

# The SweetHarp, ElfinHarp, and FairyHarp

## A New Paradigm for Inexpensive Harps

**W**e need beauty in the world. We need to feel the caress of art against our heart. It reminds us of who we are. It is to this that I've dedicated these new designs – the rebirth of the affordable harp in a form that is practical, beautiful, and above all, playable.

The **SweetHarp**, **ElfinHarp**, and **FairyHarp** are meant for the young player whose parents are cautious about spending thousands of dollars; the individual who wants to pursue the emerging "healing harps" movement; someone who simply wants an instrument they can afford to travel with; and those for whom a difficult economy makes buying a more costly harp impractical.

The desire to put an affordable harp in people's hands has always been a part of the Caswell Harps' mission. Back in 1977 when I started, we were nearly zealots about it. But that was also coupled with the desire to make a really fine harp. In 2006 I began developing a harp I hoped would address the emerging under-\$500 price range. What came out was my **Butterfly** model. Utilizing some radical ideas known to Latin American harp makers for a generation, together with my Dynamic Tension Balancing™, I was able to produce a small harp with an unprecedented sound. It has a richness associated with larger harps. Unfortunately, I couldn't bring it in at the price I had wanted. (The **Butterfly 29** starts at \$895 – which is still a lot of harp for the money!)

A couple of years ago I had the inspiration for a very inexpensive harp for toddlers which became the **FairyHarp**. Perfect for the under-six princess set, it has been well received. And it opened the door to a flood of new construction ideas. Building on the **FairyHarp**, I developed the **ElfinHarp** and **SweetHarp**, always asking, "What makes a harp strong and sound good, and how can it be made inexpensively without sacrificing those elements?" I didn't notice for a long time that I was doing was creating a new paradigm for small harps.

Hundreds of hours have gone into the design of the **ElfinHarp** and **SweetHarp** before ever wood was cut for them. The result is, I think, a radical new chapter in small harps, and an elegance of design which is measured by dozens of subtle steps forward, some brand new, many building on the innovations of traditional harp makers around the world over the last generation.

Here are just a couple of features which hint at the practicality and tonal quality of these new designs:

- No Tuning Wrench Required – Using straight-through machine tuners you can tune a string in real time while you play. No noisy-to-use wrench to drop on your soundboard or get lost.
- Anti-Warp Pillar and Curve Reinforcement – Highly accurate cutting of the parts allows me to provide additional bracing which stabilizes an otherwise thin pillar and curve.
- Internal braces on the **SweetHarp** allow for realistic tension on the strings while reducing weight and making the harp more responsive.

Check out the table to see some of the other features. And don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Thanks for your interest,

Chris Caswell

	FairyHarp 15	ElfinHarp 19	SweetHarp 29 Basic	SweetHarp 29 Starter Levers	SweetHarp 29 Standard Levers	SweetHarp 29 Half Levers	SweetHarp 29 Full Levers
<b>PRICING &amp; FINANCING</b> <i>Retail Price</i>	<b>\$149</b>	<b>\$249</b>	<b>\$469</b>	<b>\$529</b>	<b>\$599</b>	<b>\$729</b>	<b>\$919</b>
<i># of Strings<sup>1</sup></i>	15	19	29	29	29	29	29
<i>Price Per String<sup>2</sup></i>	\$9.94	\$13.11	\$16.17	\$18.24	\$20.66	\$25.14	\$31.69
<i>Warranty</i>	1 Year	1 Year	2 Years	2 Years	2 Years	2 Years	2 Years
<i>Interest-Free Rent-To-Own<sup>3</sup></i>	n/a	n/a	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Trade-Up Option<sup>4</sup></i>	n/a	n/a	1 Year	1 Year	1 Year	1 Year	1 Year
<b>STRINGS</b> <i>Optimal String Lengths<sup>5</sup></i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Modern String Configuration<sup>6</sup></i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Micro-Gradient™ String Spacing<sup>7</sup></i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Zero-Offset Strings<sup>8</sup></i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>TUNERS &amp; LEVERS</b> <i>Machine Tuners<sup>9</sup></i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i># of Levers</i>	n/a	n/a	0	4	9	17	29
<i># of Possible Key Signatures<sup>10</sup></i>	1	1	1	2	3	5	7
<b>CONSTRUCTION</b> <i>Bridge Pins<sup>11</sup></i>			•	•	•	•	•
<i>Tapered Soundbox<sup>12</sup></i>		•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Internal Bracing<sup>13</sup></i>			•	•	•	•	•
<i>Pillar &amp; Curve Lateral Bracing<sup>14</sup></i>		•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Best- Quality Laminates<sup>15</sup></i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Choice of Colors (Dyed Not Painted<sup>16</sup>)</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>ACCESSORIES</b> <i>Lap Brace<sup>17</sup></i>		\$25.00	included	included	included	included	Included
<i>Stand/Legs<sup>18</sup></i>	Stand	n/a	Legs \$35.00	Legs \$35.00	Legs \$35.00	Legs \$35.00	Legs \$35.00
<i>Internal Pickup-Ready<sup>19</sup></i>		•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Professional Pickup<sup>20</sup></i>		\$45.00	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$45.00

## Caswell Harps

CaswellHarps.com [harps@sonic.net](mailto:harps@sonic.net) 866-99-42777 (HARPS) 729 Heinz Ave. #15, Berkeley, CA 94710

All Caswell Harps are designed by master harper and harp maker Chris Caswell, and are made in the U.S. from environmentally compliant materials.

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- <sup>1</sup> **Number of Strings:** All these harps have as their top (shortest) note C3 – the third C above middle C. The SweetHarp 29 goes down to the C below Middle C. The ElfinHarp goes down to the F above middle C. The FairyHarp has the C above middle C as its lowest note.
- <sup>2</sup> **Price Per String:** This is a handy way to begin to compare harps within a similar bracket (i.e. professional, student, etc). Together with the instrument's features and quality, it can make the relative value clear.
- <sup>3</sup> **Interest-Free Rent-To-Own:** A simple program which allows for monthly payments after receipt of the harp. Ask for details.
- <sup>4</sup> **Trade-Up Option:** Any SweetHarp in good condition may be traded in towards a Caswell Harp of greater value within one year (adjustments may be made based on the condition of the trade-in), crediting the price paid before any tax or shipping.
- <sup>5</sup> **Optimal String Lengths:** String lengths are computed to give an even feeling, even sounding, reliable harp. Shortening the lengths creates a harp which is less responsive, possibly uneven feeling, and with more distortion when played.
- <sup>6</sup> **Modern String Configuration:** In the last few years, new materials, especially fluorocarbon, have gained popularity as strings, reducing the number of wound strings and allowing for a more even transition between ranges. The ElfinHarp and SweetHarp have been designed from the ground up to benefit from these advances in string technology.
- <sup>7</sup> **Micro-Gradient™ String Spacing:** Harp strings get gradually further apart as they descend to account for the increased transverse travel of the strings (otherwise they would start to bang into each other when played strongly). Developed by Caswell Harps, Micro-Gradient™ spacing provides the most even gradient of string spacing available.
- <sup>8</sup> **Zero-Offset Stringing:** There is no lateral angle to the strings from bridge pin to soundboard. Eases playing and increases accuracy of sharpening levers. Usually only found on larger harps.
- <sup>9</sup> **Machine Tuners:** High quality machine tuners replace friction pins which need a wrench. Tune in real time! No more loosening your wrench or dropping it on the soundboard.
- <sup>10</sup> **Number of Possible Key Signatures:** This is directly related to the number of sharpening levers on a harp. Every additional lever (ie, all the Fs) provides one more key signature. Each key signature has a major and minor key, in addition to all the modes.
- <sup>11</sup> **Bridge Pins:** Used to maintain spacing between strings and distance from the neck (needed with sharpening levers), bridge pins also improve the tone of nylon-strung harps.
- <sup>12</sup> **Tapered Soundbox:** A crucial element of harp design, the soundbox gets wider as the strings get longer. Sacrificing this for the sake of simpler construction greatly reduces an instrument's potential tone (and beauty).
- <sup>13</sup> **Internal Bracing:** Even moderate-sized harps are subject to large stresses which can cause sides and back to distort and crack. The solution is wither to lighten the strings and reduce the stress, make the sides and back heavy, or use internal bracing. Usually only found on more expensive harps.
- <sup>14</sup> **Pillar & Curve Lateral Bracing:** Due to their light construction, the family of inexpensive harps has often suffered from insufficient lateral bracing, resulting in inappropriate warping in the direction of the strings. Lateral bracing helps minimize this.
- <sup>15</sup> **Best Quality Laminates:** Some less expensive harps use "paneling" style plywoods. Though fine in many respects, they are less strong and dimensionally stable than the high-end laminates used here. This allows these harps to be made lighter and stronger.
- <sup>16</sup> **Dyed, Not Painted:** Dying the wood prior to lacquering allows the wood grain to show through. Painting is often used to hide "fixes" in the woodworking.
- <sup>17</sup> **Lap Brace:** This option allows the harp to rest more securely in the lap. The SweetHarp Lap Brace is adjustable, mounts at a reasonable point of balance, and is designed to minimize tone damping (a problem with cross pieces which clamp inside the back). It also fits the ElfinHarp.
- <sup>18</sup> **Stand/Legs:** The optional SweetHarp legs hold the harp securely at a practical height. The FairyHarp has a base which doubles as a lap brace.
- <sup>19</sup> **Internal Pickup-Ready:** The ElfinHarp and SweetHarp have a hole already drilled to receive a standard jack. This is generally regarded as more professional, providing a more secure, less intrusive, mounting of the pickup.
- <sup>20</sup> **Professional Pickup:** As a recording engineer, designer and master harp maker, Chris Caswell only uses the finest, studio grade audio components on his harps. The pickup he has chosen for the SweetHarp is a customized KK Big Shot Internal. A twin version is also available for \$84.00.

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