

Choosing a Harp

If you are new to the world of the Celtic Harp, choosing a harp can be very confusing. We make a range of six harps in all, which attempt to cater for all playing requirements.

The Range

There has been a trend in the last few years for people to go straight for the extra range of a 34 string harp and while we sell less 31 string harps than we did in the past they still have their advantages. We make one harp in the 31 string range.

The Tíree is a sweet sounding harp, and is the result of many years of 31 string harp development. Its appeal is to people who do not want the extra bulk of a bigger harp and are willing to sacrifice the extra 3 strings. These strings can be very useful, but are by no means essential - music can be easily arranged to suit your harp.

The 34 string harps have 2 extra strings in the bass, a C and D and an A at the top. We make three 34 string harps.

The Student is aimed at beginners and organisations like schools and Feisean, although it may also appeal to those for whom harp playing is not their main activity. This harp has the advantage of being quite light and smaller than the larger harps so is well suited to youngsters. It is also cheaper which often suits parents!

The Glencoe, Lochaber and Mamore have a bigger soundbox and so a bigger sound which can make them ideal for public performance.

Our most popular harp, these days, is the Glencoe. A 34 string folk gauge strung harp with a big sound and beautiful tone that can be enjoyed both by beginner and experienced professionals alike.

All our harps are strung in folk gauge except one: the Lochaber; which is a concert gauge harp. A few years ago concert gauge was the only string gauge available but with the innovation of the lighter folk gauge we now sell very few concert strung harps. They do, however, sometimes appeal to people who are used to the extra pull of concert gauge stringing and the sound it produces.

In 2001, we developed the Mamore, which has 37 strings and is aimed mainly at professional players, and those who need a much bigger sound when playing with groups.

Our 26-string knee harp, the Columba, has the advantage of real portability and is popular with teachers, singers and travellers. Music therapists are finding it ideal for use in hospital beds or wheelchairs.

Wood

Over the years we have experimented with different timbers for the harps, and now offer all harps in a choice of three woods.

Wood is an organic material and while a cherry Glencoe sounds like another cherry Glencoe, no two pieces are quite the same which gives each harp its own voice.

The following observations are purely a guide and approximation.

Maple is the hardest wood. It is denser and heavier which produces a bright clear sound. Cherry and Walnut are softer woods, lighter in weight and often are thought to give a slightly more mellow sound.

We usually tell customers to base their choice of wood on practical and cosmetic considerations – sound differences between them are slight and variable.

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