

Instrumental Dreamland

For thousands of years, mothers have sung tender songs to their children to help them fall asleep. But, creating a soothing lullaby does not require a voice. Pretty, relaxing music can be made using only instruments. In fact, sometimes it is even more calming when there are no words to distract you.

On *Instrumental Dreamland*, we have assembled a selection of restful instrumental songs from many cultures to help children fall asleep and ease adults through the stresses of the day. The gentle sounds of the Japanese *shamisen*, Celtic harp, African kora and Hawaiian slack key guitar will transport you and your family to a more relaxed state of mind.

Damien Erwin

What a Wonderful World

New Orleans trumpet player Louis Armstrong made the song “What a Wonderful World” famous. It has been recorded many times by artists from all over the planet. On this version, recorded in celebration of the birth of Damien Erwin’s niece, he plays the beautiful melody on Spanish guitar. Damien was born into a musical family in California and started playing the guitar when he was 9.

Sue Richards & Maggie Sansone

Bressay Lullaby / Don Oiche

The harp is one of the oldest stringed instruments, and its soothing sounds have long helped people drift off to dreamland. In this song, the Celtic harp played by master harpist Sue Richards is joined by the gentle sound of the hammered dulcimer performed by Maggie Sansone.

People from the Celtic cultures of Ireland, Scotland and beyond play the Celtic harp. Sue Richards is a four-time Scottish National Harp champion. Maggie Sansone is one of America’s best hammered dulcimer players. This ancient instrument looks like the inside of a piano.

Reginaldo Frazatto, Jr.

O Filho Que Eu Quero Ter

“The Son That I Would Like” is a famous bossa nova song from Brazil. *Bossa nova* has a gentle, smooth sound with flavors of jazz mixed with a Brazilian rhythm called *samba*. Reginaldo Frazatto, Jr. is a guitarist who has played with many famous Brazilian artists. He is from São Paulo, the biggest city in Brazil, and one of the largest in the world. You can imagine that, because he lives in a big, noisy city, Reginaldo needs soothing music like this to help him relax.

Michael Allen Harrison

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

“Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” is one of the world’s most famous lullabies. The melody comes from an old French folk song and the lyrics were taken from a poem written by English poet Jane Taylor in the early 1800s. Millions of children have fallen asleep to this pretty melody over the years.

This version is by pianist Michael Allen Harrison of Portland, Oregon. He has written music for movies, theater and ballet and has recorded many albums. One of his CDs traveled into outer space on the space shuttle Discovery, bringing this song a little closer to the stars that inspired it.

Masahiro Nitta

Komoriuta (Lullaby)

Masahiro Nitta plays the shamisen, a traditional Japanese musical instrument similar to a banjo. The body is like a drum, with an animal skin stretched over it to make the sound louder. The *shamisen* has a long neck and three strings that are often made of silk.

Masahiro was born in 1984 and has won many *shamisen* competitions in Japan. He learned how to play from his father, Hiroshi Nitta, and they often perform together. Masahiro has traveled all over the world introducing the sound of the *shamisen* to new audiences.

Balla Tounkara

Kouyate (Thanks, Good People)

A descendent of a long line of *griots*, African singer-storytellers who carry on centuries-old musical traditions, Balla Tounkara decided at a young age to take the music of his ancestors in new directions. He was raised in the city of Kita, a center of *griot* culture in the West African country of Mali. Balla plays the kora, an African harp with 21 strings, a large gourd resonator and metal shakers to enhance the sound.

Balla wrote “Kouyate” as a thank you note to the people who have supported him in his life, especially his family.

Keola Beamer

Pupu Hinuhinu (Shiny Shell Lullaby)

Musicians in Hawaii often loosen the strings of their guitars so the strings bend and make sliding notes. This is called “slack key guitar.” These instruments can be used to play fast songs or slow, beautiful melodies like this one that help you imagine you are sitting on a warm Hawaiian beach listening to the waves lapping gently onto the shore.

Keola Beamer is one of Hawaii’s most famous singers, songwriters, arrangers, composers and slack key guitarists. He comes from a long line of musicians stretching back many generations. Keola is a descendant of the Hawaiian royal family that once ruled the islands. He has blended ancient native chants and instruments such as the gourd whistle with modern popular music and instruments to create new styles of Hawaiian music.

Tony Ellis

Hand in Hand

Tony Ellis grew up in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina listening to the old-time folk and bluegrass music that is popular there. Appalachian music traces its history back to English, Irish and Scottish immigrants who first began settling there in the 1700s. They brought their folk songs with them, and, over time, these songs evolved into new styles of American popular music.

Tony Ellis has performed with Bill Monroe, one of the best-known bluegrass musicians ever, and played at the Grand Ole Opry, Carnegie Hall and other famous concert halls. Tony wrote this song for a wedding, but his gentle guitar playing makes it a perfect song to help you relax.

Kohala & Jake Shimabukuro

Honu’s Dream

Kohala is a trio of acoustic guitar players whose members live in Hawaii and perform traditional Hawaiian music mixed with jazz and classical music. Their music reflects the beauty and the landscape of the Kohala region on the Big Island where they live. Hawaii is the only U.S. state made up entirely of islands, eight major ones in all, which are home to tropical forests, sandy beaches, exotic plants and volcanoes that often erupt in fiery molten lava.

On “Honu’s Dream,” Kohala invited a friend, Jake Shimabukuro, to join them. Jake is a master of the ukulele, a tiny guitar introduced to Hawaii by Portuguese sailors long ago. He became famous on YouTube, where millions of people watched his videos, which showcase his skills on the ukulele.

Seamus Egan

The Lark

While many Irish people have moved to America over the years, Seamus Egan went the other way. He was born in Pennsylvania and moved to Ireland with his family when he was 3. In Ireland, Seamus intently studied traditional Irish music, and he became so good that he won four national championships on four instruments by the time he was 14 years old. He now lives in America again and is one of the most famous players of traditional Irish music.

“The Lark” is a slow Celtic ballad played with guitar, fiddle, piano and cello. Seamus wrote this tune, which originally appeared on his album *When Juniper Sleeps*.

Victor Johnson

Brahms’ Lullaby

“Brahms’ Lullaby” is a famous tune written by German composer Johannes Brahms in the 19th century. Its original name is the tongue-twister *Wiegenlied: Guten Abend, gute Nacht*. Brahms wrote the song for a friend’s newborn baby.

Victor Johnson, who lives in Oregon, prides himself on making music that people of all ages can enjoy. When Victor was a child, his parents would invite friends over to play music late into the night. He would sneak out of his upstairs bedroom in his pajamas, make a cozy nest of blankets on the stairway landing and listen to the music streaming up through a vent that looked like an old-fashioned radio.