

The John and Rudy Dopyera Collection



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Elderly Instruments
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The unique twelve instrument Dopyera collection. [Click for a more detailed photo.](#)

We are very proud to offer for sale the combined collection of John and Rudy Dopyera. Few instrument makers represent the American Dream quite as completely as these two inventors, innovators, marketers, and all-around creative force behind both the National and Dobro companies.



L to R: Emil, John, and Rudy during the 1970's

The Dopyera brothers were born in what is now Slovakia, and came to the U.S. with the wave of Eastern European immigrants around the beginning of the 20th century. (In fact, the word “Dobro” is both a contraction of “DOPYera BROthers” and the word for “good” in their native tongue.) Engineers, tinkerers, businessmen, and accomplished musicians (their family had a history of violin making going back centuries, and Rudy was by many accounts an exceptionally talented and soulful Gypsy-style violinist), the two Dopyera brothers combined their Old World skills and traditions with the booming technology and futuristic tastes in art of pre-WWII America. Who else thought that spun aluminum might be a good material for sound projection? Who else engraved beautiful Art Deco designs on the bodies of their guitars? Only the Dopyeras.



The unusual, experimental, and mostly one-of-a-kind instruments in this collection – John’s unusual (and spectacular sounding!) resophonic violin, Rudy’s balalaika-inspired Lullabyka, the Art Deco-influenced steel body uke and tenor guitar, even the actual workbench on which John perfected the fabled tri-cone resonator system – are uniquely American (and uniquely Dopyera) innovations.

John Dopyera poses with his [resophonic violin](#)

There's no doubt that many of the great blues and slide guitar players owe their careers to these radical innovations of the Dopyeras; and there's no question that both country and bluegrass music developed a whole new voice after the introduction of the Dobro. Because of the Dopyera brothers, American instruments – and American music – have never been the same.

Here are some web references:

<http://www.nationalguitars.com/part1.html>

<http://www.gibson.com/products/oai/dobro/story.html>



Four generations of the Dopyera family provided quality hand-crafted instruments. From left: John Dopyera, Rudolph Dopyera, Robert Dopyera, Emil Dopyera, Ronald Lazar, Sr., Ronald Lazar, Jr.

Rudy Dopyera passed away in 1978 and left his instruments and workshop to brother John, at that time 85 years old. When John passed on in 1988 the combined instruments and contents of the two workshops were packed up and put in storage by the family. Family members have now decided to sell the existing collection, plus the historic workbenches on which the brothers did much of their early work.

The instruments are as follows:

Click on the instrument for greater detail

- 110U-4480 DOPYERA RESONATOR VIOLIN**
- 90U-4103 SAFARI RESOPHONIC MANDOLIN**
- 50U-1491 DOBRO MODEL 175 "DELUX SPECIAL"**
- 80U-1879 NATIONAL STYLE N TENOR GUITAR**
- 180U-282 NATIONAL TRICONE UKULELE**
- 50U-1492 DOBRO HAWAIIAN GUITAR**
- 200U-653 DOPYERA LULLABYKA**
- 55U-3359 RUDY DOPYERA BASS**
- 90U-4104 DOBRO RESONATOR MANDOLIN**
- 185U-227 DOBRO NO. 1 HAWAIIAN GUITAR**
- 200U-654 TROIKA RESOPHONIC BALALAIKA**
- 26U-1475 DOBRO MODEL 12 "YE OLDE WOODEN"**



110U-4480



90U-4103



50U-1491



80U-1879



180U-282



50U-1492



200U-653



55U-3359



90U-4104



185U-227



200U-654



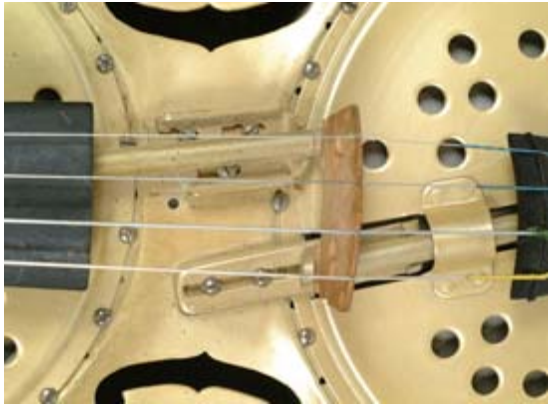
26U-1475

Included also are two of **John Dopyera's workbenches**, one of which was constructed by John with violin-shaped *thingees to hold the instruments*, and the other small workbench on which was invented and constructed the first National tricone guitar. **[Click here to see the workbenches](#)**

[Return to index page.](#)

JOHN DOPYERA RESONATOR VIOLIN

EC, Made by John Dopyera for his personal use, this violin is a uniquely designed instrument which is indicative of the ingeniousness of the work of the Dopyeras. Consisting of a standard wood neck and gold-painted metal body with 2 small cones and a unique coupling from the bridge to the cones with multi-hole coverplates, this is very good sounding instrument is the centerpiece of the Dopyera collection.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

SAFARI RESOPHONIC MANDOLIN (mid-1970's)

EC+, 11-1/2" lower bout, chrome plated metal body heavily engraved with fern and butterfly designs, small screenholes, engraved chrome handstrap and coverplate with six sets of holes in a semi-circular design, tailpiece engraved with a stylized "S", maple neck, white-bound 19-fret rosewood fingerboard, zero fret, 1-1/4" nut width, 15-3/4" scale, spider bridge, 9" resonator cone, w-b-gold-b-bound headstock with "Safari" decal logo and image of explorer with pith helmet and trusty guitar, made in small numbers by Rudy Dopyera (this is the second Safari we have ever seen, and the first with a metal body), and from his personal collection, with SSC.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

DOBRO MODEL 175 "DELUX SPECIAL" (1932-34)

EC, 14" lower bout, sunburst finish all around, walnut body and round neck, 4-piece back, slotted headstock, ivoroid-b-w-bound 19-fret ebony fingerboard, engraved pearl diamond inlays with smaller inlaid diamonds, ivoroid heelcap with black-inlaid heart, 1-3/4" nut width, 25" scale, gold hardware, two screen holes with engraved rings, heavily engraved fan style coverplate, long legged spider bridge, stamped cone, "DOBRO" fancily engraved tailpiece, ivoroid-bound body, b-w top, side and back purfling, pearl shield headstock inlay engraved with "DOBRO" and lyre, engraved gold tuners with pearl buttons, rare and highly collectible high end model, from the personal collection of John Dopyera, with OHSC (black with plush blue/purple lining).



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

NATIONAL STYLE N TENOR GUITAR (c.1930)

EC, Nickel plated pear shaped metal body, 2-piece mahogany neck with black center stripe, ivoroid-bound 21-fret rosewood fingerboard with pearl dot inlays (ivoroid dot at the 5th fret), biscuit bridge with 10" cone, chrome plated sieve coverplate, chrome tailpiece, ebony peghead overlay with engraved pearl "National" shield logo, banjo-style tuners with white plastic buttons, neck appears refinished, tuners may not be original, short-lived transitional model between pear-shaped tricone tenors and plectrums and guitar-shaped single cone models, with 1970's guitar-shaped HSC.

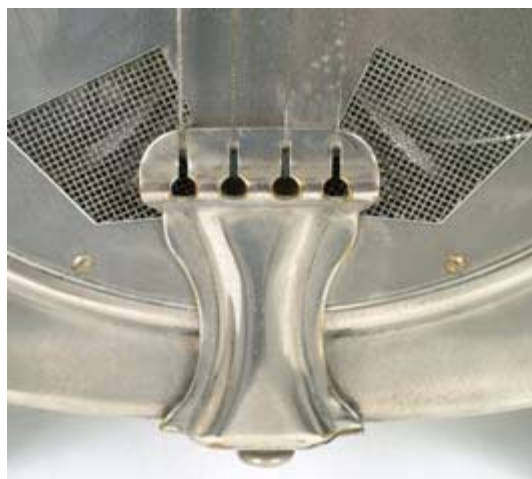


[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

NATIONAL TRICONE UKULELE (1929)

EC, Pear shaped metal mandolin body with 4-string ukulele neck (an available option), walnut neck, ivoroid-bound 18-fret rosewood fingerboard with pearl dot inlays, 1-3/8" nut width, 15" (concert) scale, ivoroid heelcap with black inlaid heart, three 6" resonator cones, round nickel-plated coverplate with eight diamond-shaped screenholes and engraved rose flower design, raised ring on body surrounds the coverplate, stamped tailpiece, shield decal logo, four chrome geared tuners with white plastic buttons (tuners do not appear to be original), very early rare model, with OSS.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

DOBRO HAWAIIAN GUITAR (1970's)

EC, Uniquely designed lap style Hawaiian guitar made by John Dopyera, satin natural finish, hollow tamo body (Japanese ash), slotted headstock with decal logo, white-bound rosewood fingerboard, 20 inlaid fret lines, ivoroid dot inlays, 1-15/16" nut width, 24-15/16" scale, three screenholes, spider bridge, 10-1/2" resonator cone, chrome fan design coverplate, single DeArmond pickup with top mounted volume & tone controls and output jack, individual nickel tuners with oval buttons, w-b-bound body, small hinged cover reveals a plush-lined storage compartment conveniently located near the headstock, interesting one-of-a-kind experimental model.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

DOPYERA LULLABYKA (1973)

EC, 6-string instrument with 3 2-string courses, gloss natural finish (fine checking), triangular curly maple body (3" depth), maple neck, white-bound 19-fret rosewood fingerboard with dot inlays, 1-5/16" nut width, 16" scale, zero fret, engraved dual screenholes on lower points of body, purple anodized 9" resonator cone, spider bridge, gold hardware, heavily engraved coverplate and handstrap, coverplate reads "This is the first / Ampliphonic / Lullabyka / Ever made in the world / Dedicated to our First Lady / of the Land / Mrs. Richard Nixon / Dr. Rudolph Dopyera D.C. / Originator / 1973", engraved tailpiece with the letter "B", banjo style tuners with pearloid buttons, headstock decal of a baby in a cradle with the name "Baushka", truly a one-of-a-kind instrument, from the collection of Rudy Dopyera.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

RUDY DOPYERA BASS (1970's)

VGC+, Natural finish, bolt-on maple neck with hand carved scroll headstock, 20-fret Brazilian rosewood fingerboard, zero fret, dot inlays, 1-5/8" nut width, 28" scale, semi-hollow maple (?) body with hand-carved scrolls on both cutaways, f-holes, one single coil pickup (looks very Rickenbacker-ish), aluminum bridge and lyre tailpiece (painted black and brown, respectively), metal control plate, chrome Schaller tuners, a one-of-a-kind piece of Dobro history handmade by Rudy Dopyera.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

DOBRO RESONATOR MANDOLIN (1960's - 1970's?)

EC, Highly unusual resonator mandolin, 11" wide body with screenholes at upper bass and lower treble bouts, stylized cutaway, maple body and neck, white-bound 22-fret ebony fingerboard, dot inlays, 1-1/4" nut width, 13-3/4" scale, spider bridge with 9" resonator cone, moon and stars coverplate, red-bound body with green top, back, and side purfling, white plastic peghead overlay with Dobro badge and red & green underlays, white-red-green backstrapping, 4-on-a-plate tuners with white plastic buttons, handmade by John Dopyera, with brown oblong HSC (blue plush interior).

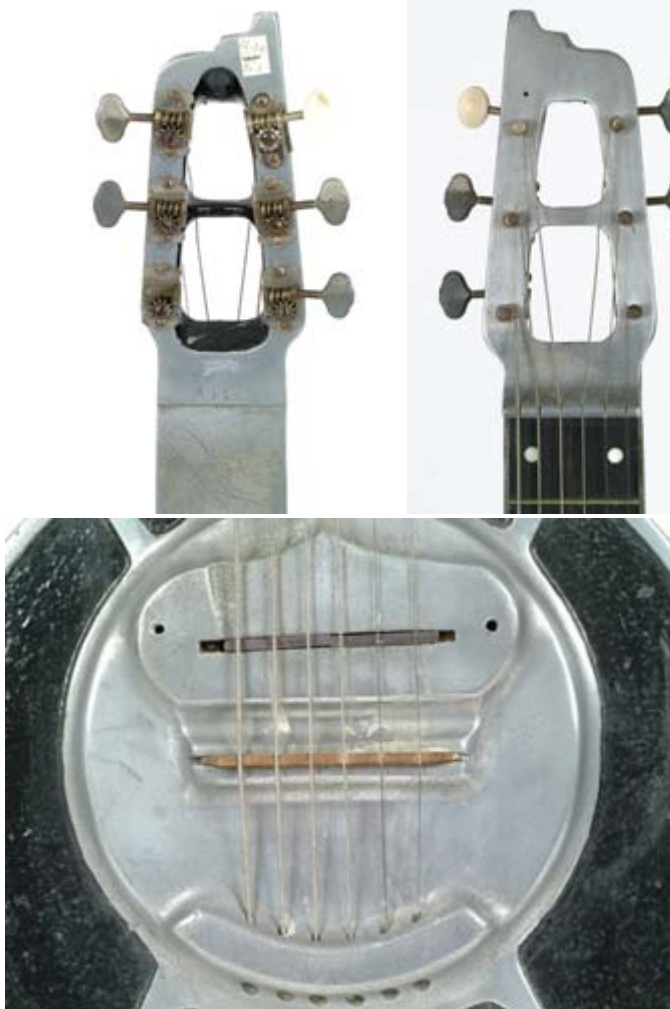


[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

DOBRO NO. 1 HAWAIIAN GUITAR (LAP STEEL) (1936)

VG-EC, Cast aluminum neck and body with integral nut and slotted head stock, 19-fret ebony fingerboard, pearl dot inlays, 2" nut width, 25" scale, circular raised center with integral single coil pickup, bridge, and tailpiece, black chicken head volume and tone knobs, four black painted body sections and f-holes, relief "DOBRO" and lyre in center of body, individual open geared tuners with butterbean buttons (4th tuner has white plastic button, 1st tuner shaft missing), very rare model, early example of Dobro's first lap steel, with guitar shaped SSC.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

TROIKA RESOPHONIC BALALAIKA (1970's)

EC, Made by Rudy Dopyera, 6 strings in 3 pairs, maple neck on triangular body, white-bound 20-fret rosewood fingerboard, dot inlays, 1-3/8" nut width, 20-5/8" scale, zero fret, body consists of flat birdseye maple laminate top and back joined by 26 dark-stained turned maple "legs" and large maple neck and endblocks centered around a metal soundwell (finished purple), spider bridge with 9" resonator cone, chrome coverplate and handstrap with fancy floral engraving, chrome tailpiece engraved with a stylized "T", white plastic dots accent the top and back at the points of attachment of the legs, figured maple headstock. As always, a unique experimental design from one of the Dopyeras.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

DOBRO MODEL 12 "YE OLDE WOODEN" 12-STRING GUITAR (1974)

EC, 14" lower bout, brown sunburst finish all around, laminated maple body, 12-fret maple neck with slotted headstock, 19-fret rosewood fingerboard, dot inlays, 1-7/8" nut width, ~24-7/8" scale, two screenholes, spider bridge, chrome fan coverplate, trapeze tailpiece, white-bound body, signed in soundwell by John Dopyera, from his collection, with recent HSC.



[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)

The first National tricone guitar was created on this workbench. John Dopyera used it for his whole life and referred to it as a “guitar vise.” It had several sleeves which could be inserted to form-fit the bodies of instruments from guitars to ukuleles.



Workbench created by Jonn Dopyera with special attachments and a customized instrument rack.

[Return to index page.](#)

[Return to index page.](#)



[Return to index page.](#)