KANTELE

**Kantele is an ancient traditional Finnish plucked string instrument. Kantele is very well known in Finnish mythology because of its role in the Finnish National Epic Kalevala. Nowadays kantele is considered Finland's national instrument.**

**The kantele is the national instrument of Finland and a symbol of national identity often depicted in national romantic art. It’s a string instrument not closely related to the harp although there are similarities. The closest relatives to the kantele can be found e.g. in the Baltic countries and Russia. The instrument has been estimated to have existed for some 2000 years. The earliest forms have probably featured a small amount of strings – perhaps five. The five stringed kantele still remains the basic form of the modern kantele.**

**The usual way to play chords on small kanteles is by pulling multiple strings with the fingers of the right hand or a plectrum. The left hand is used to mute strings that don’t belong to the chords.**

**The big kanteles which usually feature over 30 strings are played with a different technique. They are played eather from the short side with the shortest string facing the player or from the long side with the longest string facing the player. The string is not commonly picked upwards as one would pick the string of a small kantele but it’s rather pulled towards the player with the finger ending up on the string next to the one being sounded. Each hand has a special role: usually the right hand playes the melody whereas the left hand plays chords. Big kanteles (a.k.a box kanteles) were developed during the 19th century when the kantele players begun to want more strings to be able to play modern music. At this point the building technique had to be changed also. Whereas small kanteles were usually built from a single piece of wood big kanteles require construction from several pieces of board. The kantele with halftone mechanics was developed by Paul Salminen in the 1920’s. This made the use of kantele possible in e.g. classical and pop music. The ambitus of a big kantele nowaday ranges from around C to c4.**





