



Fun Harp Facts

Harp Facts

The harp is a musical instrument of the string family. Harps date back as far as 3500 BC in Asia, Europe, and Africa. They may have even existed as far back as 15,000 BC. Harps have been discovered in ancient burial tombs and they are depicted on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs. The early harps had no forepillar and are referred to as changs in Persia. Harps have been depicted along with angels dating back to their early beginnings. Harps are made with a strong triangular frame that is capable of withstanding the pressure of the tight strings. A harp is played by picking with both hands and each string plays a different note. The word 'harp' is derived from Old German, Old Norse, and Anglo Saxon words that mean 'to pluck'.

Interesting Harp Facts:

Some harp frames have a body that was carved from one single piece of wood. Some harps on the other hand have as many as 2000 pieces.

The three main parts of a harp include the neck, the sound box, and the strings.

Harps are usually between two feet and six feet in height. They usually have between 1 and 90 strings.

The electric harp is a relatively new invention. These harps can be hollow body or solid body depending on the design.

In the 1600s when the English ruled in Ireland the harp was banned and many were burned and the harpers were often executed.

Because of the banning of the harp in the 1600s there is not much information about how it was played in Ireland before the ban.

The Celtic harp tradition has been revived somewhat beginning in the 1900s and Lever/Celtic folk harps are becoming popular again after having been replaced for so long by the orchestral harp.



Fun Harp Facts

Harps can have a pedal which can help to raise or lower the pitch of a string.

Common western harps include the Celtic or Irish folk/lever harp, the concert, pedal, or classical orchestral harp, the South American harp, the multi-course/row harp, Welsh triple harp and the renaissance or gothic harp.

The harp is considered to be one of the world's oldest musical instruments.

Ireland has included the harp as its national symbol since the 1200s.
The harp is also the national instrument of Wales.

When picking, the harpist only uses the first four fingers on each of their hands.

When a harpist plays rapidly this technique is referred to as arpeggio.

When a harpist sweeps their hands across the strings this technique is referred to as glissando.

Africa is home to some of the largest varieties of harp designs in the world.

Famous harpists in history include King David, Turlough O'Carolyn, Francois-Joseph Naderman, Elias Parish Alvars, Alphonse Jean Hasselmans, Henriette Renie, Carlos Salzedo, Marcel Grandjany, and Harpo Marx.

Famous modern harpists include Catrin Finch, Eleanor Turner, Elinor Bennett, Joanna Newsom, Skaila Kanga and Nancy Allen.

The harp can be heard in a variety of music styles including classical, orchestras, Celtic, African, rock, bluegrass, country, folk, jazz, and many more.

The blues harp, Jew's harp, and Aeolian harp are not harps. They just have the word included in their name.