



*The
Reverie Harp™*

An Introductory Guidebook

Reverie - A state of quiet and pleasant contemplation. A daydream.

Peter Roberts



" Music begins where words end "

Johanne Wolfgang von Goethe

Reverie (noun)

A state of quiet and pleasant contemplation.

A daydream.

The Original Reverie Harp™

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Disclaimer:

This is a general guide for those interested in using music in a therapeutic manner with the Reverie Harp. A common sense and caring approach is assumed. It is recommended that suitably qualified professionals be sought to assist people who have specific psychological or medical needs.

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Introduction

The concept of the Reverie Harp grew from an after dinner conversation with Jerry Brown in Stillwater Minnesota. Jerry and I were discussing music and musical instruments and I shared with him a desire for a new type of musical instrument that would enable someone with limited physical abilities the pleasure of playing music. I explained that I once had an encounter with a terminally ill patient with severe multiple sclerosis. This man was very keen to show me a musical instrument he had stored in his bedside cabinet in a worn cardboard box. It was a small, home made, wire stringed instrument that obviously was a treasure from earlier days. As I watched him struggle to control his hands in order to make contact with the strings, I felt great empathy for him and knew there just had to be something easier and more suitable to play. He needed an instrument that sounded rich and beautiful, one he could play successfully despite his declining physical capacities. The large floor model harp I play, and other smaller lap harps I have seen used in hospitals for this purpose, don't seem to me to be entirely suitable. Here was a valid need for an appropriate instrument for people like him and others with limited capacities. Jerry has been designing and making musical instruments for over 25 years and we both began imagining ways this could be achieved. As I put forward various requirements, Jerry kept coming up with creative, practical solutions to make them possible.

The new criteria were that the instrument needed to be easily played by a non musician but also sound beautiful, even when played by a novice. It should be an

appropriate shape and size to be placed in a patient's bed and suitably designed to enable playing while lying down. Apart from the sound quality, it was desirable that the instrument's shape be comforting and pleasurable to hold, with smooth, rounded edges and no sharp protrusions. Another notion was to make it resonant enough for the player to actually experience pleasurable sound vibrations from the instrument when it was played up close to the body.

During my training as a music-thanatologist I had learnt a technique of gently shifting between specific modes on my harp to help facilitate an emotional shift for a patient. When I shared this concept with Jerry, he came up with a way that something similar could be achieved on a different instrument.

That night the ideas flowed and the notion of a new therapeutic musical instrument became an excitingly real possibility.

The following day, Matt Edwards from Jerry's firm, Musicmakers, brought his enthusiasm and skill to the project. After discussing the new instrument concept with Jerry he created the first prototype of what is now called the Reverie Harp. Not long after Matt created a second one in a beautiful "egg shape" and eventually a third. I think the final Reverie Harp design we now have was decided after their fifth or sixth design modification.

Each modification has seen adjustments to the design and the exploration of different tone timbers, string types and string gauges to improve the sound. During the six months we have all been working to develop this harp, I know first hand through discussions with Matt, that there have been hours and hours spent blending

chords and developing interesting modal tunings that sound comforting and soothing.

The final result is this gorgeous, innovative new instrument called the Reverie Harp.

Why the Reverie Harp? The word reverie is sometimes used to describe a state of quiet and pleasant contemplation. This seems a very apt term to describe the effect of this new harp. For many years I have worked with music in hospitals and health care clinics here in Australia and since introducing the Reverie Harp into my practice, I have been delighted at the instrument's potential to bring comfort and pleasurable, reflective moments to patients. Its potential for interaction is quite remarkable.

Prior to its release, I had the good fortune to trial the first prototypes of this new harp, both in my practice and at home where I had the chance to experiment and have some fun with it. I now own a collection of "Reveries" in different tunings. As mentioned, I use them with patients, but have now begun to use them for workshops and in individual sessions for specialist carers such as child care nurses, and pastoral care workers who have seen the results from my Reverie Harp and now want one for themselves.

In this guidebook I will be sharing with you some of my personal experiences and ideas for the Reverie Harp's use. I will also include photographs of my Reverie Harp being used in actual situations.

Quite apart from its therapeutic applications, the Reverie Harp can be a wonderful resource for people from all walks of life. For example, parents, children, seniors, teachers, story tellers, poets, meditation leaders, massage therapists and yoga teachers. They will find some interesting information in this guidebook too.

I trust that this book will enable you to bring comfort to many people and guide you in ways to offer enjoyable "hands on" musical experiences for those who may not have had the chance before. In the process of exploring the Reverie Harp I know you will experience many pleasant moments of quiet reverie yourself too.

My best to you.

Peter Roberts (CM-Th)

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A new type of musical instrument that enables someone with limited physical abilities the pleasure of playing music



Father and son

“Special Care” Nursery: Often when the health of a young child necessitates medical intervention, parents can feel “left out of the loop” and uncertain as to how they can support their child. This touching photo is of a father playing gentle sounds for his son to hear through the sides of the incubator. This was something he could do for his boy while mother was sleeping. It was lovely to witness this first musical experience for them both.

*Parents who comfort their babies
by humming or singing to them
are intuitively accessing the
therapeutic properties of music*