



THE CHILDREN'S HARP

The children's harp is a musical instrument with only seven tones, especially developed and built for children. Its simple and clear-cut form, the delicate, yet rounded tone, as well as the arrangement of the tones, relate to the musical experience of the child. In the music itself this experience finds its expression in the so-called Mood of the Fifth.

MUSICAL MODES; PENTATONIC AND MOOD OF THE FIFTH

The way in which a child experiences music differs from that of the adult. He is far more receptive to everything going on in the world around him. He becomes deeply involved with, and experiences inwardly, the sounds and noises he hears, and this involvement influences his experiences of musical sound in a very particular way. The way in which one creates music depends on how one hears music. For an adult the ground tone, the tonic, is almost always the reference point, the foundation of the melody. For the child, the melody moves around a note, but one which to his ear never sounds fixed in the way a tonic does.

The child's interest is focused on the intervals between the notes. These intervals are "open" to him in every sense and not "categorized" and referred to any system of musical expression. This is particularly apparent, and is experienced as a feeling of both openness and movement, in the interval of the fifth, which is the basis of the so called mood of the fifth (German: Quintenstimmung).

The fifth $d' - a'$, $e' - b'$, $a' - e''$, and $g' - d''$ should be tuned pure, with the a' at 432 Hertz. When playing together with other instruments which have a fixed pitch (e.g., flutes), the a' may be tuned to 440 Hertz. Tuning forks with these pitches are available at your Choroï-workshop or music store. Likewise a pentatonic pitch-pipe in $a' = 440$ Hertz is available. The mood of the fifth comes into being when fifths are formed above and below the tone a' :

$d' - a' - e''$

To these three basic notes are added the seconds, which keep the adjoining notes flowing and flexible.

$d' - e' - g' - a' - b' - d'' - e''$

In this way, pentatonic music can be developed within the mood of the fifth, in the five-tone (penta = five) scale: $d - e - g - a - b$. This scale has for the child's ear a warm and reassuring quality.

Around the ninth year of life, the child enters into a new relationship with himself and his surroundings.

Children's Harp

Playing and Care

Only then can he begin to understand the different musical rules and structures, and to relate to, for instance, major and minor.

THE SHAPE OF THE CHILDREN'S HARP

A musical instrument is an immediate point of connection between the child and his surroundings. This means that the instrument does not necessarily require an enclosed resonance body, as long as a true resonance is produced. The "front" and "back" sides of what would have been the resonance enclosure, are, on a children's harp, "pushed away" from each other, with the result that an open resonance space is created.



Through this, a "gesture" appears within the shape of the instrument, and this principle of form contributes to bringing about a tone quality which suits the young child.

SONGS AND EXERCISES

The sequence of tones we have just described is particularly suitable for developing a free, musical form of play. There are, however, a number of songs and exercises which, besides being used directly, may also help to stimulate the creation of one's own little melodies.

Here is a short selection:

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| Julius Knierim: | Quintenlieder;
Edition Bingenheim,
Verlag Freies Geistesleben,
Postf. 131122,
D-70069 Stuttgart
W-Germany |
| Alois Künstler: | Das Brunnlein singt und sa-
get; dtto. |
| Elisabeth Lebrecht: | "Pentatonic Songs" and
"Shepherd's Song Book"; To-
rontoWaldorf School,
Box 220, 91, Bathurst
Street, Thornhill,
Ontario, Canada L3T 3N3 |

and Anthroposophic Press,
258, Hungry Hollow Road,
Spring Valley, NY 10977,
U.S.A.

"Spindrift"

Games, Rhymes and Songs;
Wynpress, Wynstones
House, Brookthorpe,
Gloucestershire, England

It should be noted that the author, Norbert Visser, with this concept of the pentatonic does not include all the traditional pentatonic music, which, with its emphasis on thirds and fourths often relates strongly to the major and minor modes, which are suited to older children, after about the age of nine. Before this age, it is important to try to maintain the mood-of-the-fifth, with its de-emphasis of the ground tone. (Translator's note.)

HOW TO HOLD AND PLAY THE HARP

The children's harp should be held in the left hand, in such a way as to allow the back part of the resonance body to rest in the palm and the finger tips to gently curve around the frame of the instrument. In this way the player can feel the instrument vibrate. The strings are played in the middle, and one can practice playing with all fingers except the thumb. The strings are "stroked" rather than plucked. The underside of the finger tip should first press the string gently towards the left, then slide to the next string to find a hold. The "stroked" string can now vibrate freely.

When playing the top (e'') string, no such support is available, and a light touch is all the more important. The quality and strength of the tone are improved when the pressure, resistance and movement of the strings are in mutual balance. The hand should be held with the fingers roughly parallel to the strings, in a "prayer" gesture.

CARE OF THE INSTRUMENT AND STRINGS

Changes of temperature, variations in humidity and dust, all reduce the quality of the tone. For this reason, high tension of the strings and the ongoing tuning and playing, the steel of the strings will in time show signs of "tiredness". The sound will then no longer be as full and radiating. In addition, the wound strings will become worn with use and will eventually not be quite in tune with themselves, as is the case with all

wound strings (The overtones become out-of-tune.) For this reason, if the instrument is played regularly, the strings should be changed approximately every one to two years.

Moisture will cause oxidation of the strings and this also leads to a weakening of the tone. In order to prevent this the strings should be wiped dry with a cloth after each use and treated with a special string oil about every three months. The oil will help to restore and impregnate the strings and will also remove traces of incipient rust.

STRINGING THE HARP

While restringing the harp, it is important to assure that the instrument remains under even tension. Therefore, only one or two strings should be replaced at a time, and they must be tightened immediately.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STRINGING:

1. The tuning peg in question is turned 2 1/2 times toward the right, unwinding the string, if one is there.
2. The new string is drawn through the string holder at the bottom of the harp and then through the hole in the peg.
3. The string must then be shortened with pliers 5 cm (2 inches) beyond the peg and bent at a right angle, 5 mm (1/4 inch) from the end of the string.
4. The bent end of the string is now pulled back to the peg, and the string is tightened by turning the peg to the left with the tuning key. Care must be taken that the string eventually comes to rest in the grooves of the two wooden bridges.

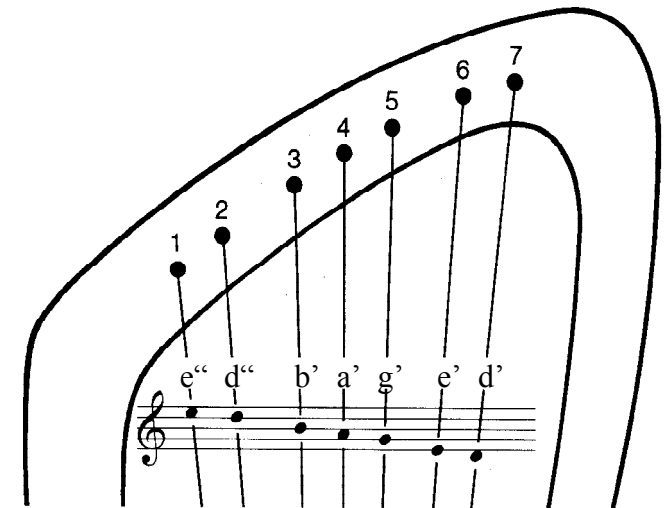
All the strings are designed for their specific pitches, and the strings should on no account be interchanged. The picture shows the arrangement, pitch and numbering of the strings.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TUNING

After the pitch of the a' is determined using a tuning fork or a well-tuned piano, the instrument is tuned in pure fifths and pure octaves. The intervals are pure when no "beating" occurs when the strings are played together.

1. Tune strings 4 and 7 (a' - d') to a fifth
2. Tune strings 2 and 7 (d'' - d') to an octave
3. Tune strings 2 and 5 (d'' - g') to a fifth
4. Tune strings 4 and 1 (a' - e'') to a fifth
5. Tune strings 1 and 6 (e'' - e') to an octave
6. Tune strings 6 and 3 (e' - b') to a fifth.

Norbert Visser
(transl. Karen and Peter Klaveness)



Available from: