

# Kids and Dulcimers: A Perfect Match

By Jennifer Ranger  
Kattywompus String Band



Any street musician can tell you that all over our great, big, music loving nation this same scene is continually played out: musicians play dulcimers and gather crowds. The crowds listen attentively, they applaud, tap their feet and sometimes leave a tip or purchase a CD. The adults often ask questions about the music and the instruments: “What is that called?” “Is it hard to play?” If kids get underfoot moms and dads will pull them back and apologize, and soon the next wave of listeners appear and the fun starts all over.

Parents ask their kids, “Did you enjoy that?” “Um-hum” comes the reply, and the family goes off to finish their busy day of school work, chores & family duties. How easy it is to miss that extra glimmer of fascination in a youngster’s eyes as they hear dulcimer music, or to consider it a mere passing fancy. Also, because dulcimers, both hammered and fretted, are rather unique it’s sometimes hard to think of offering them to children, but an increasing number of parents are doing just that. **Dulcimers appeal to kids for the same reasons that they appeal to adults.**



They’re beautiful, different and very easy to play. Dulcimers really give you a lot of cluck for your buck as far as instant gratification goes, and we all love that!

It might surprise some to know that a good percent of students in our music studio are quite young, and that at the age of 8 or 9 have already been playing a year or more. And they’re good – very good. Learning dulcimer improves their hand/eye co-ordination, discipline & patience. And when you see the glow of satisfaction on the face of a child who has just played a piece perfectly, then you begin to understand the confidence dulcimers can bring to a youngster. “I can play music – I can succeed! I’m

special” In our music studio we recommend that kids be about 8 to start lessons, but I confess to many happy hours sitting with my 5 year old grandson as I teach him to play the mountain dulcimer. Since it is so easy to play, he really enjoys it, and I’m convinced it will be a major musical base for him as he matures. After all, success at an early age can only set the stage for future achievements, and dulcimers can be an important part of that process.

**Jennifer Ranger is a member of the Kattywompus String Band, one of Los Angeles area's busiest folk bands. See their site at: <http://www.sokattywompus.com>**



Kattywompus String Band during taping of cable TV show, On the Avenue.  
Monrovia, CA