

Diatonic Bowed Psaltery

This instrument was developed from the standard triangular bowed psaltery between 1992 and 1997.



Broader and shorter in length with its distinctive Gothic shape, the Diatonic Bowed Psaltery was designed to be a more Harmonious musical instrument.

The strings are arranged in a fan pattern, this was to make the bowing a little more fluid with the geometry of the human arm. Tuned to a white note scale rather like the old Irish harp, the instrument resonates sympathetically as different combinations are played. As well as being a bowed instrument, this psaltery, like its medieval ancestor, responds well to plucking and also hammering. (see **playing notes**) This

instrument is suitable for much folk, sacred and early music.

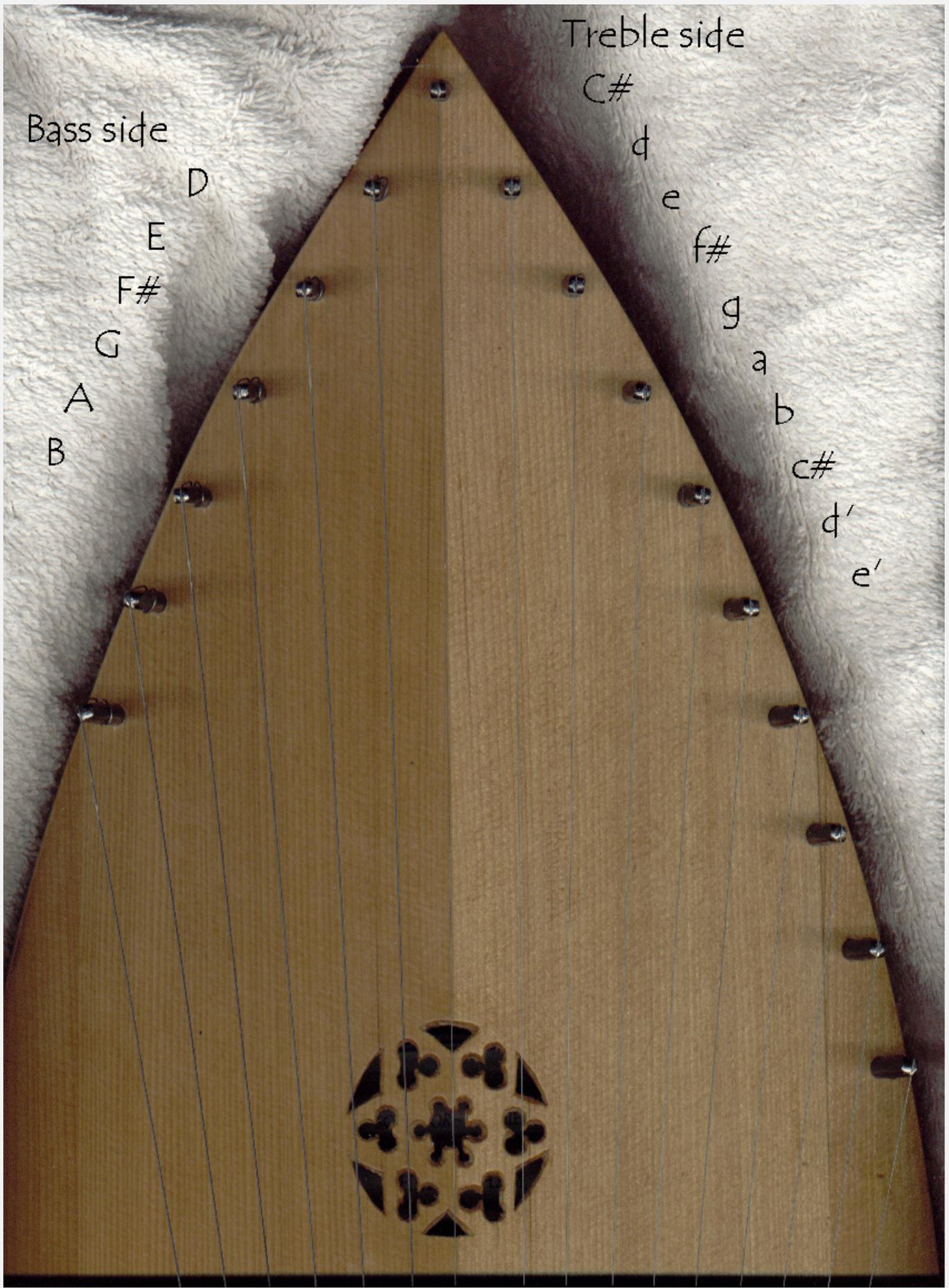
Tuning

The main difference between the triangular model and this one is in its tuning. Instead of the black notes usually found on the left there is a downward extension in pitch an octave lower than the opposite treble side. This effectively enables the instrument to be more compact, while offering the usual pitch range.

Please turn the tuning key only a fraction at a time while plucking the string to be sure, as its very easy to tune the wrong string!

The tuning is as follows for an instrument in D

Bass : D E F# G A B Treble : C# d e f# g a b c# d' e'



Bass side

Treble side

D
E
F#
G
A
B

C#
d
e
f#
g
a
b
c#
d'
e'

Playing

This instrument is very easy and quick to learn, requiring the co-ordination of one hand only to play (while you are bowing)

Bowing: To play the Psaltery with the bow you hold the instrument against the chest, cradled in the left forearm, with the left hand holding the end. The bow is simply held in the right hand and the notes are played with the hairs of the bow nestling in between the string posts and gently moved at right angles to the string being played. As a general rule, to sound the notes more clearly, the bass strings need a slower bowing speed than the trebles. Also, the higher notes on the treble side benefit from playing closer to the post.

Plucking: To pluck the psaltery it is best to lay the instrument on your lap, the narrow end farthest from you, and pluck with the nails, or tips of your fingers, the left hand playing the bass, the right the treble.

Hammering: This can be a wonderful effect if used with discretion while bowing. Hit the string with the side of the bow, being careful not to fret the string but to quickly release it. It is especially effective on the bass strings, creating rich sympathetic vibrations on the treble side.

Stringing

For earlier versions of this instrument I used a variety of different gauges of music wire.

For a Psaltery in the key of F, I used .25mm steel for the treble and .55mm bronze/steel for the bass.

Mandolin D strings also work in this key as do guitar .011 " 1st strings.

For the Standard instrument in the key of D which I now make and which is detailed in the plans I supply, I use violin D strings for the bass, with violin E and .012" guitar strings for the treble which result in a slightly warmer tone.

Most Chromatic Instruments use 0.010 gauge