

# What is a Nyckelharpa?

[*nook-uhl-hahr-puh*]

**A bowed string instrument from Sweden**  
**Nyckel = keyed and harpa = fiddle.**

**4 bowed strings** - tuned C G C A

**12 Sympathetic strings** - tuned in a chromatic scale that are placed lower in the bridge so that they are not touched by the bow and are left to resonate sympathetically and add the instrument's characteristic zing.

**37 keys** pushed upwards by the fingers that make tangents touch the three main playing strings to change the pitch.

The nyckelharpa has a long rich history. The oldest representation is a statue in Källunge Church in Sweden, dated 1350. There are countless images of the nyckelharpa throughout central Europe from the 1400s and surviving instruments dating from the mid-1600s.

The oldest instruments only had two strings - one drone string and one diatonic melody string. Gradually as technology evolved more strings were added. The sympathetic resonating strings were added sometime in the 1700s. The first fully chromatic nyckelharpa is attributed to August Bohlin and the modern three row chromatic was developed by Eric Sahlström in the 1970s.

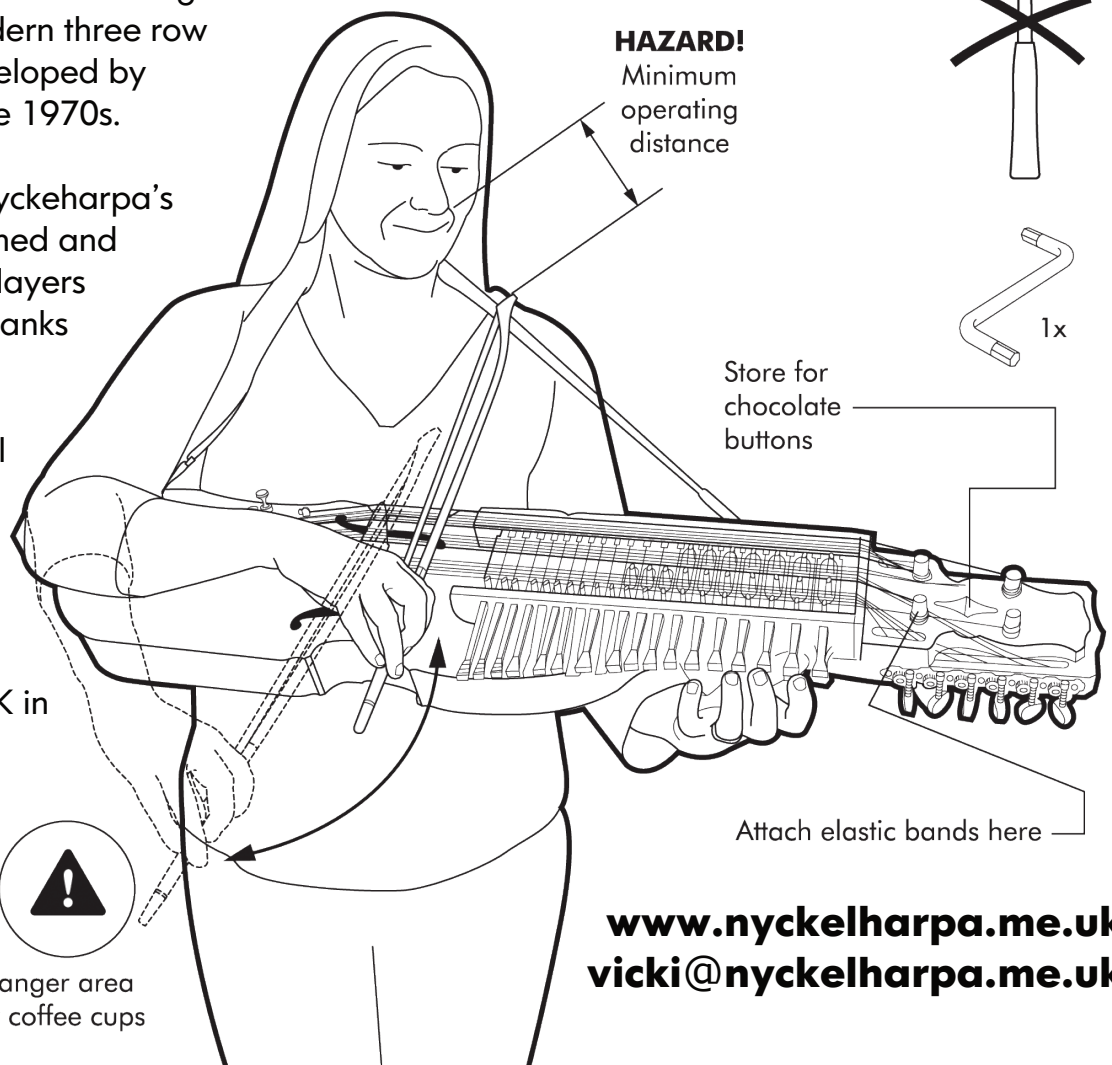
By the 1950s the nyckelharpa's popularity had waned and only a handful of players remained. It was thanks to the work of Eric Sahlström that we have this wonderful instrument to enjoy today.

The nyckelharpa began to gain popularity in the UK in the early 2000s.

See website for more info about lessons and workshops.



Danger area for coffee cups



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