

Making Musical Instruments by Traditional Methods

Tutor: Ken Baddley

Dates: Monday 05/01/26 – 16/03/26 (excluding 16/02/26)

Times: 18:30 – 21:00

10 Weeks

Course Information & Teaching Methods:

This is a 'first principles' course designed to introduce students to making stringed musical instruments, covering the following areas of design and construction:

- Specification and tunings.
- Selecting and sharpening tools.
- Types of wood required.
- Making internal moulds.
- Preparation of hard and softwoods.
- Use of specialist tools.
- Making glue and varnish.
- Making tuning pegs and strings.
- Calculating fretting and fitting frets.
- Using decorative elements such as inlays and purfling.
- Gilding and parchment work.
- Tuning and playing.

We shall use hand tools and methods to explore some of the techniques of making a variety of instruments of the psaltery family, from the French Épinette to the Finnish Kantele.

The class will be taught by one-to-one contact as well as group tuition and working notes covering each week's work topic will be provided in handout form.

No previous experience of making musical instruments is required.

Students can bring hand tools (knives, chisels, saws, scrapers, hand drills, etc. but **not power tools**) if they have them, and pencils and drawing tools (compasses, etc.) if possible.

Specialist tools for winding strings, making tuning pegs, and hot-forming wood will be provided.

Students will be taught to sharpen tools, if required for instrument work. Students may wish to buy tone-woods from a specialist supplier for the vaults (soundboxes) of instruments, for which the tutor will be happy to put together a joint order.

Equipment:

The Arts & Crafts Centre is fully equipped, but students sometimes like to have their own hand tools (sharp pencil, metal ruler and craft knife) and small specialist tools (usually available from the tutor at cost)

Materials are available from the tutor at an additional cost, usually about £5 per project, but specialist items (e.g. leathers or hand-patterned papers) will be more expensive.

Additional Information:

Tea, coffee and biscuits are available in the kitchen area, for a small charge.

About the tutor;

Ken Baddley trained as a luthier in Germany and the Netherlands. He taught instrument making at the West Kent Centre (Continuing Education) of the University of Kent for seven years and is a past holder of a Hertfordshire Digswell Arts Trust Fellowship. He has recorded and toured in the UK with the Christminster Singers and the Oxford Waits, and in the USA with Vermont's 'Northern Harmony'. He is active as a luthier, singer, and instrumentalist, and since 2004 as the founder and Musical Director of the performance and research group Bedford Gallery Quire.

Please adhere to the regulations concerning Personal Protective Equipment & Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and how they apply to the course or accommodation and to any 'Safe System of Work' as advised by your tutor.

In addition to the Centre's legal responsibility, students also have the responsibility to take care of the Health and Safety of themselves and others.