

# Regal and rare, golden harp set for auction



Harpist Michelle Abbott of the City Chamber Orchestra tests the instrument ahead of the auction. Photo: Felix Wong

## Vivienne Chow

A harp fit for royalty will grace the stage of City Hall this week.

And for those who want the presence of the Minerva Verde Princess to be permanent, it will be on sale afterwards, with bids starting at HK\$720,000. The harp is one of two in the world, the first having been sold to an Italian collector in France. It features an unusual gold and green composition, with 24-carat gold leaf on its bird's-eye maple veneer.

It will be sold after Catrin Finch makes her Hong Kong debut at City Hall on Tuesday night for the City

Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong's season-opening concert. She was the British royal harpist between 2000 and 2004.

"The sound is very warm, very responsive, with a deep tone," she said.

Finch said three potential Hong Kong buyers had expressed interest in the ornate instrument. The sale will be by silent auction.

Finch said her tour had included Tokyo and Bangkok. She hoped more appearances in Asia would bring harp music to a greater audience.

"It's important to promote it," said the Welsh harpist, who has been playing since she was six. "I'm play-

ing in a way to show more people the instrument."

Finch hoped that her appearance in the city would lead to opportunities to perform on the mainland.

Michelle Abbott, principal harpist with the orchestra, said playing the instrument was an expensive hobby as a standard harp cost about HK\$200,000. For professionals, the price was about HK\$250,000.

"But professional harpists are in great demand in Hong Kong," said Abbott, adding that the instrument offered a good career because there were fewer than 10 professional harpists in the city.