

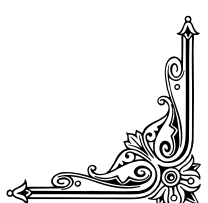
Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Musical Instruments

Thoroughly researched and individually hand-crafted by master luthier, Paul Baker.



Catalogue
Autumn/Winter 2023

diabolus.org 01384 295210





Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Musical Instruments



In this catalogue, I only show the “standard” model of each instrument, and give brief details. Because they’re individually made to commission, custom options are always possible. More information can be found on my website at

diabolus.org

(if your browser has problems, try the full <https://diabolus.org>)

Look for Instrument Making Workshop.

Most of the instruments I make are shown here, but I’m happy to consider commissions for instruments not in the catalogue.

Ordering :
Alas, the days when I occasionally had instruments in stock are long gone. I now have a reputation and a waiting list. You’ll need to contact me to discuss the beastie for which you’re hankering, then pay the deposit of £150. That secures the order and your place in the workshop list. Waiting time is currently around 14 months, but please check the website for updates.



“Cantigas” Gittern

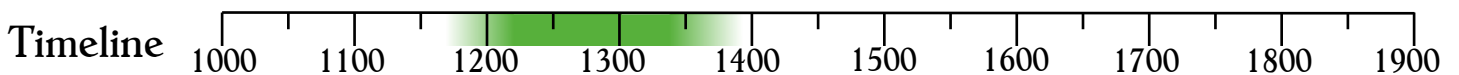
The gittern was a very popular instrument from the 13th to 15th centuries. It can be seen in numerous paintings and carvings, and it is mentioned by Chaucer. This gittern is based on an illustration in the mid-13th century “Cantigas de Santa Maria”. There is no definite information on historical tuning for early gitterns. Some tunings which work on this instrument are : g d' g' d'' g d' g' c'' a d' g' c'' but I can calculate string gauges for your preferred tuning.

Price : £1200 with simple scroll head

With a hard case : £1420



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14th Century "Martini" Gittern

The gittern was a very popular instrument from the 13th to 15th centuries. It can be seen in numerous paintings and carvings, and it is mentioned by Chaucer. This gittern is based closely on one depicted in Simone Martini's "Saint Martin is knighted", c.1320.

String length is 45.5cm. Tuning is derived from the Berkeley Theory Manuscript, which contains the sole surviving documentary evidence for gittern tuning : a A d' d g' g c'' c'.

Other tunings are possible. There is no surviving music specifically for gittern, but it is a versatile instrument, ideal for exploring a large range of medieval repertoire.

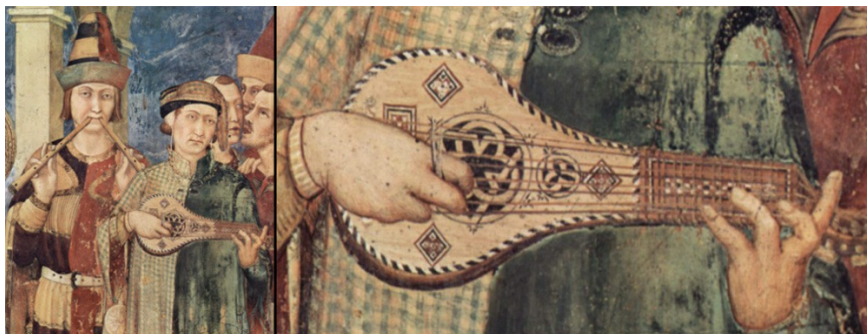
Price : £2500. With a hard case : £2720

Includes carved lion head as shown.

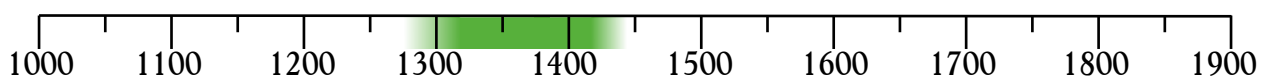
Cheaper, plain version, different head - contact me for a quote.



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Timeline



15th Century "Hans Oth" Gittern

The gittern was a very popular instrument from the 13th to 15th centuries. It can be seen in numerous paintings and carvings, and it is mentioned by Chaucer. This gittern is based closely on the sole surviving example, by Hans Oth of Nuremberg, c.1450.

It is a late 5-course gittern, produced when the plectrum was giving way to more complex finger technique. There is evidence that an authentic tuning is dd gg bb e'e' a'a', but other tunings are possible. There is no surviving music specifically for gittern, but it is a versatile instrument, ideal for exploring a large range of medieval repertoire.

Price : £1600

With a hard case : £1820

Includes acorn head as shown.

Custom carved head - contact me for a quote.



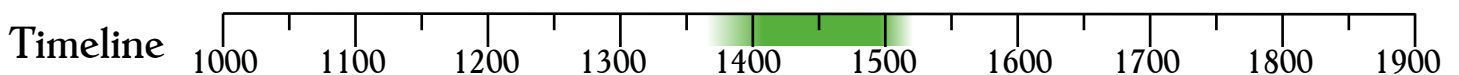
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Original
Hans Oth, c. 1450



Bartolomeo Vivarin, 1474



Elblag Koboz

This is a reconstruction of an instrument found in an archaeological dig in Elblag, Poland. Initially identified as a gittern, Ian Pittaway and I have concluded that the wide string spacing and lack of frets make it a medieval version of the East European Koboz, which is still played regularly, and can be heard on many YouTube recordings. A re-assessment of the iconography of “gitterns” shows that it was a very popular instrument, and not just in the East.

The original tuning is unknown. Ian has experimented with various options, based on modern Koboz tuning and historical gittern tunings, and arrived at a very workable schedule which makes the instrument sing. It is double-strung on the lower three courses, with a triple top course :

g g' d d' g' g' c'' c'' c'

but, of course, that can be changed to your preference.

Price : £1300

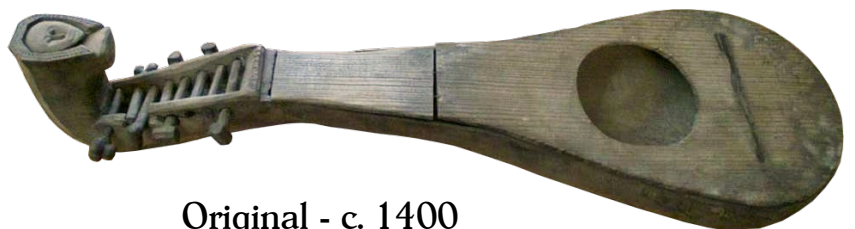
With a hard case : £1520



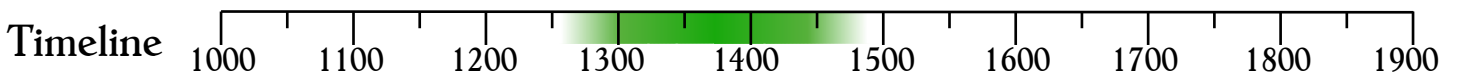
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Original and reproduction heads



Original - c. 1400



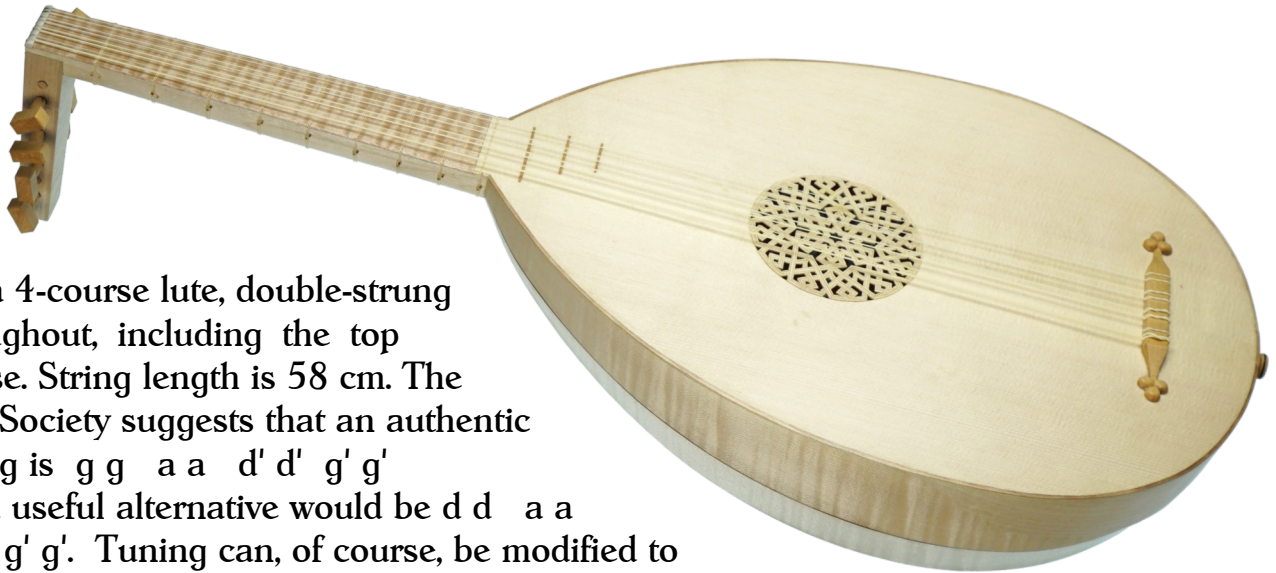
Medieval Lute

This lute is closely based on a remarkable survival - an actual lute plan, c.1440, by Henri Arnaut of Zwolle. It is an invaluable document, giving accurate proportions for a type of instrument which has no surviving examples.

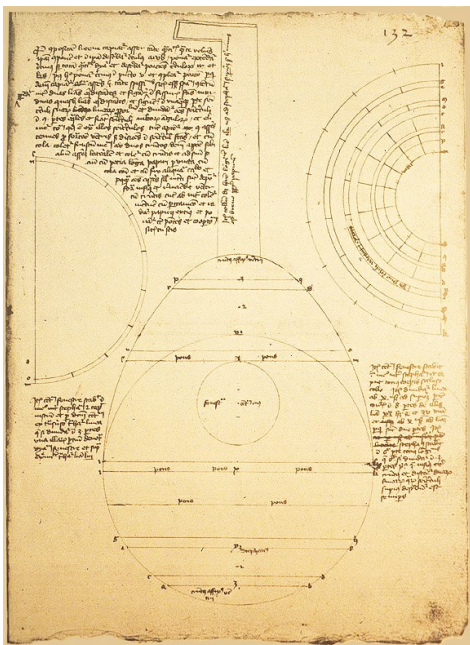


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The distinctive "hammer head" tuning pegs are shown in a number of medieval paintings. The rose design is taken from a mid-16th century lute by Georg Gerle.



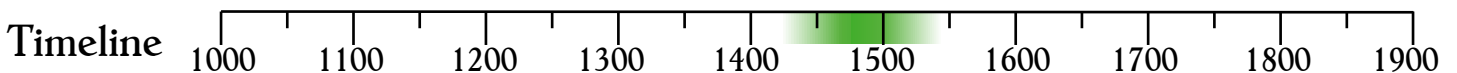
It is a 4-course lute, double-strung throughout, including the top course. String length is 58 cm. The Lute Society suggests that an authentic tuning is g g a a d' d' g' g' But a useful alternative would be d d a a d' d' g' g'. Tuning can, of course, be modified to suit your preference.



Drawing by Arnaut of Zwolle

Price : £2400

With a hard case : £2700



Citole

The citole was a popular instrument in the 13th and 14th centuries. Pictorial evidence is confusing. There may have been several types, but luckily, there's a surviving example in the British Museum. Conversion to a violin in the 16th century destroyed the original soundboard, but the body is intact, and I have reconstructed the soundboard from iconography. This is, therefore, a close replica of the British Museum citole, except that I've simplified the dauntingly intricate carving of the original. More information on my website.

Price : £5500

With a hard case : £5720

This includes carving similar to the example shown, with your choice of themes. A less ornate (and somewhat cheaper) version is possible.



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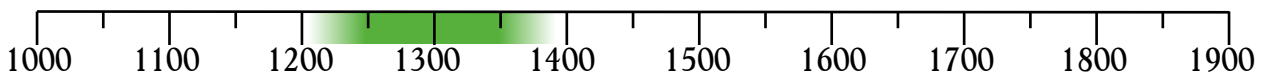
Original, British Museum



DeLisle Psalter, c.1330



Timeline



Renaissance Guitar

Based on the drawings in Syntagma Musicum (Michael Praetorius, 1612) and Guillaume Morlaye's guitar book of 1552. A really useful workhorse for 16th and early 17th century music.

There is a small lute-like repertoire available in tablature, but it is equally at home strumming chords. It's easier to play and more portable than a lute, but excellent for accompanying other instruments and the voice. It blends with everything from choirs to bagpipes. Tuning is similar to a modern ukulele.

Price : £1250

With a hard case : £1470



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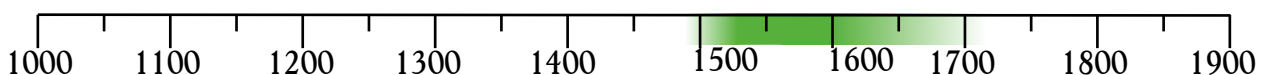
Alternative fingerboard - bookmatched yew



Alternative rose designs



Timeline



Vihuela

The instrument that 16th century Spain was using when everyone else in Europe was playing lutes. It has its own repertoire, but it can also play the extensive 6-course lute repertoire. It's easier to hold and carry than a lute

Price: £1550

With a hard case : £1770.

Add £100 for a 7th course. There's no definite evidence for a 7-course vihuela, but it's not wild speculation, and it allows access to the vast 7-course lute repertoire.

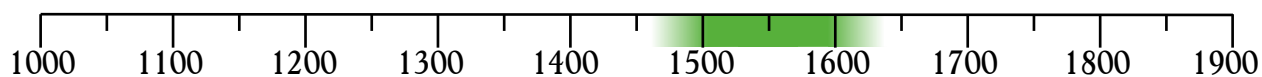
Plain version? More ornate version? Please enquire.



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Timeline



Orpharion

The Orpharion (from Orpheus and Arion) was mainly a late 16th and early 17th century phenomenon. Its low-tension brass and iron stringing, with an angled nut and bridge, gives it a resonant, ethereal sound. It was a popular alternative to the lute. It uses the same tuning, and can play the same repertoire, which is extensive.

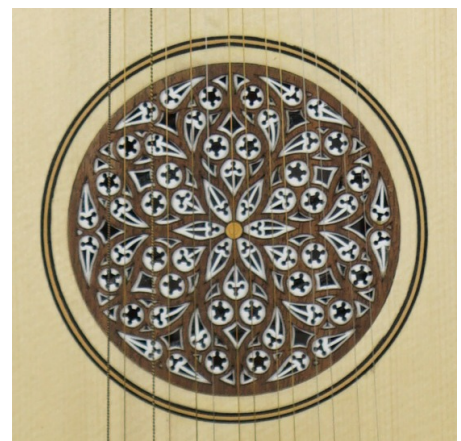
This instrument is closely based on a 1617 original by Francis Palmer. I have reduced the original 9 courses to 7, to provide more space on the fingerboard, but I can build an 8 or 9 course on request. Please enquire.

Price : £3200

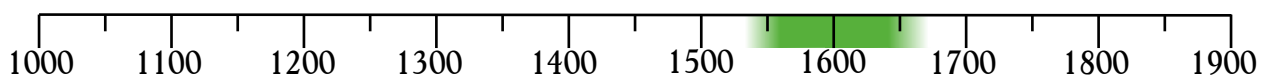
With a hard case : £3420



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Timeline



Baroque Guitar

Based closely on the 1688 Stradivarius guitar in the Ashmolean museum.

The 5-course baroque guitar has an extensive published repertoire, from c. 1600 to 1780. It was also used for continuo, and, from its earliest days, for strummed accompaniments.

Strung in natural gut or NylGut.

Price : £2200

With a hard case : £2420

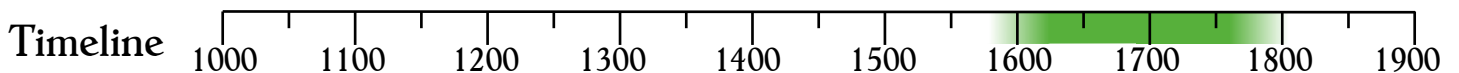
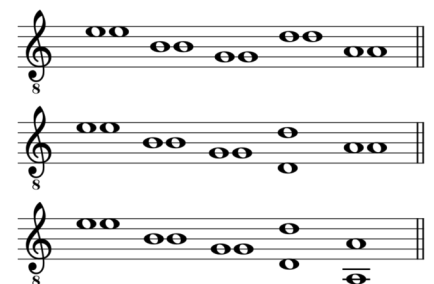
Custom options : please enquire or see the website.



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Original Tunings



Mandore

The Mandore is, alas, a largely forgotten instrument. It came into being in the early part of the 16th century, and survived for about 200 years, gradually increasing in size. There is a respectable surviving repertoire for it, including some attractive French and Scottish music.

This is a close copy of a surviving mandore in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Contrary to the inked "Boissart 1640" inscription on the body (now invisible), I believe it to be made around 1570, restored in 1640. I have built the copy to the later configuration - five single-strung courses. The basic tuning is $g' c' g' c'' g''$. It will accept being retuned to $g' c' g' c'' e''$ and $f' c' f' c'' f''$ without having to change strings. That covers most of the tunings in the surviving sources.

Note : this is a tiny instrument. Overall length is 440mm approx.

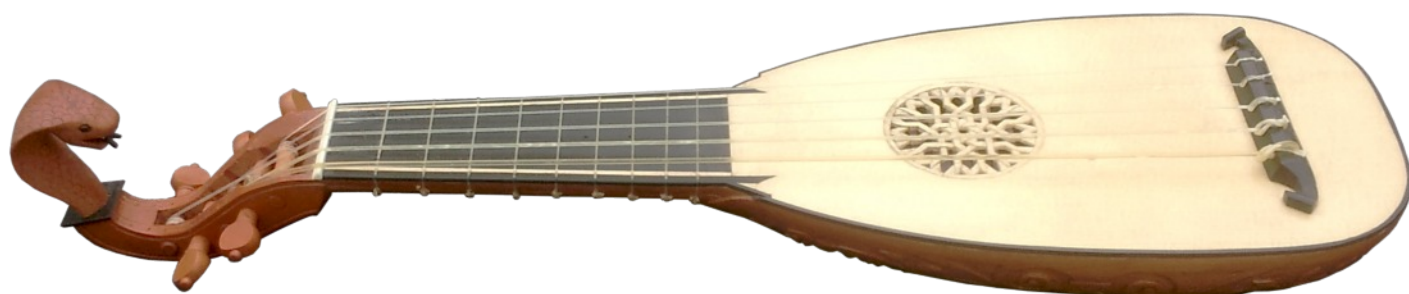
Price : £2500

With a hard case : £2720

Other stringing options are available. Please enquire or see the website.

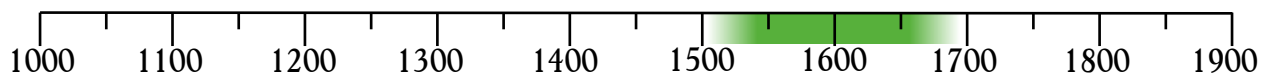


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Original in the V&A

Timeline



Symphony

The symphony was a box-shaped version of the organistrum, which was an early form of the hurdy-gurdy. It can be seen in a number of illustrations and carvings from about 1200 to 1400.

I have created a typical instrument, with a single chanterelle, two drones, and a diatonic keyboard. It has a gentle, contemplative sound, ideal for accompanying the voice, although it's perfectly capable of playing estampies and saltarelli if you want to liven the mood.

Standard tuning is C Ionian (ie. C Major) - chanterelle in g', and drones in c' and g. But it can be re-tuned in various modes.

Price : £1300

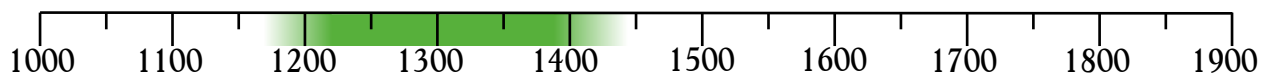
With a hard case : £1520



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Timeline



Luttrell Symphony

About half the depictions of symphonies in iconography and carvings show an instrument with the keyboard at the top, and evenly-spaced keys running across almost the entire top edge. One could be dismissed as an artist's error, but this many suggests that an alternative mechanism was in use alongside the more familiar hurdy-gurdy style.

Ian Pittaway commissioned me to construct an experimental symphony with a top-mounted keyboard. I eventually came up with a keyboard similar to a clavichord, with canted key levers that allow a regular row of keys of equal width to stop a string at the irregular positions demanded by a diatonic sequence of frets. The result was the "Luttrell Symphony", named after the Luttrell Psalter, which was a major source of reference images.



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The instrument is more powerful, less contemplative than a "standard" symphony with its single chanterette. It has twin chanterelles in c'. The compass is c' to a'. There are keys for both b natural and b flat, which is useful for some medieval tunes that require both. Tenor drone in f with capos to change to g or a. Bass drone in c with a capo to change to d.



Price : £2400 with carving as as shown.

Plain version - £2000.

Hard Case £220.

Original depictions of symphonies with top-mounted keyboards.

Timeline



Rutland Organistrum

This is a conjectural reconstruction of an instrument depicted in the Rutland Psalter, c. 1260. It is a useful, manageable instrument, with a deep, rich tone, ideal for accompanying the voice or other instruments. It has a single chanterelle, and two drones.

The keyboard is diatonic, covering the range g to d", but I have designed the layout with re-tuning in mind. Several of the tangents can be set to a higher or lower semitone, so it will accommodate various modal tunings without re-tuning the drones.

The original type of handle - a plain, bent steel shaft - works remarkably well, but it makes the instrument rather long, so a more modern hurdy-gurdy style handle with a rotating knob is an option.

Price : £1800

With a hard case : £2020



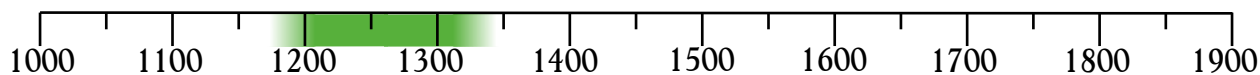
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Rutland Psalter, c. 1260



Timeline



“Royal College” Hurdy-Gurdy

16th/ early 17th century hurdy-gurdy, closely based on a surviving instrument in the Royal College, London.

Two chanterelles, mouche, trompette, 2 bourdons, 1 keybox drone.

Chromatic keyboard, 1½ octaves, g' to d”.

Perfect for Renaissance and Jacobean dance music - Susato, Attaignant, Arbeau, Playford, etc.

Sounds wonderful with a renaissance guitar.

Price : £3000

With a hard case : £3220

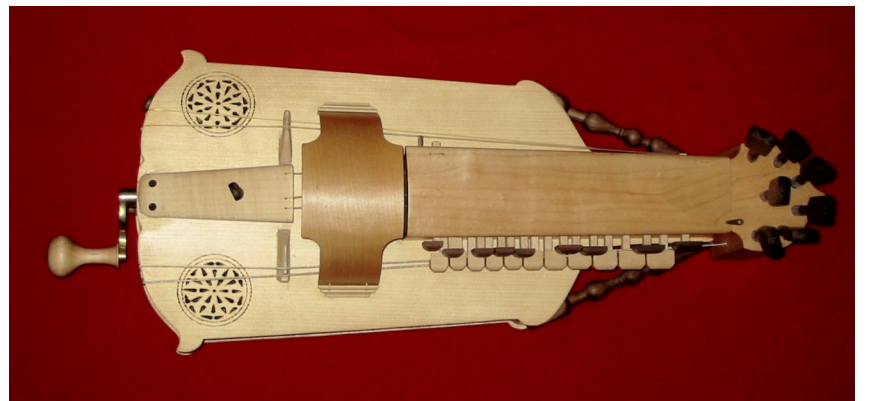
Basic straps and a tuning peg (tourne a gauche) are included. Options : please enquire or see the website.



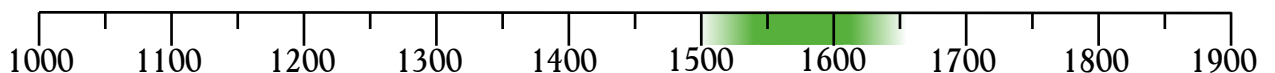
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Original instrument in the Royal College



Timeline



“Cantigas” Psaltery

This is a reconstruction of an instrument from the "Cantigas de Santa Maria", a huge collection of poems, written and set to music during the reign of Alfonso X 'El Sabio' (1221-1284), King of Galicia, Castile and León. It is a simple form of the psaltery, easy to tune and play. It has 13 strings, giving a diatonic range of g' to e”.

A tuning key and a pair of goose quills are included.

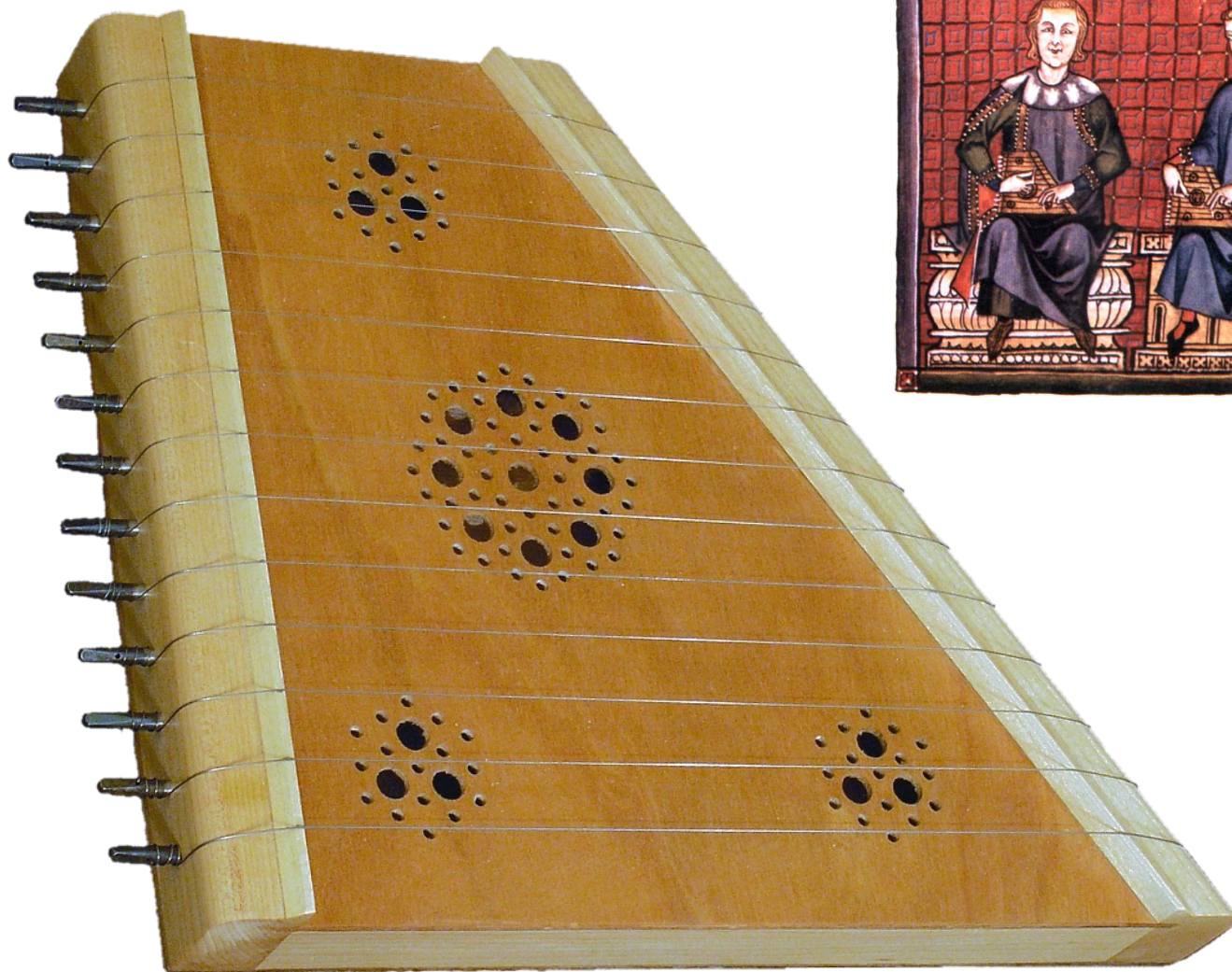
Price : £300 with plywood soundboard and back.

With a hard case : £520

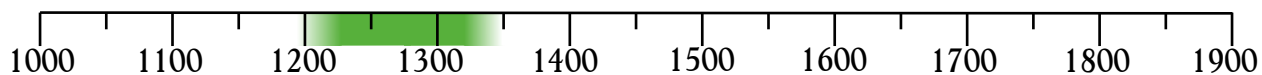
Professional version (17 brass strings, all solid wood, carved roses, fishtail tuning pegs : £600. See website.



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Timeline



Pignout Psaltery

The psaltery was a popular instrument for several centuries. It was made in various shapes, but the “pignout” was the most common. This reconstruction is based on a number of historical illustrations and carvings. It has 23 steel strings. As supplied, it is tuned diatonically in C major (ie C Ionian), giving a 3-octave range from a to b^{'''}, but it can be re-tuned to give a range of modal tunings.

A tuning key and a pair of goose quills are included.

Price : £700

With a hard case : £920



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Timeline



Dulcimer

The hammered dulcimer was closely related to the psaltery, but continued in use much later. Dulcimers were made in various shapes, but this “trapezoid” type is one of the most common. It is based on a number of medieval and renaissance illustrations and carvings. It is triple-strung, and has a 13-note diatonic range from b to g”. Options include a double-strung instrument with greater range, or a central bridge, giving two rows of notes on opposite sides.

A tuning key, authentic brass hammers, and modern wooden hammers are included.

Price : £700

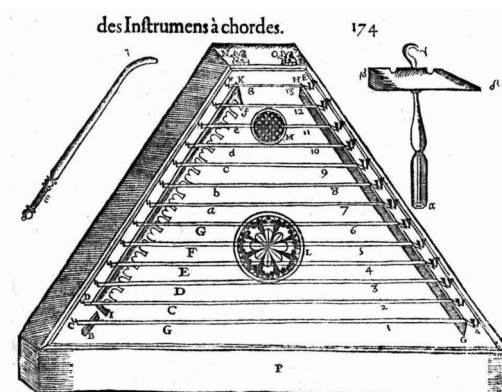
With a hard case : £920



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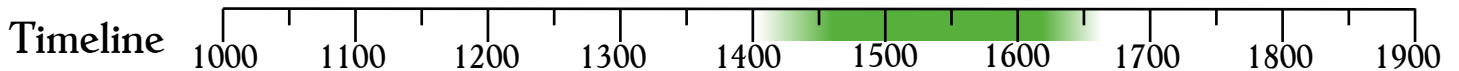
“Le Livre des Echecs Amoureux”, c.1496



Mersenne, “Harmonie Universelle”, 1636



Manchester Cathedral, c.1490



Medieval Lap Harp

Harpes of various shapes and sizes have been common from medieval to modern times. This is a small and simple lap harp, based on a number of medieval illustrations and carvings. It has 17 strings, and it features brays, which give the strings a “buzzing” sound, especially popular in the 15th century. These can be turned on or off by turning them.

Standard tuning is diatonic, a to c”, but that can be altered to suit your preference. Includes a tuning key.

Price : £1100 with nylon strings.

Natural gut or Nylgut at cost.

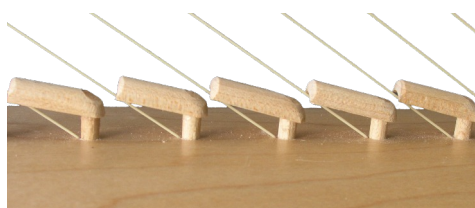
With a hard case : £1320



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Range



Timeline

