

# Mountain Dulcimer

*A story by a kid*

by Nathan McAlister

I was very young when I saw my first mountain dulcimer as a child. My father had recieved one as a birthday present when I was only eight or nine years old. He tried to learn it, but with little success the flea-market dulcimer was put in the closet for good.

Time went on and I had began playing the violin mountain style, played all over our area, and had explored the mandolin with some degree of satifaction. It was not until the Christmas season many years later that the dulcimer was removed from the closet along with the Christmas decor. I was immediately captivated by the beautiful simplicity and the graceful lines of the instrument. I knew I would play the dulcimer.

Stringfling came that February. I went with the dulcimer, but most of my jamming was done witht the fiddle. Another dulcimer player informed me that my dulcimer was not in good playing condition, and could't believe I had learned to play it. After Stringfling the dulcimer was again put in the corner to collect dust. I just didn't intend to buy a dulcimer. After one of my little brothers baseball games one summer night, our family went out for ice cream. My grandma informed me that a lady at work had a mountain dulcimer for sale and wanted to know if I would like to have it. Needless to say, I jumped at the chance. It turned out, this dulcimer was not that much better than the first. The action was ok though, so I was pleased.

Another year went by. This time I was called to Stringfling to give a performance. I was thrilled. Not because of the performance, but I had finally enough to buy a good dulcimer. I performed, then went right out and bought a Mcspadden standard dulcimer that same day. That is when the dulcimer bug really got to me. I joined the Ozark Mountain Wilderness Dulcimer Society. I was and am still the youngest member in the club, and I am proud of it!

My point is not only that kids can play the mountain dulcimer, but anyone can. It does require a little effort. I practice and practice every night for at least an hour or two. I truly am in love with the instrument, thats why I am so dedicated. I want to show people how high kids can take the mountain dulcimer.

Over these years I have played at Silver Dollar City three times, once with the Gallier brothers. I have played at Missouri youth fiddling showcases, and many local events. This is all a result of hard work.

If I can do it you can too. I stress this to all people I have shown how to play. The Appalachian dulcimer is a folk instrument. It can be as easy as you want, or as complicated as you want. It is all what you put into it. The music must please you, not anyone else. Do not be judgemental of your own efforts.

I am now 16 years old, and in love with the dulcimer and everything it stands for. Sometimes I am laughed at for playing the dulcimer, other times I am looked at as a musician stuck in the good old days. If you have not bought a dulcimer yet or have not tried to play that dusty old thing in the closet, I encourage you to open that case and strum awhile. You have nothing to lose, because you can learn to play it.

There is an instrument for everyone, if you look in you heart you will find it. Mine is the mountain dulcimer. I truly hope yours is too.