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Jackson

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(45) **Date of Patent: Aug. 23, 2016**

(54) **TRANSFORMABLE STAND WITH AN IMPROVED FOOT OPERATED PITCH CHANGING MECHANISM FOR STRINGED INSTRUMENTS**

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(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
G10D 3/14 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***G10D 3/143*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC ..... 84/312 P
See application file for complete search history.

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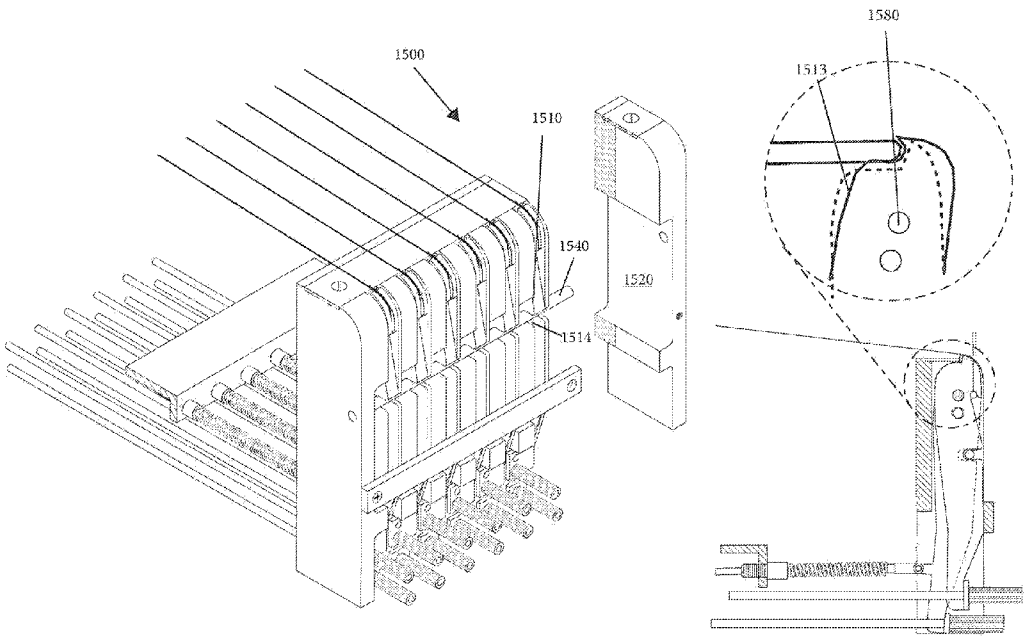
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Buche & Associates, P.C.; John K. Buche; Bryce A. Johnson

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed are apparatus and related methods for changing the pitch of a stringed instrument, such as an standard, fixed-pitch, resonating or Dobro-type guitar, by attaching the stringed instrument onto a transformable stand comprising a foot pedal assembly and string pitch changing mechanism. In one embodiment, the apparatus and related methods involve affixing the strings from an existing guitar to an improved pitch-changing mechanism, such as disclosed string pitch changer housing, that does not require the deconstruction of the guitar body. Rather, the existing guitar is securely placed on its back on a transformable stand with the use of specially designed plates that hold the instrument with screws, securing the body of the instrument to the stand.

13 Claims, 18 Drawing Sheets



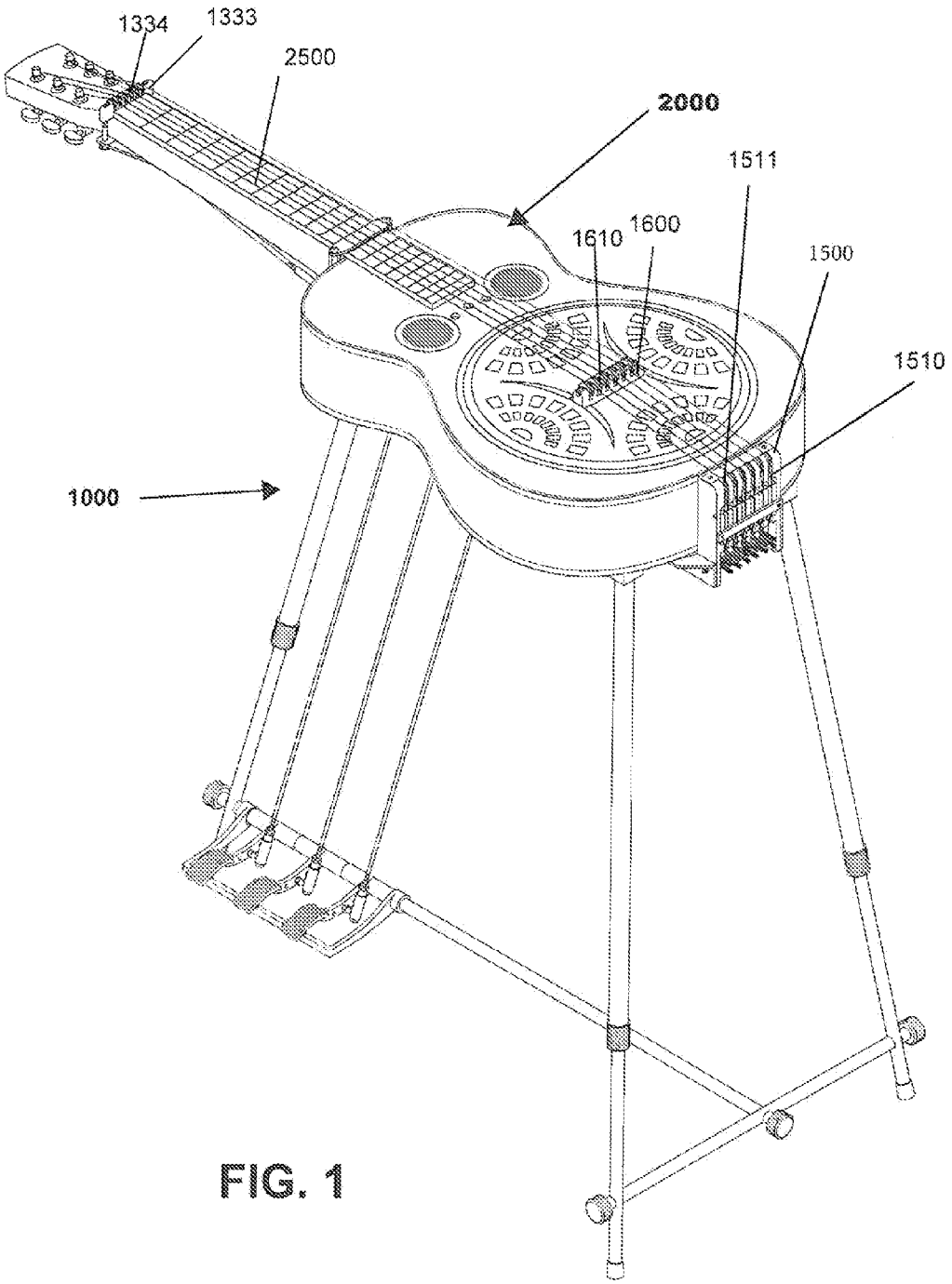


FIG. 1

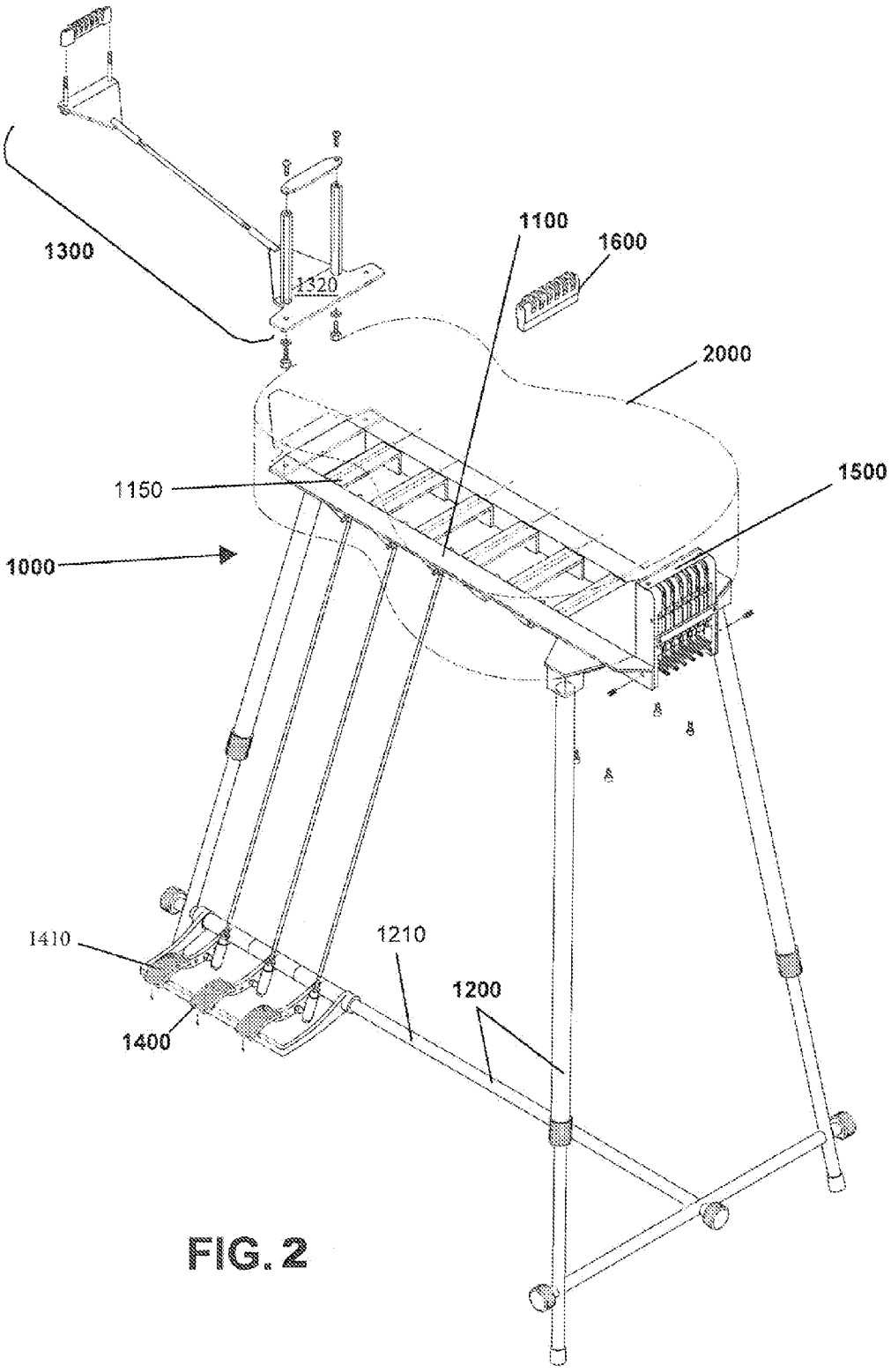


FIG. 2

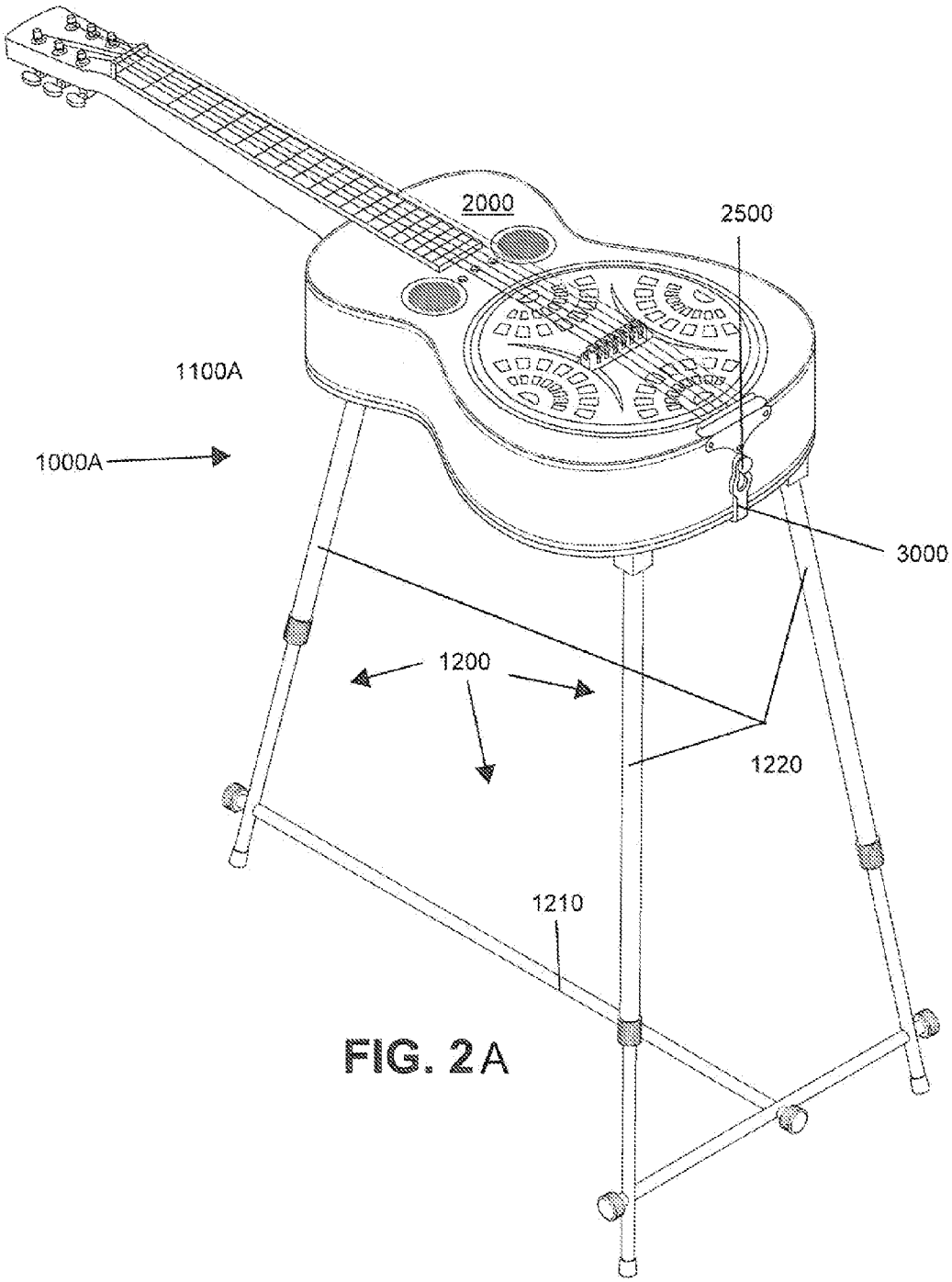


FIG. 2A

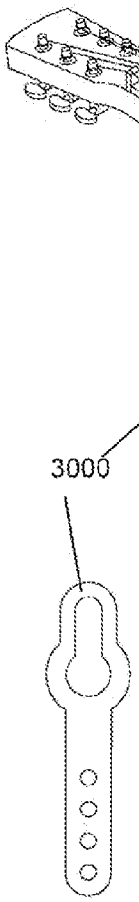


FIG. 2C

FIG. 2B

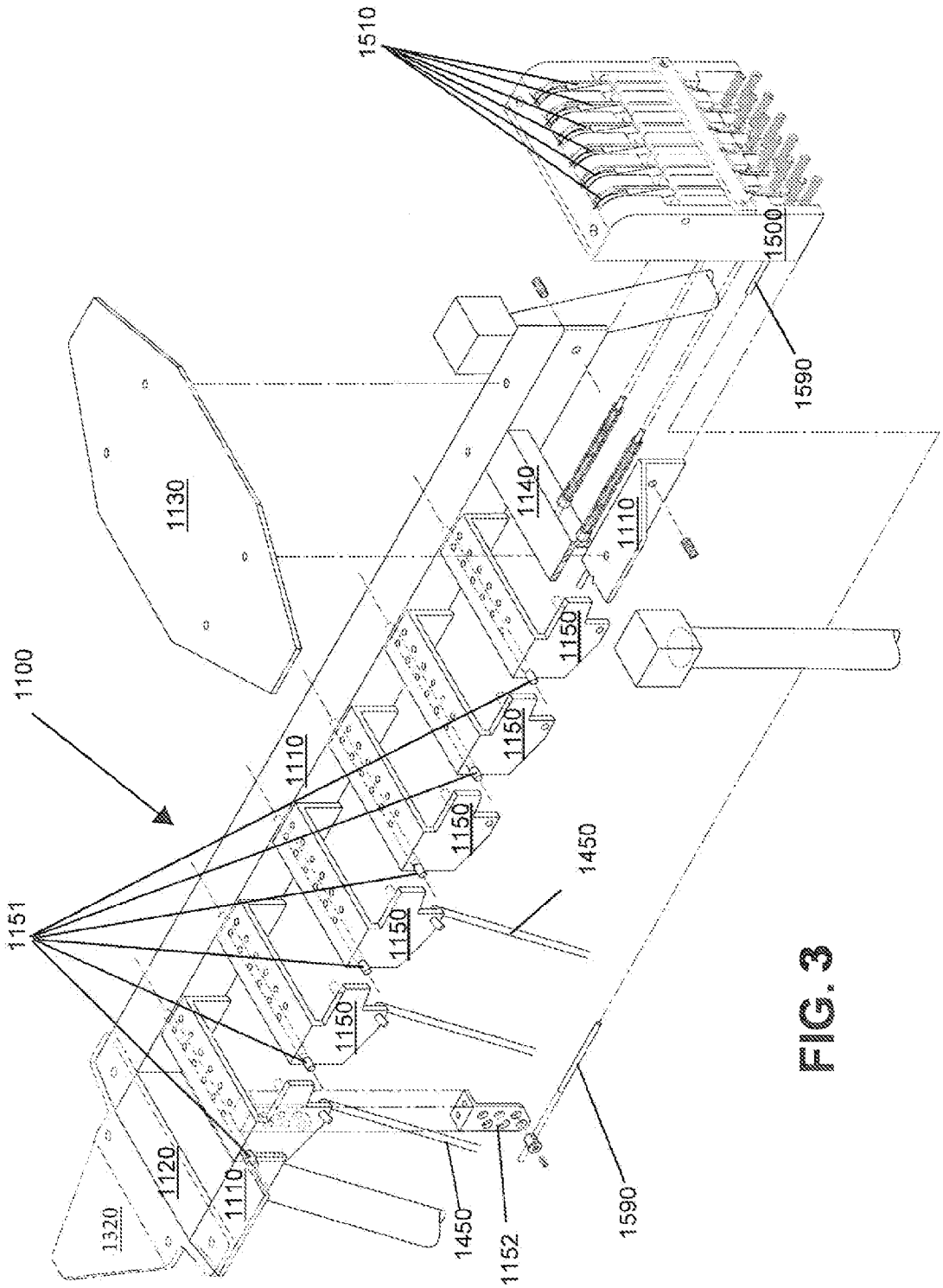

1510
1500
1590
1130
1140
1110
1150
1100
1110
1150
1150
1450
1151
1150
1150
1120
1110
1320
1450
1152
1590

FIG. 3

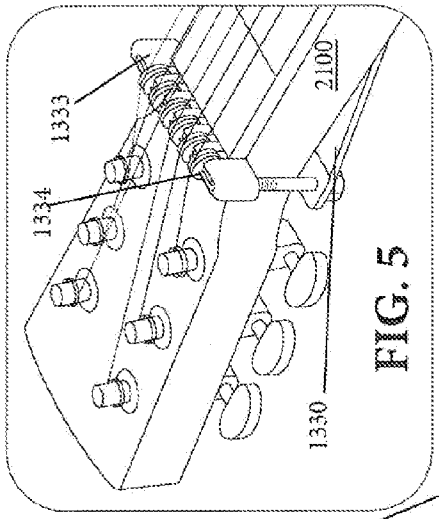

1333
2100
1334
1330

FIG. 5

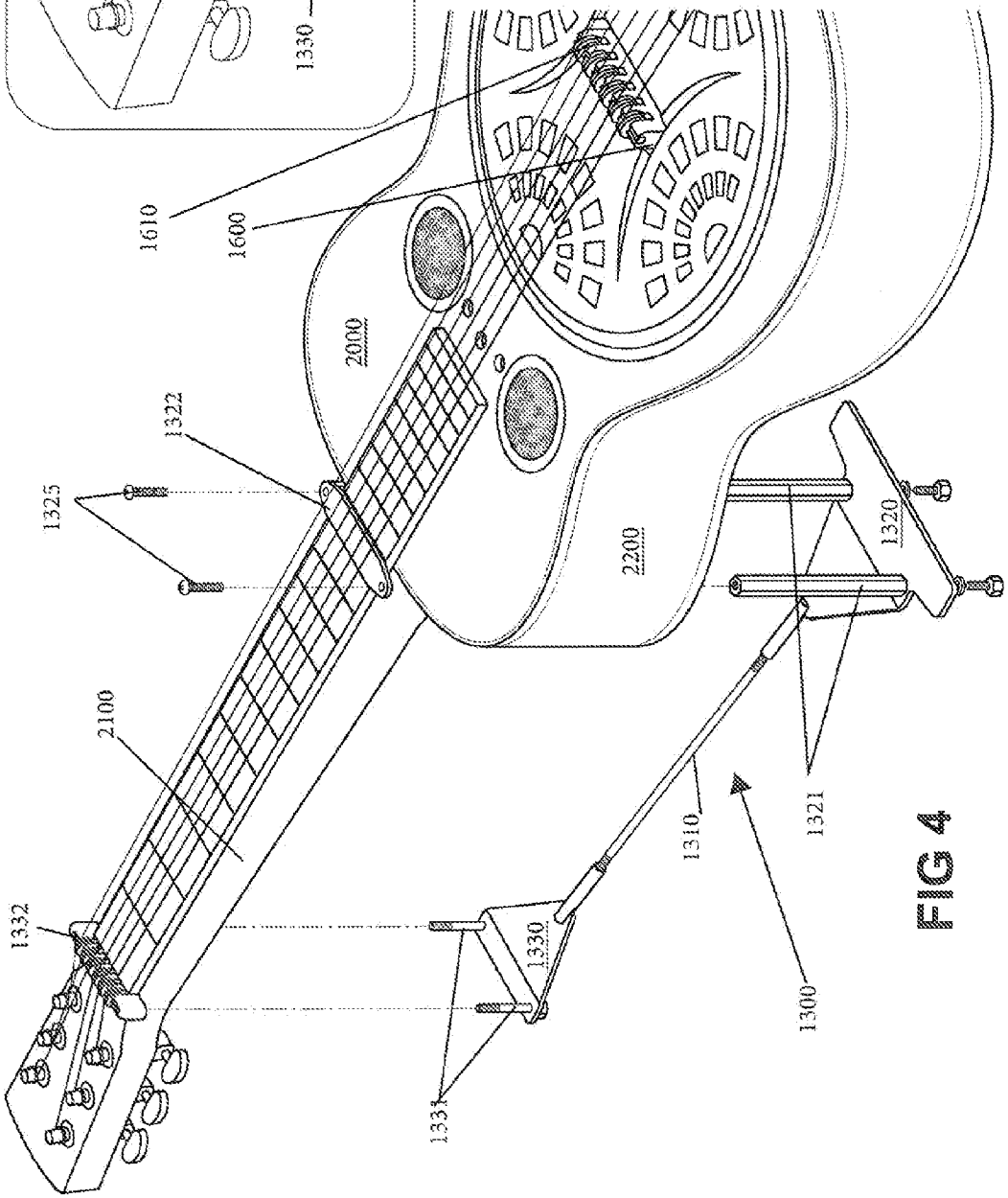

1610
1600
2000
1322
1325
2100
1332
2200
1320
1330
1333
1310
1321
1300

FIG 4

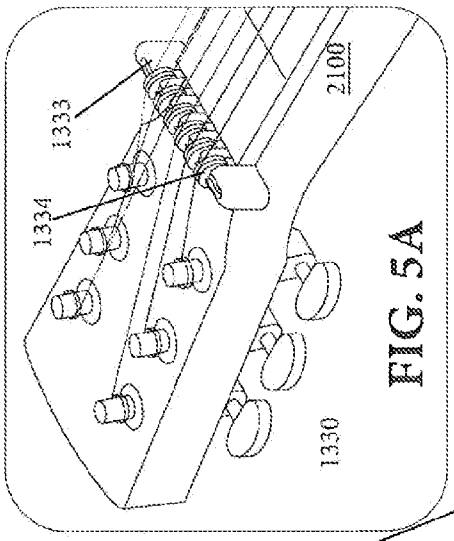


FIG. 5A

FIG. 4A

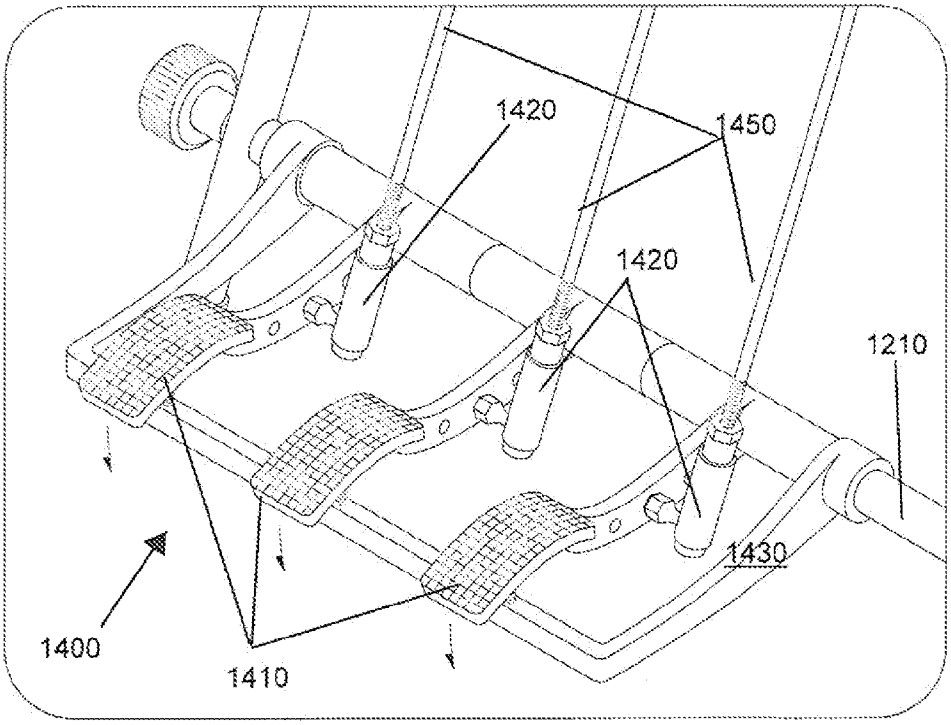

1420
1450
1420
1210
1430
1400
1410

FIG. 6

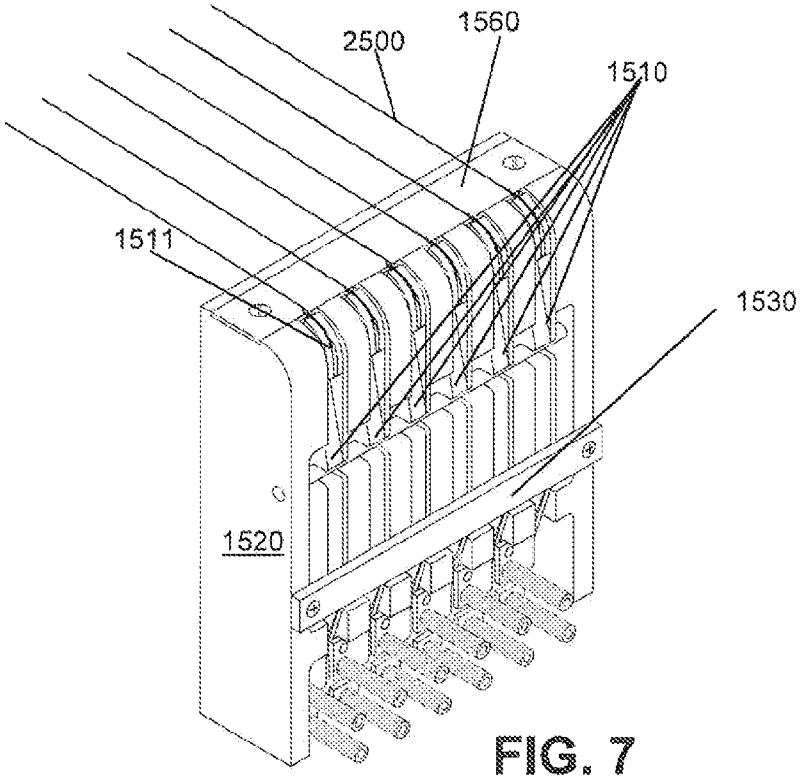

2500
1560
1510
1511
1530
1520

FIG. 7

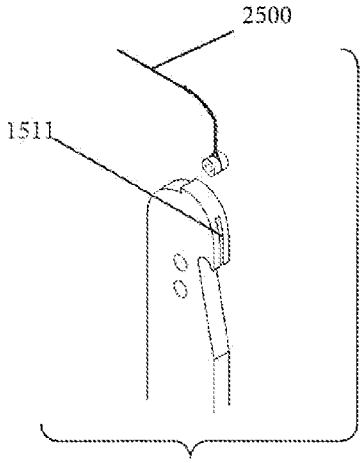

2500
1511

FIG. 8A

1150
1590
1500
2500
1510
1540
1590
1560
1512
1514
1520
1530

FIG. 8

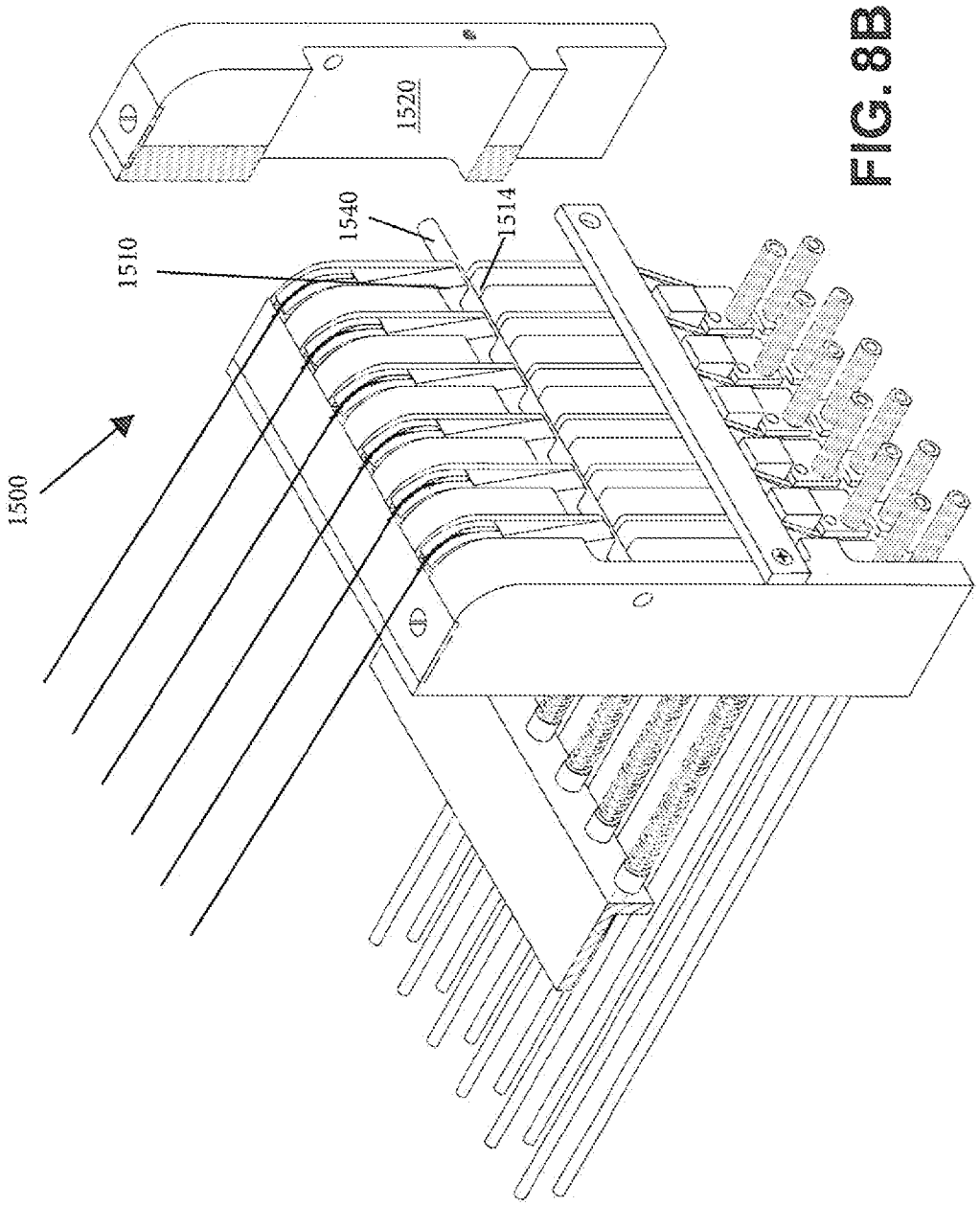


FIG. 8B

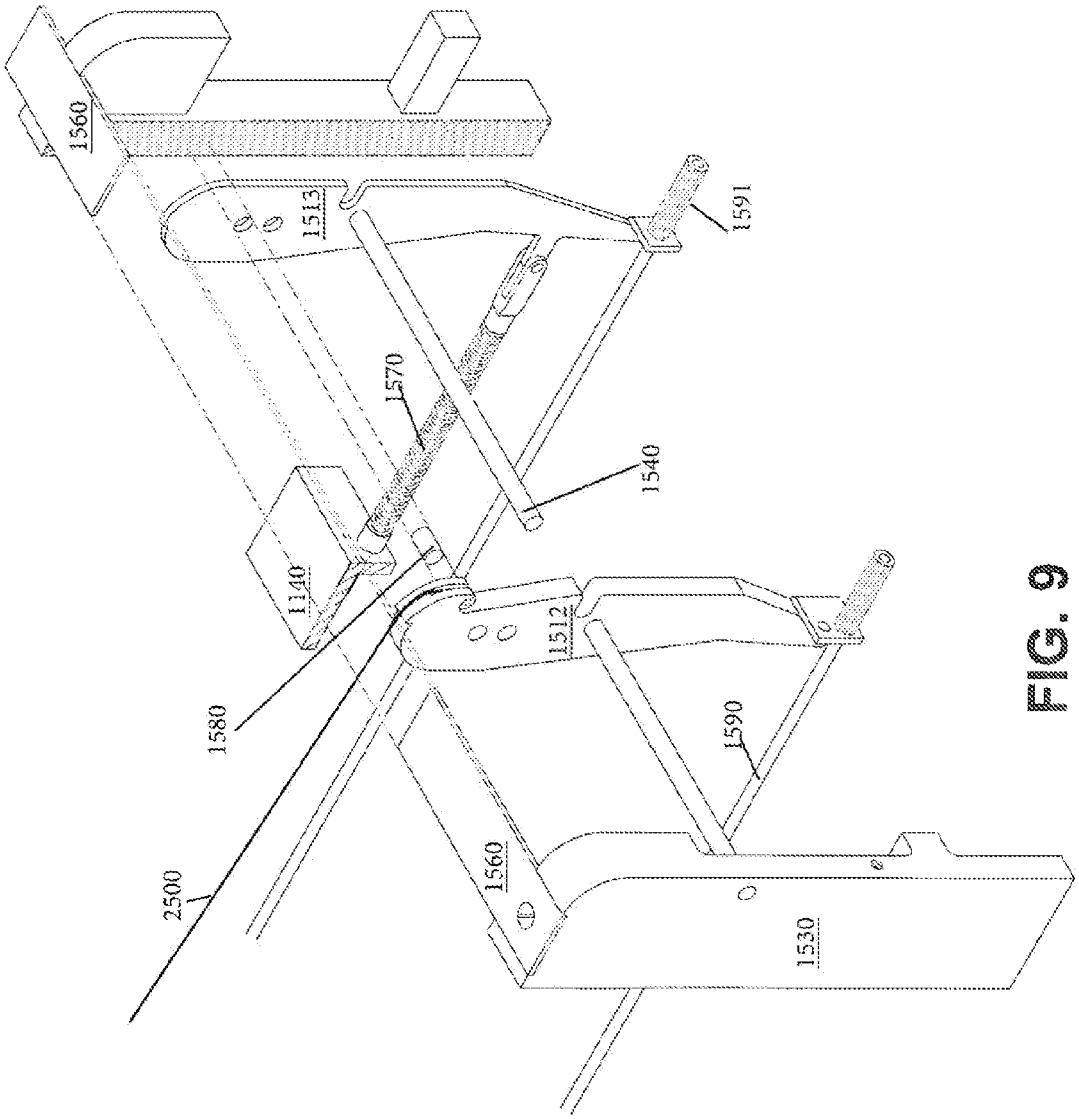


FIG. 9

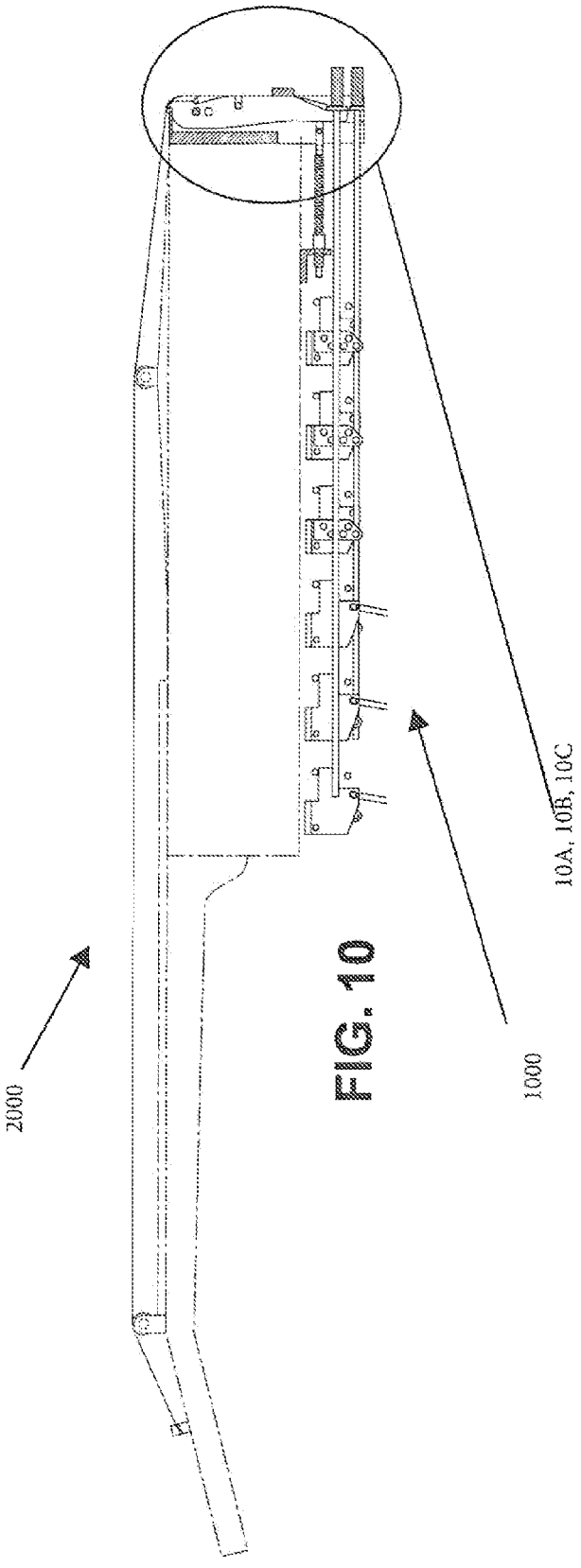


FIG. 10

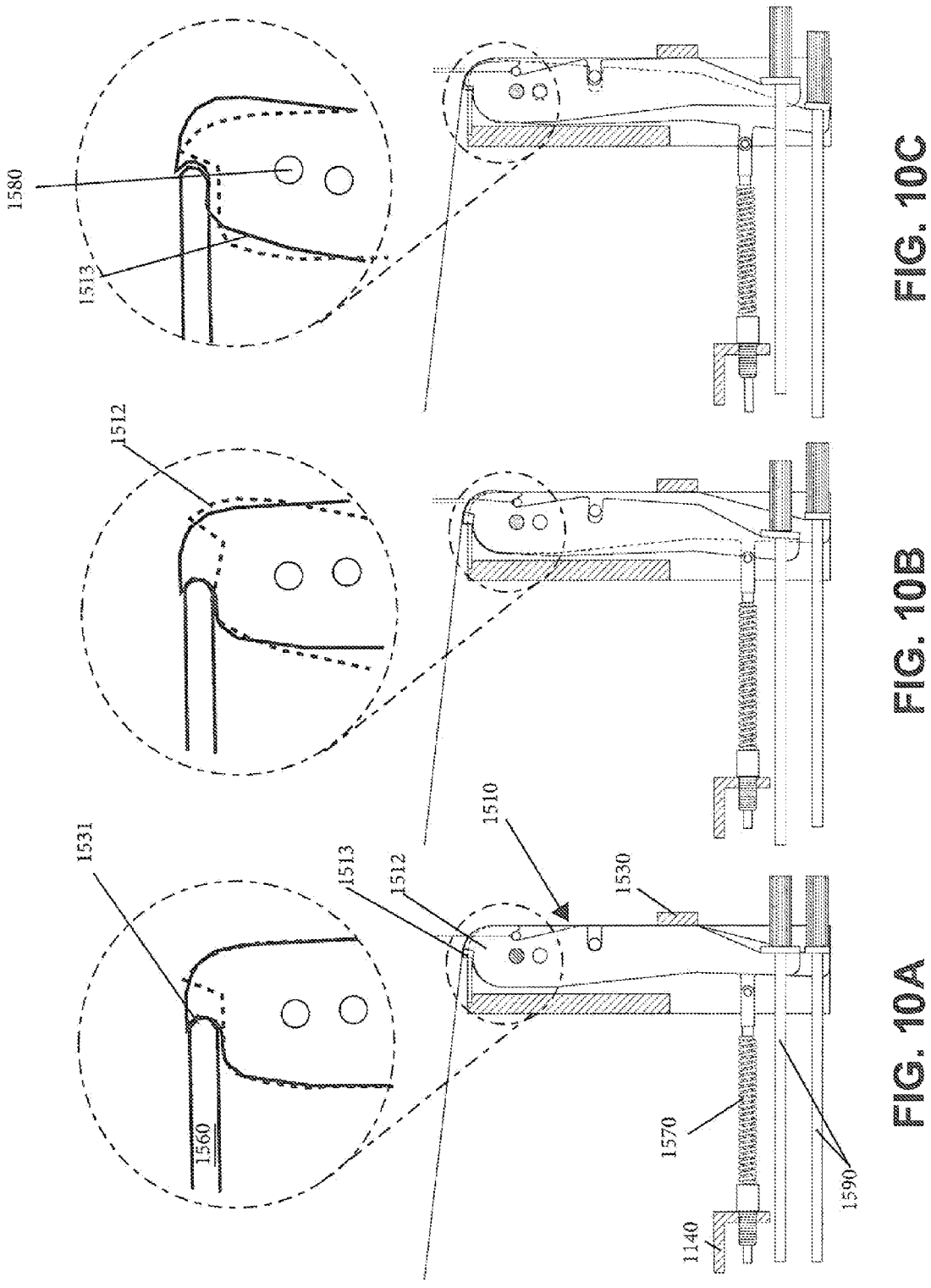


FIG. 10C

FIG. 10B

FIG. 10A

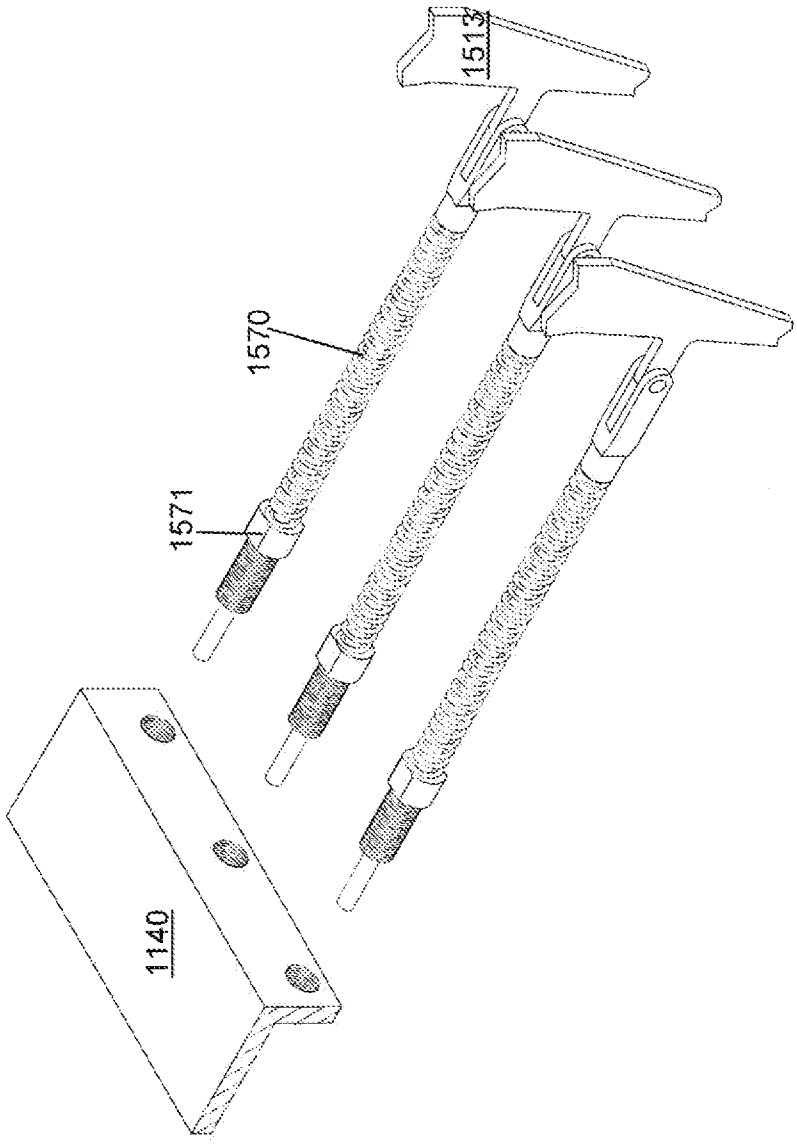


FIG. 11

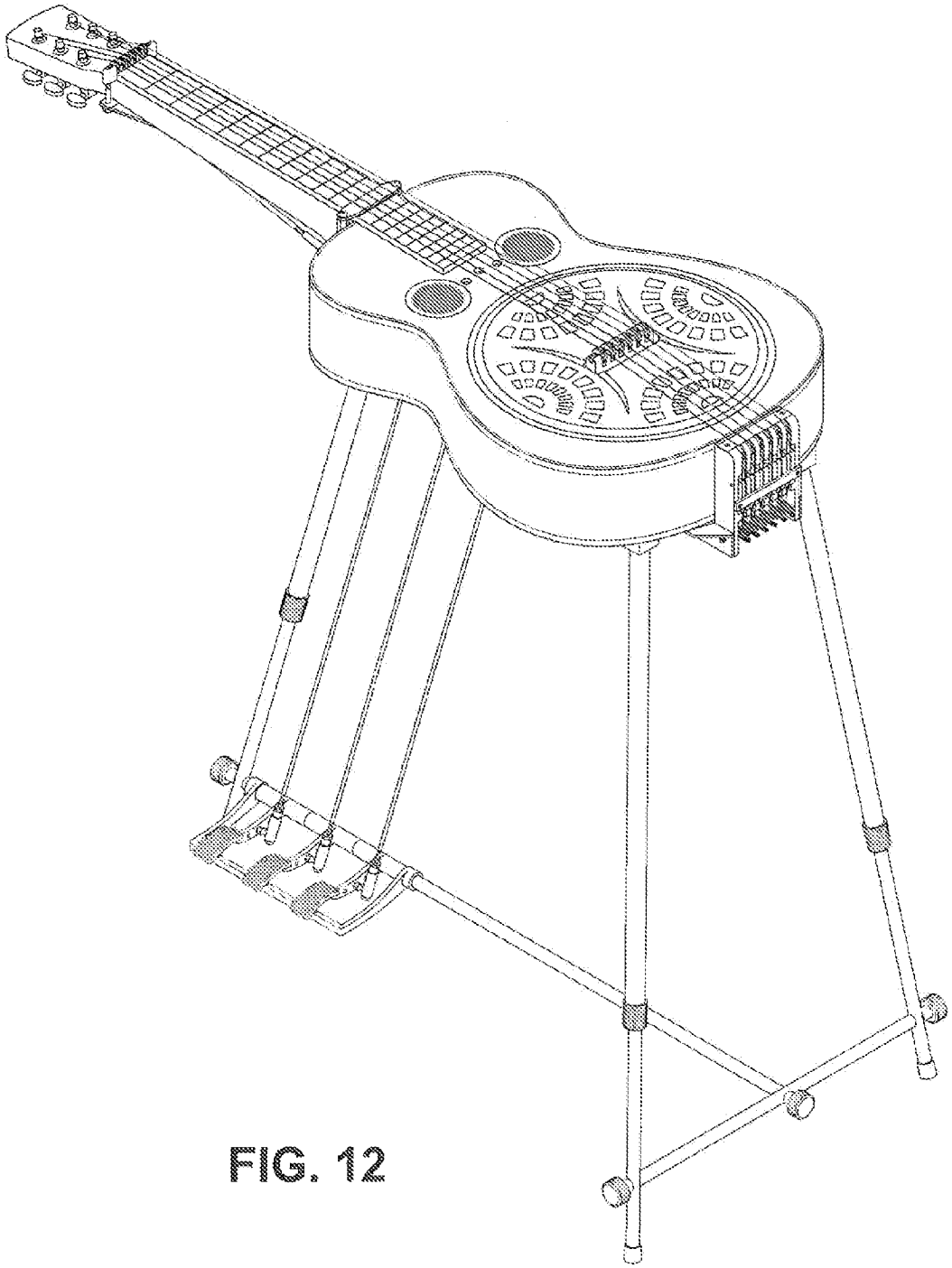


FIG. 12

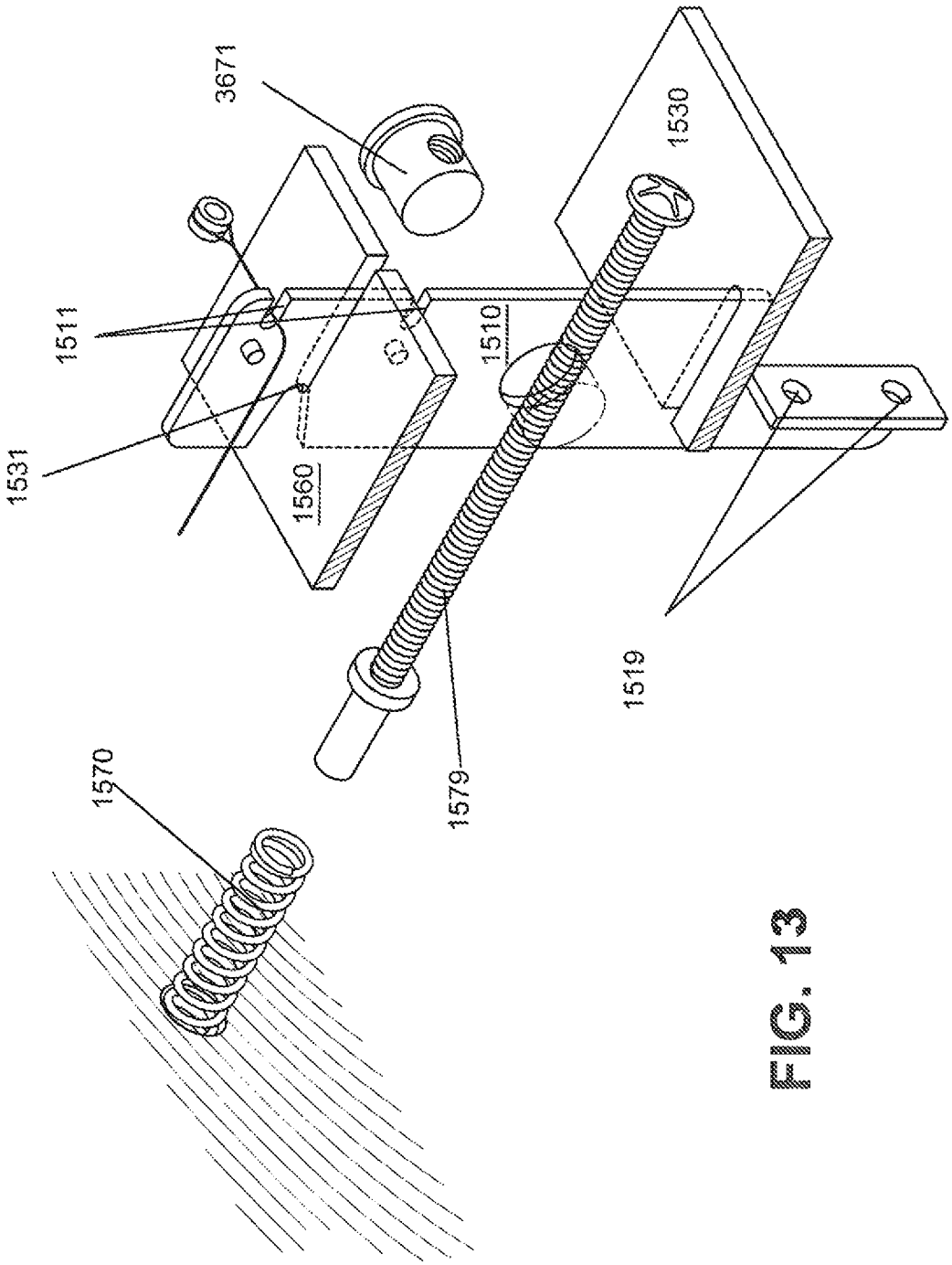
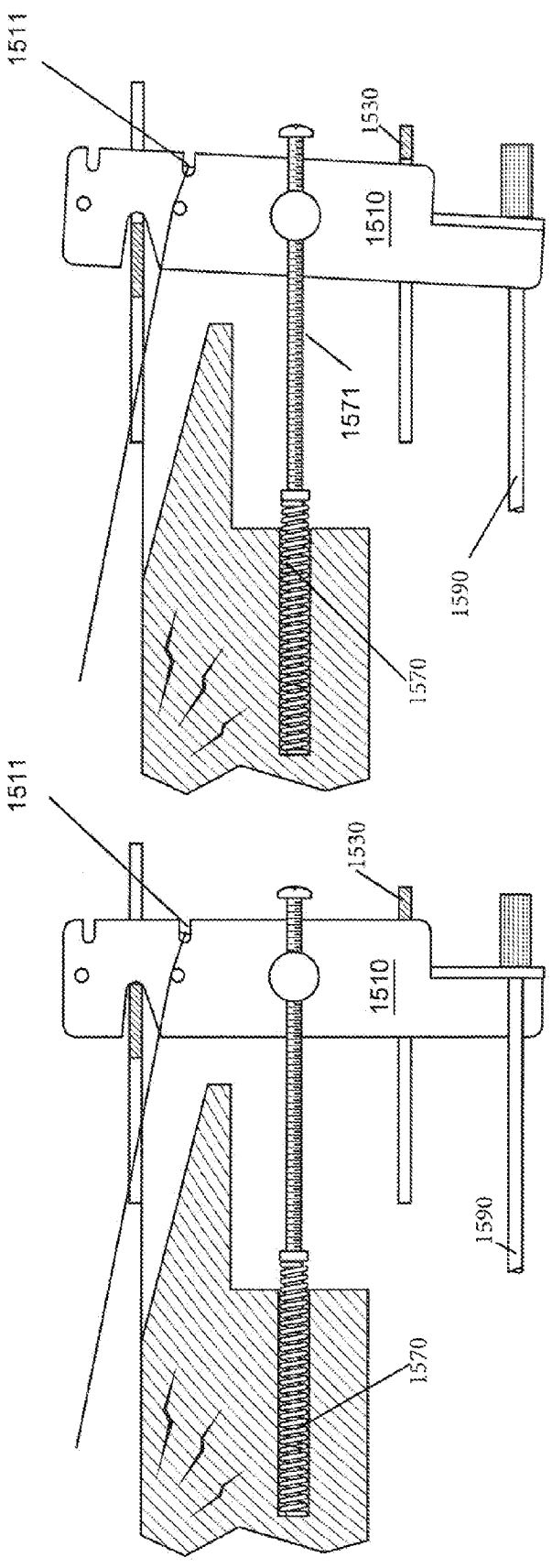


FIG. 13



STRING IN LOW SLOT-W/ LEVER PULL

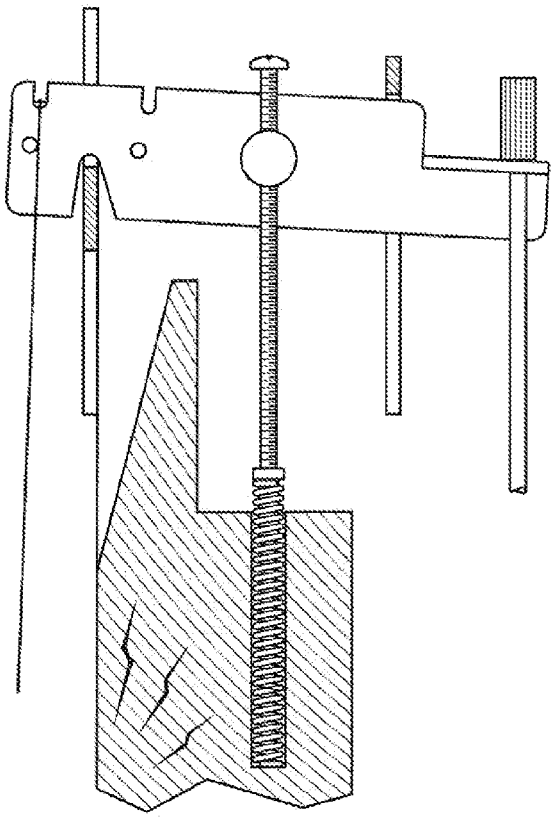
STRING IN LOW SLOT-W/ NO LEVER PULL

FIG. 15

FIG. 14

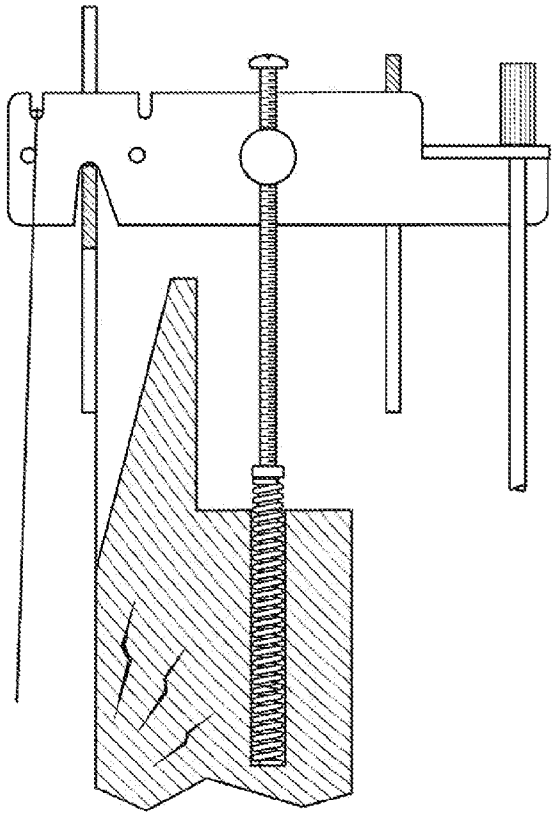
STRING IN LOW SLOT

LEVER PULL DECREASES STRING TENSION TO LOWER PITCH



STRING IN HIGH SLOT-W/ LEVER PULL

FIG. 17



STRING IN HIGH SLOT-W/ NO LEVER PULL

FIG. 16

STRING IN HIGH SLOT

LEVER PULL INCREASES STRING TENSION TO RAISE PITCH

TRANSFORMABLE STAND WITH AN IMPROVED FOOT OPERATED PITCH CHANGING MECHANISM FOR STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable.

FIELD OF INVENTION

The disclosed subject matter is in the field of guitar effects. More specifically, this subject matter includes improvements to pedal or lever operated mechanisms that change the pitch of an instrument's string by raising and/or lowering its tension.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Stringed instruments, like guitars, make sounds when a string vibrates. The pitch of a vibrating string's sound is dependent on many things, including the string's thickness, tension strength, and length. Thus, stringed instruments create a range of sound pitch via varying such physical characteristics of their strings.

Guitars typically have a preset pitch range that is determined by suspending a plurality of strings between the pegs, tuning keys or fine pitch changers at the end (keyhead) of a guitar's neck and the guitar's bridge. Some musicians seek to alter the preset pitch range of a guitar. However, in order to manually change the pre-determined pitch range on a guitar, the strings must be individually tuned by physically tightening or loosening the pegs, tuning keys or fine pitch changers. This manual tuning is usually too awkward and time consuming to be done during a performance and as a result, the performer is limited to single pitch range during the duration of the musical performance with any single instrument.

Pitch-changing mechanisms for stringed instruments are known. See, e.g., Fender: U.S. Pat. No. 3,352,188 A, Fender: U.S. Pat. No. 2,973,682 A, and Franklin: U.S. Pat. No. 4,704,935. For instance, pedal steel guitars are stringed musical instruments wherein the pitch of one or more strings may be manipulated via the movement of pedals or levers which are mechanically linked to the end of the strings to effectively slacken or tauten the string. With the advent of pitch-changing mechanisms, such as those used by a pedal steel guitar, the pitch of strings on a stringed instrument can be easily manipulated, up and/or down. In the case of the pedal steel guitar, the ability to mechanically change the pitch of a string by pressing a foot pedal or knee lever provides a wider range of pitches to musicians without tedious and time-consuming tuning.

Although capable of seamlessly adjusting the pitch of a stringed instrument, such pitch-changing mechanisms are often complex and cannot be utilized with a regular guitar. Actually, present pitch-changing mechanisms, such as those in a pedal steel guitar, must typically be built-in physical components of the instrument. As a result, current pitch-changing mechanisms cannot be utilized by an ordinary guitar without destructive modification. Stated differently,

traditional guitars cannot be played like a pedal steel guitar without permanent modification. As a result, musicians who desire to incorporate the unique sounds of a pedal steel guitar with the sounds of a traditional, fixed-pitch guitar would need access to both (1) a pedal steel guitar and (2) a regular fixed-pitch guitar.

In view of the foregoing, a need exists for a pitch changing mechanism that transforms an existing fixed-pitch guitar into an instrument with pedal-activated pitch changing capabilities without destructive modifications. Thus, with the disclosed improvements described herein, existing guitars can be easily converted to a pitch-changing device and vice versa without professional installation through the use of a transformable stand, foot pedal assembly, and a string pitch changer.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Disclosed are apparatus and related methods for changing the pitch of a stringed instrument, such as a standard, fixed-pitch, resonating or Dobro-type guitar, by attaching the stringed instrument onto a transformable stand comprising a foot pedal assembly and string pitch changing mechanism. In one embodiment, the apparatus and related methods involve affixing the strings from an existing guitar to an improved pitch-changing mechanism, such as disclosed string pitch changer housing, that does not require the deconstruction of the guitar body. Rather, the existing guitar is securely placed on its back on a transformable stand with the use of specially designed plates that hold the instrument with screws, securing the body of the instrument to the stand.

The guitar strings are routed across a replacement roller nut and roller bridge and connected to the string pitch changer mechanism that is operated by the foot pedal mechanism. In use, the placement of pressure on the pedals results in the pitch changing capabilities of the guitar.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The manner in which these objectives and other desirable characteristics can be obtained is explained in the following description and attached figures in which:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a stringed musical instrument securely placed to a transformable stand with a foot operated string pitch changing mechanism;

FIG. **2** is a partially exploded perspective view of the transformable stand of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **2**A is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the stand;

FIG. **2**B is an exploded perspective view of the stand of FIG. **2**A;

FIG. **2**C is a zoom-in view of a strap;

FIG. **3** is a perspective and partial exploded view of a frame of the stand of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of a musical instrument;

FIG. **4**A is a perspective view of a musical instrument;

FIG. **5** is a zoom in view of a keyhead of a musical instrument;

FIG. **5**A is a zoom-in view of a keyhead of a musical instrument;

FIG. **6** is a zoom-in perspective view of a pedal assembly;

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a pitch changer housing;

FIG. **8** is an exploded view of the pitch changer housing;

FIG. **8**A is an environmental view of a pitch changer;

FIG. **8**B is another exploded view of the pitch changer housing;

FIG. **9** is another exploded view of the pitch changer housing;

FIG. **10** is a cross section of an instrument on a stand;

FIG. **10**A is a zoom-in view of FIG. **10**;

FIG. **10**B is an alternate zoom-in view of FIG. **10**;

FIG. **10**C is an alternate zoom in view of FIG. **10**;

FIG. **11** is a perspective view of a compression spring;

FIG. **12** is a perspective view of an instrument on a stand;

FIG. **13** is a perspective view of another embodiment of a pitch changer;

FIG. **14** is a cross section of the pitch changer of FIG. **13**;

FIG. **15** is a cross section of the pitch changer of FIG. **13**;

FIG. **16** is a cross section of the pitch changer of FIG. **13**; and,

FIG. **17** is a cross section of the pitch changer of FIG. **13**.

It is to be noted, however, that the appended figures illustrate only typical embodiments of the disclosed assemblies, and therefore, are not to be considered limiting of their scope, for the disclosed assemblies may admit to other equally effective embodiments that will be appreciated by those reasonably skilled in the relevant arts. Also, figures are not necessarily made to scale.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Disclosed are preferred embodiments of an improved pitch-changing apparatus and method for retrofitting the pitch-changing apparatus to existing stringed musical instruments. More particularly, disclosed are pitch-changing apparatus and related methods for existing stringed instruments via a pedal mechanism for raising and lowering the pitch of the individual strings of a stringed musical instrument. The details of the disclosed tuning apparatus are disclosed with reference to the figures.

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a musical instrument **2000** (e.g., a Resonating or "Dobro" guitar) coupled to a pitch-changing apparatus **1000**. FIG. **2** is a partially exploded perspective view of the pitch-changing apparatus **1000** with the musical instrument **2000** drawn in see-through broken lines to illustrate the structure of the apparatus **1000**. As shown in the figures, the apparatus **1000** comprises six subassemblies or components: (1) the base frame **1100**; (2) the leg assembly **1200**; (3) the truss rod assembly **1300**; (4) the pedal assembly **1400**; (5) the string pitch changer housing **1500**; and (6) the bridge housing **1600**.

The Base Frame **1100**

As shown in FIG. **2**, the base frame **1100** is the central component of the apparatus **1000**. In the preferred embodiment, the base frame **1100** is positioned atop of the leg assembly **1200** and may optionally support the truss rod assembly **1300** at one end and the string pitch changer housing **1500** on the other end. As discussed in greater detail below, the base frame **1100** is configured to transfer the mechanical movement of the foot pedal assembly **1400** to the string pitch changer housing **1500** so that the tautness of the strings of an instrument **2000** may be manipulated.

FIG. **3** is an exploded view of the base frame **1100**. As illustrated, the base frame **1100** is defined by: two parallel beams **1110**; an end piece **1120** for coupling one end of the two parallel beams **1110**; a support plate **1130**, and a cross bar **1140** that spans between the two parallel beams **1110** (one is depicted in a cut-away). Structurally, the two parallel beams **1110**, the end piece **1120**, and the cross bar form a rectangle. The support plate **1300** is preferably positioned over the cross bar **1140** as shown in FIG. **2**. Referring to FIGS. **2** and **3** the frame **1100** may be coupled to the truss rod assembly **1300** (the connecting component of the truss rod assembly **1300** is shown in FIG. **3** in broken lines). Referring back to FIG. **3**, one end of the base frame **1100** is configured to receive the string pitch changer housing **1500** in an upright position between the beams **1110** and adjacent to the cross bar **1140** in the manner shown. Suitably, the base frame **1100** features a plurality of bell cranks **1150** that are pivotally mounted between the beams **1110**. The bell cranks **1150** are configured to pivot around an axis **1151**. Each bell crank **1150** features a rod puller **1152** that may be positioned at any location on the crank **1150** between the beams **1110**. Alternatively, multiple rod pullers **1152** could be provided on a crank between the beams. Suitably the rod pullers **1152** are configured to align with the pitch changers **1510** of the pitch changer housing **1500**. In operation, the bell crank **1150** transfers the mechanical movement of a foot pedal rod **1450** to corresponding string pitch changer rod **1590**. The frame **1100** is configured to be supported by the leg assembly **1200**.

The Leg Assembly **1200**

FIG. **2** illustrates the leg assembly **1200**. The leg assembly is defined by a T base **1210** and three telescoping legs **1220**. The height of the telescoping legs may be adjusted to accommodate users of differing height or use in standing or sitting positions. Preferably, two of the three legs interact with the support plate **1130** of the base frame **1100** while the other leg interacts with the end piece **1120** to support the frame **1100**. In a preferred embodiment, the T frame **1210** is configured to pivotally support, the foot pedal assembly **1400**. In other embodiments, four or more legs might be used for the leg assembly **1300**.

FIG. **2**A shows another embodiment of a guitar stand without pitch changing capabilities. FIG. **2**B shows an exploded view of the guitar stand **1000**A. As shown in FIG. **2**A, the leg assembly **1200** may be used to create a guitar stand **1000**A for a guitar **2000**. In this embodiment (FIGS. **2**A and **2**B), the leg assembly **1200** is positioned underneath a support surface **1100**A that supports the guitar **2000**. In a preferred embodiment of the guitar stand **1000**A, the guitar **2000** may be secured to the support surface **1100**A via two straps **3000** (or draw clamps) secured to the underside of the support surface and a nub **2500** at the bottom of the instrument **2000** and at the top of the instrument at the intersection of the guitar **2000** neck and body and illustrates the strap **3000**. FIG. **2**C shows the strap, which has a plurality of apertures for adjusting the length of the strap relative to the guitar **2000** to be supported on the stand **1000**A.

The Truss Rod Assembly **1300** and the Bridge Housing **1600**

FIG. **4** shows an exploded view of the truss rod assembly **1300** and an installed bridge housing **1600**. As shown, the truss rod assembly **1300** is defined by the truss rod **1310**, a neck plate **1320**, and a roller nut plate **1330** plus roller nut **1331**. As shown in FIGS. **2**, **3** and **4**, the neck clamp is configured to be coupled to the frame **1110** over the end piece **1120**.

FIGS. **4** and **5** depict the appropriate placement and assembly of the truss rod **1300** so that the neck **2100** of the stringed musical instrument **2000** is supported on the transformable stand **1000** (not shown). FIG. **4** depicts an exploded truss rod **1300** in position for installation on a

stringed instrument **2000**. FIG. **5** depicts a fully assembled truss rod **1300** onto a stringed musical instrument **2000**. In one embodiment, a truss rod **1310** is placed at the bottom of the neck **2100** of the stringed musical instrument **2000** to help support and reduce stress that may placed upon the neck **2100** during the playing of the stringed musical instrument **2000** affixed to the apparatus **1000** (see FIG. **1**).

In the depicted embodiment shown in FIGS. **2**, **4**, and **5**, a truss rod assembly **1300** contains a roller nut plate **1330** and a neck plate **1320** on both ends of the truss rod **1310** to attach to both ends of the neck **2100** of the stringed musical instrument **2000** onto the apparatus (see FIGS. **1** and **2**). The ends of the rod may be threaded so that the length of the rod may be effectively lengthen or shortened to accommodate instruments with variously dimensioned necks **2100**. Referring to FIGS. **2** and **4**, the neck plate **1320** can be attached to the frame **1100** so that the guitar **2000** may be fully supported and secured onto the apparatus **1000**. Furthermore, in another embodiment, a bridge housing **1600** with brass rollers **1610** replaces the existing bridge on the stringed musical instrument.

FIGS. **4** and **5** illustrate the installation of the truss rod assembly **1300**. In the embodiments shown in FIGS. **4** and **5**, the roller nut plate **1330** has two roller nut clamp screws **1331** that span the width of neck of the stringed musical instrument. Preferably, the roller nut plate **1330** is placed beneath the keyhead of the neck **2100** of the stringed musical instrument **2000**. Correspondingly, a roller nut assembly **1332**, which consists of roller nut housing **1333** (FIG. **5**) and brass and gauged rollers **1334** (FIG. **5**), is placed over the neck **2100** and coupled to the roller nut plate **1330** via roller nut screws **1331**. In the preferred embodiment, the screws **1331** are tightened so that the roller nut assembly **1332** may be securely placed over the neck **2100** of the stringed instrument **2000**.

Still referring to FIGS. **4** and **5** for installation of the truss rod assembly **1300**, a neck plate **1320** on the truss rod **1310** has two clamp screw posts **1321** that span the width of the neck **2100** of the stringed musical instrument **2000**. The neck plate **1320** is placed beneath the neck **2100** of the stringed instrument **2000** where the neck **2100** of the stringed musical instrument **2000** connects to the body **2200**. Continuing with installation, a neck clamp plate **1322** with two screw holes located at opposite ends are placed over the neck **2100** and positioned to align with the clamp screw post **1321**, allowing the screws **1325** to be placed through the neck clamp plate **1320** and the clamp screw post **1321** so that the neck **2100** may be firmly secured onto the base frame (see FIGS. **1** and **2**).

It should be noted that the truss rod assembly **1300** is an optional feature of the apparatus **1000**. FIGS. **4**A and **5**A respectively illustrate installation of the roller nut **1332** without a truss rod assembly (**1300** FIGS. **4** and **5**). In this embodiment, the roller nut **1332** replaces the nut of the guitar that is adjacent to the keyhead of the guitar **2000**. Suitably, the roller nut assembly **1332** will fit into the groove that results from removal of said nut, as shown.

Pedal Assembly **1400**

FIG. **2** shows the foot pedal assembly **1400**. FIG. **6** shows a zoom-in view of the foot pedal assembly **1400** depicted in FIG. **2**. Referring to FIG. **6**, the foot pedal assembly **1400** is defined by foot pedals **1410**, quick-connect ball joints **1420**, foot pedal rods **1450**, and floor stop **1430**. The foot pedal **1410** is suitably pivotally mounted to the T frame **1210** of the leg **1200** assembly (see FIG. **2**). In operation, pressing down on the foot pedal **1410** pulls the attached pedal rod **1450** which is connected to a bell crank **1150** on the frame **1100** of the transforming stand **1000**. As discussed above, the crank **1150** in the housing frame **1100** translates the motion of the foot pedal rod **1450** to the string pitch changer **1290** (this will be discussed in greater detail below) (see FIG. **3**).

Referring still to FIG. **6**, In a preferred embodiment, the pedal rod **1450** features a turnbuckle (not shown) for lengthening or shortening the rod **1450** whereby the pitch change of an instrument may be calibrated to the depth of pedal **1410** depression. Suitably, other full stops (e.g., a floor stop for instance) is be incorporated and similarly calibrated so that pedal depression does not result in cabinet drop (or bending of the instrument **2000** body under the torque caused by pedal depression).

The String Pitch Changer Housing Assembly **1500**

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a string pitch changer housing assembly **1500**. The housing assembly **1500** is also depicted in place on the apparatus **1000** in FIGS. **1**, **2**, and **3**. As shown in FIG. **7**, the assembly **1500** is defined by a plurality of pitch changers **1510** (usually one per string of the instrument **2000** (FIG. **1**)) within a housing **1520** with a stop bar **1530** and a pivot plate **1560**. The top of the pitch changer **1510**, which is suitably designed to raise the tension of a string **1510** when activated, incorporates a string catch **1511**, for coupling the pitch changer **1510** to a string **2500** of a musical instrument (not shown in FIG. **7**). FIG. **1** illustrates an installed housing assembly **1500**. As shown, strings **2500** are secured to the key head of an instrument **2000**, passed over the gauged brass rollers **1334** of the roller nut housing **1333** and rollers **1610** of the bridge housing **1600** before being mechanically coupled to the pitch changer **1510** via the string catch **1511**. As discussed later below, the connection of the strings to the pitch changer **1510** allows the foot pedal assembly **1200** (FIG. **2**) to tighten or loosen the strings to produce varied pitch sounds. In other words, the Pitch changer housing assembly **1510** is an integral tuning member that converts existing stringed musical instruments, like fixed-pitch, standard, resonating or "Dobro" guitars, to stringed instruments with pitch changing capabilities operated by the foot pedal assembly **1200** (FIG. **2**). In a preferred embodiment, the housing is coupled to the guitar via a screw into the bottom of the guitar house and at the top of the body where the neck and guitar meet.

FIG. **8** is a partially exploded view of a preferred embodiment of a string pitch changer housing **1500** with a single pitch changer **1510** depicted. FIG. **9** is a full exploded view of the first embodiment of a string pitch changer housing assembly **1500** with the pitch changer **1510** exploded. As shown in these figures in the context of FIG. **1**, the strings **2500** are suitably each placed into each individual string pitch changer **1510**. FIG. **8**A illustrates the coupling of a string **2500** with the string catcher **1511** of the pitch changer **1510**. As shown in FIGS. **8** and **9**, each individual string pitch changer **1510** can be removed or replaced from the string pitch changer housing **1500** without disturbing other pitch changers **1510**. Suitably, the pitch changers **1510** float within the housing **1520** and are retained therein by a retaining rod **1540** provided through a slot **1514** in the pitch changer **1510**. FIG. **8**B, a partially exploded view of the housing **1500**, shows the retaining bar **1540** disposed in the slot **1514** of the changers **1510**. FIG. **9** shows an individual string pitch changer **1510** comprising a raise lever **1512** and a lowering lever **1513** connected by a pin **1580**. Suitably, the

levers **1512/1513** are pivotable around the pin **1580**. Suitably the lowering lever **1513** interacts with a pivot plate **1560** disposed in pivot groove **1531** in the lower bar **1513**. As shown in FIG. **8**, each of the raise lever **1512** and lower lever **1513** are mechanically coupled to a pitch changer (or "pull") rod **1590** that are also mechanically coupled to a bell crank **1150**. As set forth in detail below, the pivot bar **1530** interacts with the pivot groove **1531** to shift the location of the raise bar **1512** when the changer rod **1590** of the lowering lever **1513** is pulled. Each pull rod **1590** features a nylon tuning screw **1591** to adjust the effective length of the rod relative to the pitch changer **1510**. Suitably, the lowering lever **1513** is mechanically coupled to a compression spring **1570** extending from the cross bar **1140** of the frame **1100** (not shown) so that the lever **1513** may also have a rest position against the stop bar **1530** of the assembly housing **1530**.

FIG. **10** depicts a cross section of a musical instrument installed in the apparatus **1000**. FIGS. **10**A through **100** respectively depict operation of the string pitch changer **1510** within the string pitch changer housing **1500** at the circled portion of FIG. **10**. Specifically, FIG. **10**A illustrates a neutral pitch changer **1510**, FIG. **10**B illustrates a pitch changer **1510** with the raiser lever **1512** being pulled by its rod **1590**, and FIG. **100** illustrates a pitch changer **1510** with the lowering lever **1513** being pulled. Referring first to FIG. **10**A, the string pitch changer **1510** is normally positioned with the lowering lever **1513** forced against the stop plate **1530** via the spring **1570** and the pivot plate **1560** positioned within the pivot grove **1531**. As shown, the pivot plate **1560** features a rounded or curved edge that cooperates with the pivot groove **1531**. In FIG. **10**B, the rod **1590** pulls the raiser lever **1512** to pivot around the pivot pin **1580**. As the raiser lever **1512** moves, the pivot plate **1560** does not interact within the pivot groove **1531** so that the lowering lever **1513** does not move. When the raise bar **1512** so moved, the strings are pulled taught via the raiser lever **1512**. When the raise bar **1512** is released, the tension of the string will return the raiser lever **1512** to its initial position shown in FIG. **10**A. Finally, in FIG. **10**C, the lowering arm **1513** is being pulled by the rod **1590**. As shown in the zoom-in, the pivot plate **1560** interacts with the pivot grove **1531** so that the lowering lever **1513** rotates around the curved edge of the pivot plate **1560**. This rotation moves the raise bar **1512** toward the bridge assembly **1600** (FIG. **1**) to allow the string tension to relax. Referring now to FIGS. **10**A and **100**, after the lowering rod **1590** has been pulled and released, the compression spring is suitably configured to push the changer **1513** back to the position of FIG. **10**A. Suitably, the spring strength must exceed the tension of the string so that the changer **1510** can move back to its initial position against stop bar **1530**. In a preferred embodiment, the spring force is adjustable via a threaded nut **1571** that adjusts the compression of the spring whereby the compression force of the spring may be modified or changed to accommodate strings of different diameters. An image of the compression spring and the adjustment nut **1571** is shown in FIG. **11**.

FIG. **13** shows an exploded perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a pitch changer **1510**. As shown, the pitch changer housing (not shown) features a stop plate **1530**, a pitch changer **1510** with a string catch **1511** and a pivot grove **1531**, a compression rod **1571** and spring **1570** with a pivot **1571** for pushing the changer **1510** against the stop plate **1530**, and apertures **1512** for mechanically coupling the changer **1510** to a bell crank (not shown) and foot pedal (not shown).

FIGS. **18** through **21** are cross sections of the pitch changer **1510**. FIG. **18** through **21** illustrate a typical operation of the pitch changer **1510**. Specifically: FIG. **18** shows a cross section of the pitch changer **1510** in a neutral position with a guitar string in a low string catch **1511**; FIG. **19** shows a cross section of the pitch changer **1510** in a pulled position with the string in the lower catch **1511**; FIG. **20** shows a cross section of the pitch changer **1510** in a neutral position with a guitar string in a high string catch **1511**; and, FIG. **21** shows a cross section of the pitch changer **1510** in a pulled position with the string in the high catch **1511**. Regardless of whether the string is positioned in the low or high catch **1511**, operation is the same, but the effects are different. When the string is positioned in the low catch **1511** (FIGS. **18** and **19**), pulling the pitch changer **1510** results in reduced tension of the spring. The compression spring **3670** pushes the changer **1510** back against the stop plate **1530** when the pull is released. Conversely, pulling the pitch changer **1510** when the string is in the high catch **1511** (FIGS. **20** and **21**) increase the tension of the string. The tension of the string will pull the changer **1510** back to the stop plate **1530** upon release of the tension.

Other features will be understood with reference to the drawings. While various embodiments of the method and apparatus have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not of limitation. Likewise, the various diagrams might depict an example of an architectural or other configuration for the disclosed method and apparatus, which is done to aid in understanding the features and functionality that might be included in the method and apparatus. The disclosed method and apparatus is not restricted to the illustrated example architectures or configurations, but the desired features might be implemented using a variety of alternative architectures and configurations. Indeed, it will be apparent to one of skill in the art how alternative functional, logical or physical partitioning and configurations might be implemented to implement the desired features of the disclosed method and apparatus. Also, a multitude of different constituent module names other than those depicted herein might be applied to the various partitions. Additionally, with regard to flow diagrams, operational descriptions and method claims, the order in which the steps are presented herein shall not mandate that various embodiments be implemented to perform the recited functionality in the same order unless the context dictates otherwise.

Although the method and apparatus is described above in terms of various exemplary embodiments and implementations, it should be understood that the various features, aspects and functionality described in one or more of the individual embodiments are not limited in their applicability to the particular embodiment with which they are described, but instead might be applied, alone or in various combinations, to one or more of the other embodiments of the disclosed method and apparatus, whether or not such embodiments are described and whether or not such features are presented as being a part of a described embodiment. Thus the breadth and scope of the claimed invention should not be limited by any of the above-described embodiments.

Additionally, the various embodiments set forth herein are described in terms of exemplary illustrations. As will become apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art after reading this document, the illustrated embodiments and their various alternatives might be implemented without confinement to the illustrated examples. For example, block dia-

grams and their accompanying description should not be construed as mandating a particular architecture or configuration.

I claim:

1. A device for mounting an existing fixed-pitch musical instrument that provides the capability of selectively changing a string pitch of such instrument by utilizing foot pedals comprising:

a frame that is configured to support the musical instrument, said frame featuring at least two bell cranks;

a leg assembly defined by at least one adjustable leg;

a pedal assembly with at least two pedals that are each mechanically coupled to a bell crank of the frame;

a pivot plate;

a pitch changer disposed within an assembly housing and coupled to a string of the instrument, said pitch changer with (a) a lowering lever with a pivot groove and (b) a raise lever, wherein said lowering lever and raise lever are pivotally coupled via a pivot pin, wherein said raise lever is mechanically coupled to one of the bell cranks so that depressing one of the pedals causes the raise lever to pivot around the pivot pin, and wherein said lowering lever is mechanically coupled to the other bell crank so that depressing the other pedal causes the lowering lever to pivot around one end of the pivot plate in the pivot groove; and,

wherein the lowering lever is coupled to a compression spring so that the compression spring compresses when the lowering lever is pivoted around said end of the pivot plate to lower a pitch of a string.

2. The device of claim **1**, wherein the pitch changer is further defined by at least one string catch.

3. The device of claim **2**, wherein the pitch changer is housed within a pitch changer housing and retained within the pitch changer housing via a retaining rod that is disposed in a slot of the pitch changer.

4. The device of claim **3**, wherein the lowering lever and raise lever are mechanically coupled to a pitch changer rod.

5. The device of claim **4**, wherein the pitch changer rod is mechanically coupled to a bell crank.

6. The device of claim **5**, wherein the pitch changer rod features a nylon tuning screw.

7. The device of claim **6**, wherein the compression spring extends from a cross bar of a frame, whereby the lowering lever has a rest position against a stop bar of the assembly housing.

8. A pitch changer comprising: a lowering lever with a pivot groove; and, a raiser lever, wherein said lowering lever and raiser lever are pivotally coupled via a pivot pin, wherein said raiser lever is mechanically coupled to one of at least two bell cranks so that depressing one of at least two pedals causes the raiser lever to pivot around the pivot pin, and wherein said lowering lever is mechanically coupled to the other bell crank so that depressing the other pedal causes the lowering lever to pivot around one end of a pivot plate in the pivot groove, whereby string(s) may be raised and/or lowered; and a compression spring that is mechanically coupled to a lowering lever for adjusting tautness of a musical instrument string, wherein the compression spring extends from a cross bar to a frame, wherein the compression spring resists movements of the lowering lever by compressing when the lowering lever is pivoted around said end of the pivot plate to lower a pitch of a string.

9. A pitch changer comprising:

a lowering lever with a pivot groove; and,

a raiser lever, wherein said lowering lever and raiser lever are pivotally coupled via a pivot pin, wherein said raiser lever is mechanically coupled to one of at least two bell cranks so that depressing one of at least two pedals causes the raiser lever to pivot around the pivot pin, and wherein said lowering lever is mechanically coupled to the other bell crank so that depressing the other pedal causes the lowering lever to pivot around one end of a pivot plate in the pivot groove, whereby string(s) may be raised and/or lowered; wherein the lowering lever is coupled to a compression spring so that the compression spring compresses when the lowering lever is pivoted around said end of the pivot plate to lower a pitch of a string.

10. The pitch changer of claim **9** further defined by at least one string catch.

11. The pitch changer of claim **10** wherein the pitch changer is housed within a pitch changer housing and retained within the pitch changer housing via a retaining rod that is disposed in a slot of the pitch changer, wherein the lower lever and raiser lever are mechanically coupled to a pitch changer rod that is mechanically coupled to a bell crank.

12. A pitch changer comprising: a lowering lever with a pivot groove; and, a raiser lever, wherein said lowering lever and raiser lever are pivotally coupled via a pivot pin, wherein said raiser lever is mechanically coupled to one of at least two bell cranks so that depressing one of at least two pedals causes the raiser lever to pivot around the pivot pin, and wherein said lowering lever is mechanically coupled to the other bell crank so that depressing the other pedal causes the lowering lever to pivot around one end of a pivot plate in the pivot groove, whereby string(s) may be raised and/or lowered; and further comprising:

(a) a low string catch; and,

(b) a high string catch, wherein the pitch changer is coupled to a stop plate, wherein a compression spring pushes the pitch changer against the stop plate when a pull is released, whereby if a string is in the low string catch a tension of the string is reduced when pulling the pitch changer and if the string is in the high string catch the tension of the string is increased when pulling the pitch changer; wherein the lowering lever is coupled to a compression spring so that the compression spring compresses when the lowering lever is pivoted around said end of the pivot plate to lower a pitch of a string.

13. The pitch changer of claim **12** wherein the pitch changer is housed within a pitch changer housing and retained within the pitch changer housing via a retaining rod that is disposed in a slot of the pitch changer.

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