

# Harpist

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### THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A HARPIST

There are a number of harpists who you might consider hiring to play for your wedding or special event, all offering varying degrees of aptitude, experience, and professionalism. They play on different types of instruments, offer different services, and of course, they charge different rates. Which one should you hire? There is not a one-size-fits-all answer to that question, and while lists from vendors and paid advertisers can be helpful, they don't really answer the important questions for you either. With that in mind, here are some things you might consider in deciding which harpist you ask to be a part of your special event.

**Training and Qualifications** – A conservatory degree in harp performance indicates years of formal training and intense coursework on the instrument. It also indicates that the harpist sought out and received world-class instruction. Top notch training and ability come into play in every performing context. Whether it's the musicality of the performance, the ability to sight-read and thus offer a wide repertoire of quality arrangements, the facility to easily accommodate special requests, the knowledge of music theory to be able to end the processional gracefully at the right time – a full mastery of the instrument will reveal itself in any performance.

**Their Instrument** – Does the harpist perform on a concert-grand pedal harp? A lever harp (sometimes called a folk or Celtic harp) limits the repertoire, and it offers a much smaller, less luxurious sound. A smaller pedal harp can be adequate for some performance spaces, but not for others. A concert-grand pedal harp can fill a room with sound as well as a grand piano. In the event you have an even larger space, does the harpist provide their own amplification?

**Performance Experience** – Sometimes harpists will advertise that they've been playing the harp for a certain number of years. That, by itself, does not tell you much. In addition to knowing what kind of training they possess, you will want to know:

- Are they a full-time musician, or a hobbyist?
- How many weddings and events do they play each year?
- Will they offer to meet with you and play for you before signing a contract?

Experience shows itself in many ways. It shows in the harpist's ability to work successfully with another musician, whether amateur or professional, whom the harpist has never met before. It shows in your harpist's ability to perform advanced, professional arrangements of music. It shows in their ability and willingness to accommodate special requests with ease, and to offer helpful suggestions. It shows in their reliability. It shows in reacting quickly to miscommunication or logistical problems, and making seamless adjustments to awkward situations. Experience shows in asking the right questions beforehand to ensure the problems and awkward situations are few and far between.

Consider who you are hiring before signing a contract, keeping in mind that qualified professionals make a tremendous difference in raising the standard of your special event.