offerings and the Celtic carvings a visual reminder of the history of the harp. Ultimately it is the aural experience that must be considered above all others, and by all accounts these harps do sing!

Having spent the whole of his life so far in creative and spiritual pursuits, Raphael now combines his passions by way of harp therapy, which is a natural progression of his work so far. Harp therapy is a healing art utilizing the vibrations of the harp in conjunction with the natural vibrations occurring in the human body, and many of Weisman's harps are created with this use in mind. "Even beyond the range of the human ear, the inaudible harmonics align and entrain the subtle bodies of the listener, producing a harmonious state in the mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies," Weisman writes in his article "Don't Stop Playing" (read the full article at www.harpsoflorien.com, for a more complete understanding). It is through his harps that Raphael Weisman hopes to spread joy and peace, healing and comfort to those who play them and to those who hear them played.

In addition to these therapeutic uses, Lorien harps are popular as educational tools, especially the pentatonic line, including the Kinder Lyre and the Little Minstrel Harp. Many Steiner schools use the Kinder Lyre harps in their early education programs and it is easy to see the benefits inherent to this approach to learning. These beautiful little harps are easy to pluck and strum and as long as they are tuned they sound "right," even if you don't yet know how to play – there are no dissonant notes to discourage a novice player.

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The original article includes many photographs and is in color.