

MUGWUMPS

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\$2.00

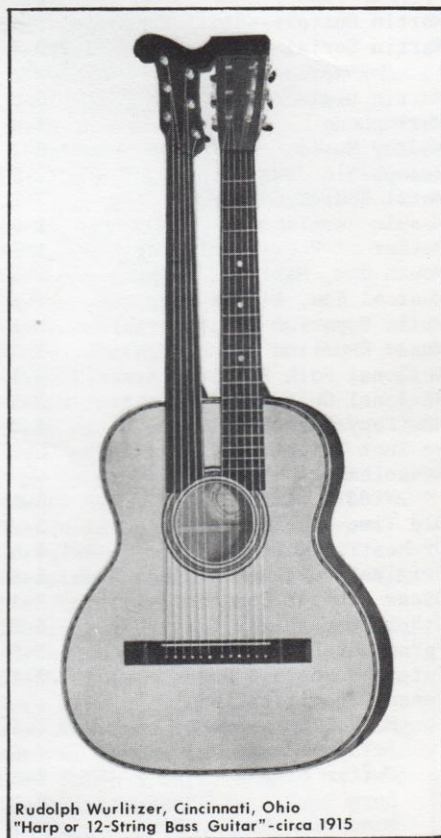
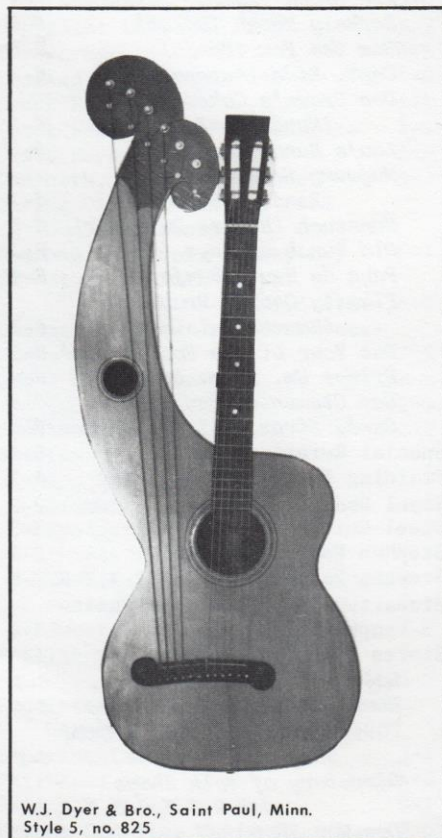
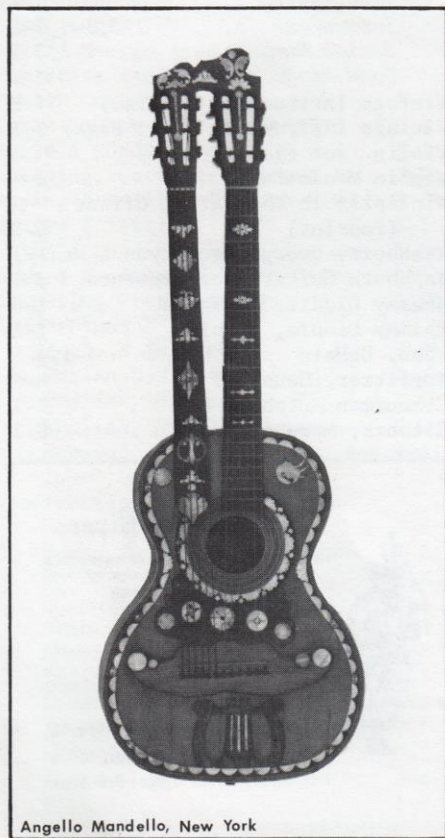
Harp-Guitars

Things called "harp-guitars" fall into two categories. Actually, a harp guitar is one with a regular guitar neck and a second set of strings, generally attached to a common bridge but running to a separate peghead or set of pegs, the strings being unsupported, that is, not being over a neck and/or fingerboard. In usage, however, both by contemporary players and by original makers, the name was applied to all instruments which were guitar shaped but had two distinct necks (and in one case, two distinct bodies). The original intent is hidden somewhere in history, but that marvel of early advertising panache, Gibson, compared the harp-guitar's detractors to those who argued against the piano as it replaced the harpsichord. Gibson felt the harp-guitar would replace the regular instrument and that the recognition a harp-guitar player would receive, well justified the money spent; a Gibson harp-guitar cost \$354 in 1902, \$443 in 1921, and reflecting changing tastes only \$300 from 1928 through the 40s after which they no longer appear in the catalogs.

Harp-guitars certainly pre-date Gibson, with some sources crediting European makers in the late 1700s. Anthony Baines' 1966 book *European & American Musical Instruments* (Viking Press, NY - may be out of print) shows many double necked, double strung instruments, but the final form seems to have solidified around the late 1800s in this country. Most major makers offered some variant and suggested various uses for the other neck or strings. The bass strings of a Gibson were to be tuned chromatically from Eb to E one octave below the usual bass string. On guitars with fewer than 12 bass strings, individual players could choose tunings to suit the occasion. Generally, though, the extra strings were used to play lower notes written into the musical lines or as lower bass notes in a 'bass note-chord' accompaniment pattern.

Until 1979, Gibson offered their #275 "harp-guitar sub-bass sets" for sale; that is no longer true. However, sub-bass strings may be ordered from Matt Umanov Guitars, 276 Bleeker Street, New York, NY 10014. If yours is a Gibson, he has ready-made sets; if you have some other brand, send him a list of the gauges you need. If you have no strings for your instrument, decide what notes you want, and he will make up a set.

Thanks to Matt Umanov, Reed Martin, Jonathan Eberhart, Bob Coward, Rich & Alex Usher and Jim Bumgardener for allowing the use of their instruments.



UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

J. IN FREDERICK CHARLES ABELSPIES, OF GLASGOW, SCOTLAND.

MUSICAL-INSTRUMENT.

Patented May 23, 1893.

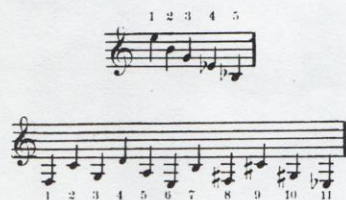
No. 497,939.

This invention relates to an improved musical instrument, which may be termed a harp-guitar, as it combines along with a guitar of ordinary or special construction, a number of strings strung after the manner of a harp and plucked by the fingers as in that instrument.

The object of this invention is to provide an instrument, such as a guitar, which shall have a much greater and richer volume of sound, and on which music played in any key can be produced with equal effect.

In carrying out my invention, the guitar is provided with a metal frame, to which all the strings are attached at one end. This frame does not rest on the belly of the instrument, but is raised slightly above it, and fastened by means of screws at the end and at each side, to small blocks, fixed at suitable points inside the instrument at the edges. The bar to which the strings are attached is furnished with holes and other suitable means, if desired, for fastening the strings, and extends for a considerable distance across the instrument, to allow for the increased number of strings. The strain is thus taken off the belly and distributed better over the instrument. The usual bridge is of course provided, over which the strings pass. A number of strings, preferably five, at the outer side, proceed to the end of the finger board, which is of the ordinary construction, with raised lines or frets marking the notes, and are there fastened by tuning keys, in any suitable manner. At the end of the finger board is situated one end of a frame, somewhat after the style of a harp frame, which projects outward, with a suitable curve, far enough to allow the remainder of the strings to be fastened in a similar manner by keys. A rod or stay projects from the end of this upper bar, to the lower end of the instrument, passing through the body to the foot block inside, and fixed there by any suitable means. The whole frame is thus firmly fixed and takes off much of the strain from the body of the instrument. The last mentioned set of strings have no finger board, and are not stopped by the fingers, the whole string vibrating, and they are generally of lower pitch than the stopped strings, the lower notes thus always coming out clearly when played on these strings.

According to the arrangement I find most desirable, the strings are arranged in the following order:—The five strings stretched over the finger board are tuned in the order *c*, *b*, *g*, *eb*, *bb*, and the remaining strings, preferably eleven in number, in the order *f*, *c*, *g*, *d*, *a*, *e*, *b*, *fb*, *cb*, *gb*, *db*.



The finger board having one string less than the ordinary guitar is thus more easily manipulated, as the hand has not so far to stretch, the sixth string not being required with the added strings.

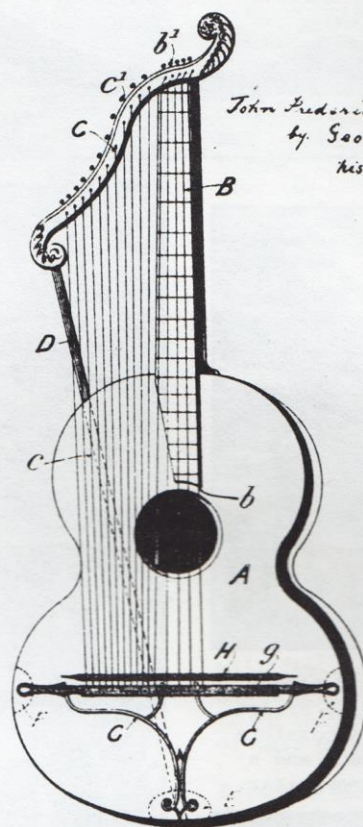
All of the major and minor keys can be played with ease on this instrument, and the flat and minor keys which are very ineffective and difficult to play on the ordinary guitar, are brought out as clearly and with as good effect as the simplest major keys, as all the

WITNESSES.

James Miller
Albert Edward Allen

bass notes in whatever key can be played with open strings, the strings from the fourth on the ordinary or finger board set to the sixteenth or eleventh on the harp set, giving the chromatic scale from *eb* to *cb*, without requiring stopping. The strings are tuned in the manner described (in fifths), in order to bring the chords more conveniently to the fingers, as the dominant and subdominant bass lie together, and any bass figure can be played without interfering with the chords. The strings all resting on the bridge, transfer their vibration to the belly of the instrument, which being comparatively free from strain, will respond readily and give out a much greater volume of sound than that obtained from an ordinary guitar, each note also being given with greater clearness.

In order that the invention may be more clearly understood, reference is had to the accompanying drawing, which shows an instrument after the form of a guitar with my improved arrangement applied. *A* is the body of the instrument, having the finger board *B* of the ordinary construction, but with the end formed by the curved piece or head *C*, to which all the strings are attached, forming part of the frame. The rod *D* extends from the other end of this piece through the body *A*, to a block *E*, at the bottom of the instrument, thus completing the frame and bearing the greater part of the strain on the instrument, caused by the strings. To this block and to two other blocks *F*, situated one on each side, is fixed by means of screws or



otherwise the frame *G* to the upper bar *g* of which the lower ends of the strings are attached, passing over the bridge *H* to the top *C*, the set *b* belonging to the finger board and stopped and played in the manner usual in such instruments, and the set *c* being attached to the outer side of the frame. All the strings are fastened by means of the tuning pegs *b'* and *c'*, of any ordinary or special construction and are tuned in the usual manner.

What I claim as my invention, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. In an instrument of the kind described, the combination of a frame *C D*, fixed to the top of the finger board, and to a block *E* in the lower end of the body *A*, carrying a supplementary set of strings, with a metal frame *G* also fixed to the block *E*, to the upper bar *g* of which the strings are attached, substantially as described and for the purposes specified.

2. An instrument of the kind described having three blocks *E* and *F*, one at the bottom of the instrument and one at each side, the frame *C D* fixed to the top of the finger board and to the block *E*, and serving to carry a supplementary set of strings, and the frame *G*, fixed to the three blocks *E* and *F*, to the upper bar *g* of which the strings are attached, the whole constructed as described and shown and for the purposes specified.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand, at Glasgow, this 24th day of October, 1892, in the presence of two witnesses.

JOHN FREDERICK CHARLES ABELSPIES.



Made by Harmony - circa 1920s



Some makers offered their normal guitars with an extra wide bridge and bolt-on neck. It was possible to buy just the extra neck and a tailpiece to add to your own guitar.



American Conservatory with bolt-on neck

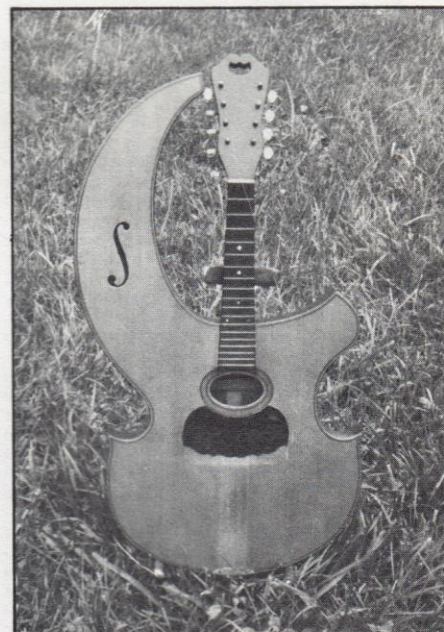


Gibson Style "U" - circa 1915

Harp-guitars were popular during that period which also spawned the mandolin orchestras. It was only natural that someone would produce a mandolin-harp. These had the large horn on the bass side, but not the extra strings.

Although Mike Longworth's book, *Martin Guitars, A History*, lists a small number of harp-guitars made by Martin on special order, there is no record of the mandolin-harp shown here; the usual Martin stamps and workmanship are present and there is no question that it is a genuine Martin; its origins are a mystery.

W.J. Dyer & Bro. offered their mandolin harp as a regular catalog item.



Harp Mandolin by C.F. Martin & Co. - 1890

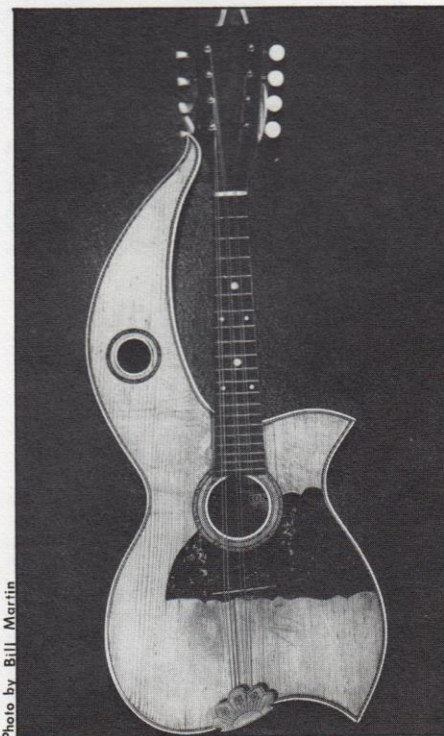


Photo by Bill Martin

W.J. Dyer & Bro. Symphonic Harp Mandolin