

Mt. Dulcimer

Presented by the Boston Bluegrass Festival

- **Belongs to the String Family**
- **Made of wood with wound metal strings**
- **A rhythm and lead instrument in Mountain Music**
- **The Appalachian Mountain Dulcimer**



3- beautiful Folkcraft Mountain Dulcimers from Connecticut.

The plucked dulcimer has been known by many names: Appalachian dulcimer, lap dulcimer, mountain dulcimer, Kentucky dulcimer. Local variant names include “delcumer,” “dulcymore,” “harmonium,” “hog fiddle,” “music box,” and “harmony box”. The instrument is essentially a fretted zither traditional to the southern Appalachian mountains of the eastern United States consisting of a narrow fingerboard attached to a larger soundbox underneath. Never widespread and found only in scattered pockets of tradition, the dulcimer since the 1950s has gained popularity outside the mountains and is today widely used by both amateur and professional musicians for primarily folk-based repertoires. Since the turn of the twentieth century, popular images of the plucked dulcimer have tended towards the romantic, associating the instrument with romanticized notions of Appalachian residents as “our Elizabethan ancestors” and with simplistic conceptions of folk music as spontaneous, natural, naive musical outpourings of tradition. Repertoires were assumed to be limited to older pieces--balladry, play/party songs, and religious hymnody harking from the British Isles, and playing styles were reduced to drone accompaniments with simple melodic lines requiring little technical skill or musical talent. The traditional repertoire of the dulcimer included the full range of repertoires found in the mountains, including traditional British balladry and hymnody, dance tunes, and play/party songs (an Anglo-American tradition of songs instead of musical instruments accompanying social dances and children’s games) along with minstrel show tunes and popular sentimental songs, gospel, blues, and commercial hillbilly music of the twentieth century. The older British-derived repertoire was emphasized by the romanticists of the instrument, and the dulcimer is still associated today with those styles of music, although contemporary players have expanded the repertoire enormously. Because of its soft volume, the dulcimer is thought to have been used either as accompaniment to singing or for instrumental solos, but it was also used in string bands and instrumental duets where it functioned as a melody instrument and also provided harmony and a rhythmic background through the slapping of the pick against the strings. (by Lucy M. Long)



Detail of a FolkCraft Dulcimer