The Hurdy-gurdy: From Pageantry to Peasantry

A lecture by Samuel A. Nelson

The hurdy-gurdy is a medieval, mechanically bowed instrument. The performer turns a knob on the side of the gurdy that rotates a wheel. That rotating wheel rubs against several strings that vibrate to produce a sound. The performer depresses a panel of wooden buttons to change the pitch of the strings. With a wide array of shapes and sizes, the hurdy-gurdy is unlike any instrument most of us have ever encountered.

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