

DISINFECTING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The information printed below is a summary of correspondence between NSBTM and several harp manufacturers regarding the issue of disinfecting harps or other wooden instruments.

This document should not be considered an authoritative voice on disinfecting your specific instrument. Because products can be safe on some finishes but damaging to others, NSBTM recommends that you always contact the manufacturer of your instrument for safe disinfection of your instrument.

FROM BLEVINS HARP:

Minwax, the company that manufactures the finish product that we use on our harps, doesn't recommend any specific products to clean instruments. However, they suggest that after cleaning you should immediately wipe the harp down with a damp - not wet - cloth to neutralize the cleaning product. Don't leave harsh chemicals on the surface any longer than necessary because it is possible that, over time, they could start to dissolve the finish. Hydrogen peroxide wipes may offer a safer way to disinfect the surfaces of harps. Oxivir TB wipes have been suggested. It is not ideal to put any liquid or chemicals on a wood surface, but harps were meant to be played so sometimes we don't have any other option!

FROM HEARTLAND HARPS:

From Dave Woodworth, owner of Heartland Harps:

A carbon fiber harp is the ideal harp to take into environments where it would need to be disinfected multiple times per day. Heartland Harps are all carbon fiber, and can be wiped down constantly, using a spray-on or wipe-on disinfectant, such as hand sanitizer. Any disinfectant cleaner can be used on the carbon fiber, as long as it does NOT contain acetone (think nail polish remover). This process applies to Heartland Harps that are painted or wood-grained, as well.

The nylon strings are easier to disinfect than the wound wire strings, and can be immediately wiped dry after the cleaner is applied. Use a cloth that does not shred fibers onto the wires. This process applies only to Heartland Harps carbon fiber harps, not wood harps.

FROM LYON & HEALY AND SALVI HARPS:

Most of the products that sanitize from COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases could damage the finish of a Salvi harp. **We therefore advise against the use of alcohol, bleach, ammonia, or other sanitizing products.**

We recommend carrying out a normal cleaning of the instrument, using a soft cotton or microfiber cloth, dry or slightly moistened with soapy water. If you use a damp cloth, quickly dry the instrument after cleaning. The cleaning thus performed can remove a virus in whole or in part from the surface of the harp but does not kill it. We therefore recommend that you do not use the same cloth for cleaning other objects as it may carry the virus on them. Discard the

used cloth immediately after cleansing the harp or sanitize it immediately after immersion in denatured alcohol at 90 °. For the cleaning of the harp, however, we refer to what is specified in the User And Maintenance Guide.

SALVI HARPS MOUNT BOW BRAND STRINGS. We consulted Bow Brand International Ltd regarding string sanitation methods to prevent CO-VID-19 infection and other viral respiratory diseases. At this proposition Bow Brand stated:

“It seems that hand sanitizer has no harmful impact on our strings. The disinfectant gel we tested contains 68% alcohol. Even with copious amounts of gel, the strings did not react. In addition, with a gel-impregnated cloth, the strings dried very quickly due to the alcoholic strength.”

For this reason, whenever you deem it necessary, clean the strings with a gel hand sanitizer found commonly on the market. We always recommend doing this if the harp has been played previously by someone else. Use a soft or microfiber cloth to apply the gel. It is not necessary to rub repeatedly or vigorously: the mere contact with the gel kills viruses and bacteria and a too energetic or prolonged friction could however affect the finish of the gut strings.

FROM MARINI MADE HARPS:

Sanitizers that contain alcohol could damage some wood finishes. A safer option is a solution of warm water, vinegar, and a few drops of mild dish soap. I can't say how effective this is when compared to alcohol-based sanitizers, but it should help, and it should be safe for most wood finishes, except shellac.

FROM MUSICMAKERS:

When considering how to disinfect your harp it is important to keep in mind that harp makers don't all use the same type of finish and what may be ok on one harp may cause damage on another harp. It is always best to check with the harp maker to get the best advice. That being said - here are some general guidelines that, applied carefully, should not harm most harps.

First of all, the best way to keep your harps safe and free of germs/viruses is to wash your hands before playing that harp!

You can safely use alcohol based wipes on harp strings. Long term use may alter the tone somewhat and could even make them a bit squeaky. You can also use hydrogen peroxide wipes such as Oxiver TB Wipes.

The most commonly available disinfectant wipes are alcohol based. Alcohol is a solvent and long term use may cause some fading and clouding of the finish. When using alcohol based wipes, it is recommended that you wipe the surface with the disinfectant wipe and then immediately dry the surface with a soft cloth.

Hydrogen Peroxide based wipes are safer than alcohol wipes on most finishes but it is still recommended that you follow up the application with a soft cloth to remove any leftover solution.

Pine Sol cleaner is a great choice. It is all natural and safe on all finishes. The only drawback is that it is not as readily available in a convenient wipe.

Finally, Seventh Generation Disinfectant Wipes are a great choice and what we would recommend. They are known to be safe on all surfaces.

FROM TRIPLETT HARPS:

With our harps you can use alcohol, just make sure you wipe it off with some water then a dry cloth.

FROM VAVRA HARPS:

Regarding your interest in disinfecting harps, I cannot give recommendations for other makers but for the harps I make, I use Clorox Wipes on the wood, strings and hardware followed with Pledge and a soft cloth.

NOTE: when cleaning natural gut strings, do not saturate the string and wipe them dry immediately. Expect to retune. Wait awhile before retuning so the strings can reach humidity equilibrium. Gut strings tuned at a higher humidity may break as they shrink while drying. This is much less of a concern with nylon or synthetic gut.

Vavra harps are finished with natural shellac. Alcohol is the solvent, therefore, any cleaner or disinfectant containing alcohol, natural or denatured, could mar the wood finish.