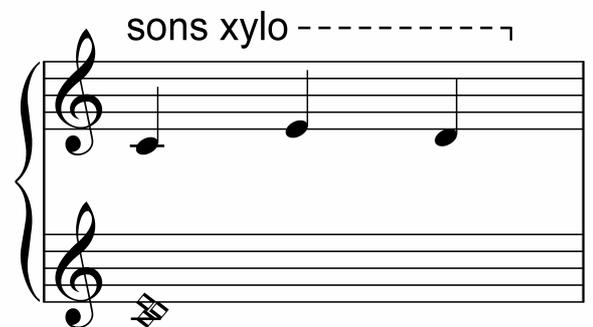


SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

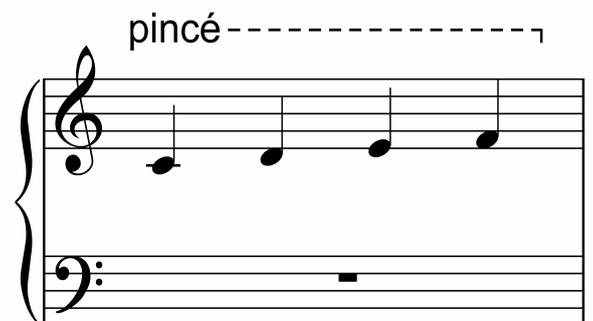
Playing with nails gives a sharp and penetrating sound. Playing with nails can be combined with p.d.l.t. for a more exaggerated effect. Playing with nails takes extra time: we have to place the nail accurately and precisely on the string. Therefore virtuoso figures, big jumps and high speeds are limited. NB For many (South American) folk harpists, playing with fingernails is the normal playing technique. These harps have less tight strings.



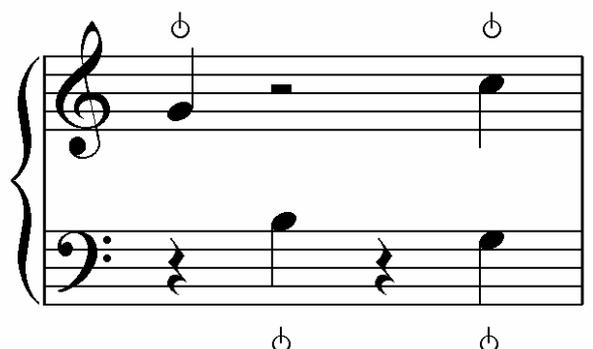
Sons xylophoniques give a muted, 'wooden' sound. One hand mutes the string at the soundboard, the other hand plucks the string normally. This effect should alter the timbre of the sound, not the pitch! To play sons xylophoniques we need two hands within the range of the right hand. Big jumps and big chords are not playable. The dynamic range is limited.



Sons pincés give a sharp, spiky sound. Sons pincés are executed by gripping the string firmly between thumb and index finger, then pulling the string until it snaps back on its own. Sons pincés can only be used on single notes and take time. Sons pincés can be played on the whole range of the harp, but are most effective in the middle register. Sons pincés have hardly any dynamic variation.



Bartók pizz is the sound of a sharp tap after a single played string. A Bartók pizz is produced by letting the finger snap from the lower end of the string onto the soundboard. A Bartók pizz can be played by both hands on a single note.



SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Près de la table = p.d.l.t. play close to the soundboard. P.d.l.t. is a sound colour effect: the sound is more dry, like a guitar.

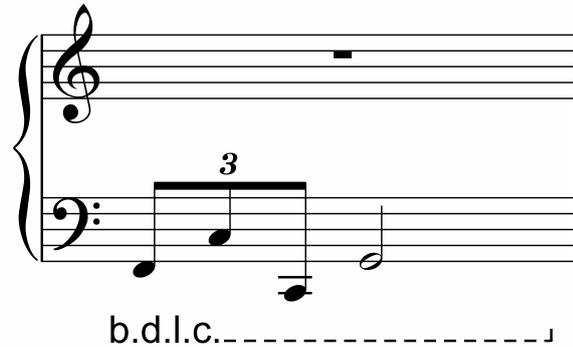
The effect varies depending how close we play to the soundboard. We can gradually change playing position from the middle of the string, to very close to the soundboard.

The optimal place to play p.d.l.t. is the middle register. The effect of p.d.l.t. in the high register is hardly audible. Playing p.d.l.t. with the left hand in the low bass strings is physically challenging.

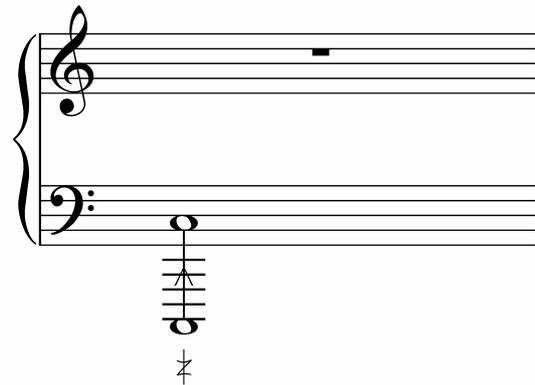


Bas dans les cordes = b.d.l.c. play lower on the strings.

B.d.l.c. is mostly used to achieve a sound which has more definition. It is possible to play b.d.l.c. in all registers of the harp, but it is most effective below middle C.

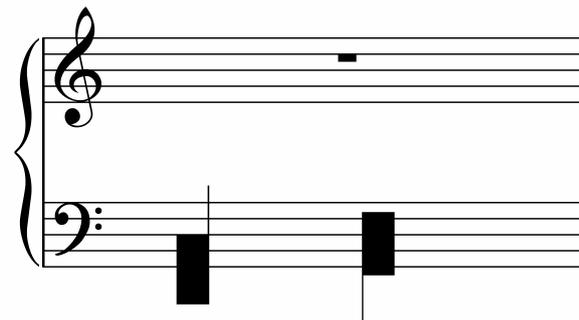


Thunder effect is produced by playing a glissando on the wire strings so loudly, that the strings buzz against each other.



Hitting the bass strings produces a cluster sound.

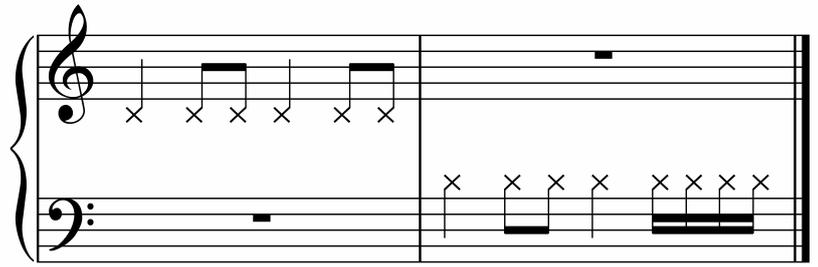
It is created by smacking the lower strings violently with a flat left hand. The volume depends on the power of the attack. The harpist can muffle the strings, or let them ring.



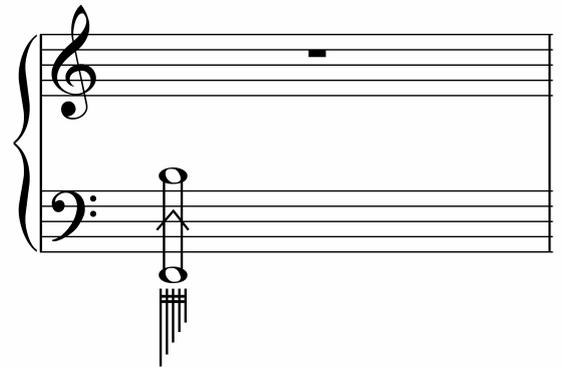
SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Knocking on soundboard

There are many ways and places to knock on the soundboard: knocking, snapping, hitting, rolling, with nails, fingers, palm, fist and so on. If you prefer a certain sound, please specify!



Whistling sound: sliding the flat of the hand up or down the strings. This is only effective on the bass wires.

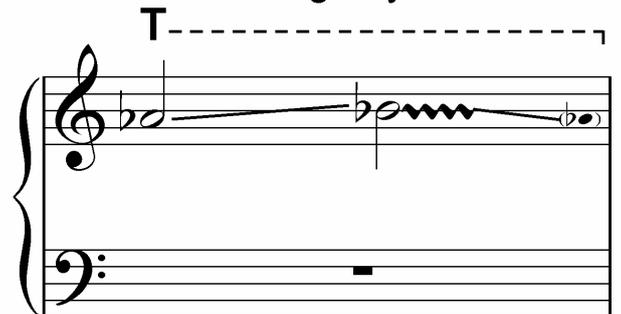


Tuning key slide is a very 'fluid' sound, like the bottle neck on the guitar.

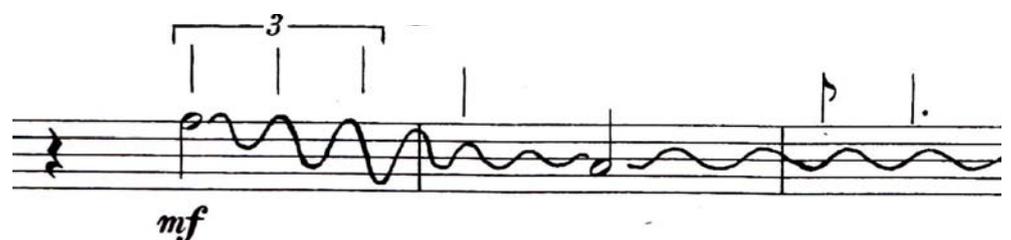
This sliding sound is produced between two or more pitches on one string. The metal part of the tuning key is pressed against the string: the string is shortened so the pitch will be higher. The other hand plucks the string. After the string is plucked the tuning key will be moved up or down. Instead of a metal tuning key a screwdriver can be used and will produce a stronger effect.

Tuning key slides can be executed on all strings, but they are most effective on the longer gut strings. In the high register there is less resonance, and the tuning key doesn't fit easily between the strings. The wire strings are difficult to reach and sound less clear. The pitches can be controlled. It is possible to slide in quarter tones.

with tuning key



Different ways of notating a tuning key slide: If you want the exact pitch and the exact slide, you need to notate this. More improvised slides are also very common.



SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Scordatura

Detuning a string affects all the notes on that string. For example, if a particular G string is detuned, the G# and Gb will also be detuned.

Lowering the pitch of the string causes no problems. Raising the pitch stresses the string and means bigger tension on the frame of the harp. The pitch of a string should not be raised by more than one tone, to diminish the risk of broken strings.

Detuning the strings takes time: we cannot detune during playing. It may take the harp some time to become used to different tuning. Retuning afterwards also takes time.

Touching a vibrating string with the the nail, plectrum or tuning key. This creates a buzzing sound and is most effective on the bass wires.

If you prefer a certain sound: experiment with a harpist and specify in the score!

Playing behind the bridge

sounds like soft staccato plucking. It is mostly used in the higher registers, by playing between the bridge pins and the tuning pins.

Since this effect has hardly any resonance and does not always correspond to normal pitch, it is not used for melodic lines.

However, it is a great sound colour, often used as a plectrum glissando behind tuning pins.

Amplification (and electronics)

Pickup mics can be placed everywhere on the harp (strings, soundboard, pedals etc) to amplify any specific sound you want.

Vibrato pitch bending is produced by pressing the string between the tuning pin and the bridge, right after playing. The sound is quite soft and does not resonate for very long. It is most effective in the high register. We need two hands to play vibrato pitch bending, and it requires a different playing position.

Prepared harp: paper in strings

The harp can be prepared in numerous ways. Placing paper between the strings will create a sound like a snare drum. Every kind of paper creates a different sound colour, so experiment with a harp and a harpist for the best result.

Other common used objects are felt, hair clips, clothes pegs. Pedals can also be prepared. Prepared effects take time.

Objects: bow

In contemporary harp music, many objects can be used to add sound colours. One of the most common effects is using a bow.

The sound of bowed strings is a bit like running your fingers over a glass rim. We bow between two or more strings, either rhythmically or with rubato.

For the best sound effect, we need to resin the bow. This is bad for the strings.

Objects: super ball

The super ball stick is a stick with a plastic bouncy ball on the end. It is used to rub along a string or along the soundboard. It makes a 'whale like' sound.

Tremolo of metal stick between two strings

The strings are not plucked with the fingers, but instead touched by a rattling tuning key. We put the tuning key between two strings, then tremolo. The pitch of the tremolo is lower if we play high in the strings (near the bridge), and higher if we play low in the strings (near the soundboard)