

What's Your Heart Instrument?

When you're asked to complete a task, would you rather work with a team or forge ahead on your own?

Team player

Self-reliant

It's Friday night! Where would you rather be – out at a party, or at home in your favourite chair?

At school or work, which end of the spectrum are you – teacher's pet or class clown?

Home

Party

Pet

Clown

What are you more likely to end up doing on your night off?

- A) Getting trapped in YouTube/Wikipedia vortex while researching obscure Japanese cartoons
- B) Reading poetry or a novel, listening to music while musing on the exquisite beauty of your own melancholy

While you're out at your party, what are you more likely to do?

- A) Meet absolutely everybody, stay till the bitter end, never stop talking
- B) Loiter enigmatically, let the best people come to you, leave without telling anyone

While you're at school or work, what are you most likely to daydream about?

- A) Adventures, dreamscapes, far-away lands
- B) Lunch

You have a deadline looming in a week. What are you more likely to do?

- A) Work calmly towards completion in an organised fashion
- B) Leave everything until the last minute
- C) Complete the work brilliantly but only after a week-long meltdown

A

B

A

B

A

B

A

B

C

You're a handpan player!

You're a barrow fiddle player!

You're a seahorn player!

You're a reed piper!

You're a cithara player!

You're a bagpiper!

You're a bodhran player!

You're a bombard player!

You're a fiddle player!



SONG OF THE FAR ISLES

NICHOLAS BOWLING



What's Your Heart Instrument?

Cithara

The cithara is the first of the instruments, and the most versatile. It is unique in not having a specific partner-instrument, and will happily duet with any of the Nine. Cithara players are just the same — open-minded, open-hearted, friendly to all (even when they should be more circumspect). Cithara players are creative, imaginative, and often characterised as dreamers. They usually have an adventurous streak, and have difficulty seeing the seriousness and danger of certain situations.

Fiddle

When you're asked to complete a task, would you rather work with a team or forge ahead on your own? Fiddle-players have long had to endure the age-old joke about being "too highly strung". While it is true that they have a tendency towards worry, and do not cope well with change and disorder, they are also fiercely loving and selfless souls. They are tireless workers — often on the behalf of others — and their quick fingers make them exceptional craftsmen and women.

Barrow fiddle

Traditionally the accompaniment to funeral song, players of the barrow fiddle are, like their instruments, a thoughtful and melancholy bunch. In general they are self-sufficient and happiest in their own company, but the friendships they do form are incredibly strong. To those who know them they are loyal, trustworthy and can always be relied upon for sound advice and a sympathetic ear.

Sea Horn

Brash and brassy, players of the sea horn are perhaps the most confident of musicians. They are born leaders. They love to be in the company of others, and others love to be around them — not least to catch their jokes and stories. Typically, sea horn players have incredible amounts of energy, and are known to be spontaneous to the point of recklessness. Underestimate their mood swings at your peril...



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Bombard

Bombard players are renowned for being deeply affectionate and soulful sorts (the bombard is often known by its colloquial name, “the lover’s pipe”). They want nothing more than to please other people, and the courtship of a bombardist can be a wearisome thing. They are, like fiddle players, incredibly hard workers — although, unlike fiddle players, they are also impossibly disorganised. Always best to give a bombard player one task at a time.

Reed Pipe

Reed pipers are often hard to pin down — never happy to settle in one place, or at one task, for too long. They have a reputation for being flighty, changeable and unreliable, but at the same time there is no one with quicker wits. Many a time has an over-confident sea horn player found themselves on the sharp end of a reed piper’s tongue. And their feet are quicker still — with the smallest and lightest of the instruments, they are the best dancers on the Four Seas.

Bagpipes

Bagpipers are some of the most gregarious musicians in the Far Isles — great talkers, great storytellers, and (as the stereotype goes) great eaters and drinkers. Only cithara players can compete with their friendliness. They are known for their patience and compassion, and are nearly impossible to rouse to anger. On the rare occasions when they give in to their emotions, however, best set sail for another island...

Bodhran

The role of the drum is to hold a song together, so it is unsurprising that bodhran players are the most steadfast and reliable of islanders. They say what they mean, and they mean what they say. A drummer is often called upon to settle disputes between more “passionate” instruments — in fact, they can be so diplomatic and even-handed that they seem to lack any feelings at all. Do not be fooled by this. Under a bodhran player’s thick skin is a warm heart and a wicked sense of humour.

Handpan

The handpan is perhaps the oddest instrument in the Far Isles — somewhere between percussion and a tonal instrument — and handpan players are, without exception, eccentric folk. Their minds seem to work in ways that other musicians cannot fathom, which means they often befriend each other (or just talk to themselves). But beyond their outward strangeness they are fiercely intelligent, perceptive, and imaginative. They often see solutions to problems where everyone else has failed.

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