

The Gift Of Music Lasts A Lifetime

“I want to play that autoharp!”

One of the joys of being a music teacher is knowing first-hand that every minute spent teaching music to a child is an investment in a life. “We’re building a musical catalog,” I tell my young pupils as I tap on my forehead, “a mental catalog that you’ll always have with you!”

The thing is, I’m not just making this up – in my mind’s eye I can still see my own elementary school teacher playing the autoharp every Friday afternoon as she lead our class in song. Music day was so special, and so exciting, and I *really wanted to get my hands on that autoharp!* Although we got to play lots of small percussion instruments like tone blocks, tambourines and triangles, I can’t remember ever getting a turn to strum that beautiful old autoharp.

It’s often said that good things are worth waiting for, and this has surely been true when it comes to the autoharp. In the mid-eighties after being encouraged by Angela Lloyd, one of California’s premiere harp players and storytellers, I bought my very first harp and started poking around on it. It was so much fun I just couldn’t believe how lucky I was to actually have one after all those years. Making my own music was now not only possible, it was literally right at my fingertips. With my new harp I strummed, I sang and finally started to explore the world of music for myself – and it was wonderful.

Fast forward another twenty or so years and I’m the lucky owner of several beautiful harps both old and new, and I now have the privilege of teaching others how to play this lovely, exciting, and very accessible instrument. Now I get to be the teacher who shares her love of music and all things autoharp with students of all ages, but with one important difference: *in my classes everyone gets to try the harp!*

As I teach private lessons on other instruments in my studio, I keep an eye out for fond glances being cast towards the autoharps. “Would you like to try the autoharp?” I often ask a dulcimer or guitar student during class. And at the elementary school where I work as a music teacher my “Autoharp Line Up” is sure to bring squeals of delight from excited kids as they come into class and see a table with several harps lined up in a row, just waiting to be played by eager little hands. After all, autoharps are supposed to ring out with joyful music, not to sit and get musty packed away in dusty old cases.

Have you got an autoharp stored away somewhere? Find it, tune it up and invite a child to play the harp with you. That one simple act will not only brighten your own day, but it’s guaranteed to make a real difference to your young friend – *guaranteed.*

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