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R O Y A L
C O L L E G E
O F M U S I C
London

Royal College of Music Museum

Western Classical Music - KS3 & 4
Piano Pack

The piano

The piano was invented around the year 1700. It is a member of the keyboard family.

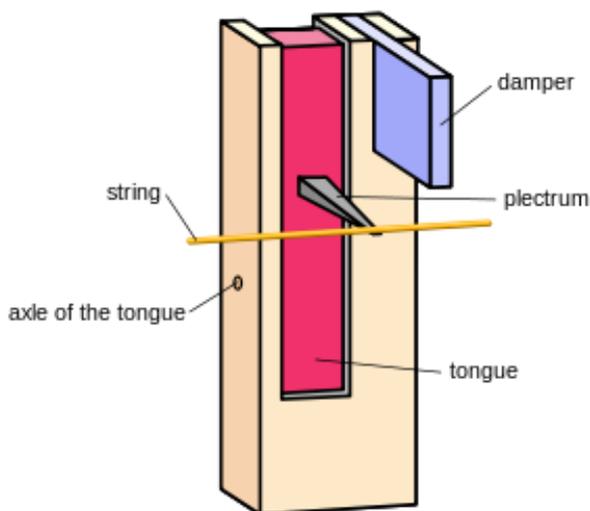


What was different about the piano?

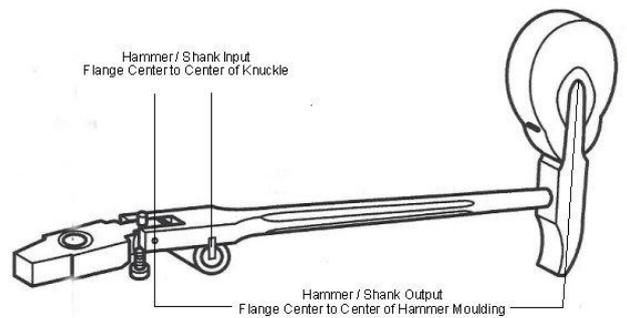
In the Baroque period, harpsichords were the popular choice of keyboard instrument. The strings inside harpsichords are plucked, which creates a distinctive, tinkly sound.

However, harpsichords cannot easily change dynamics from loud to soft.

The strings inside a piano are hit with a hammer. This means that pianists can control the dynamics just by the way they press the keys. In fact this is why it was called the *fortepiano*, because *forte* means 'loud' and *piano* means 'soft' in Italian.



Plucking mechanism (called a 'jack')
Harpsichord



Hammer mechanism
Piano

Composers liked this so much that they stopped writing music for harpsichords, and by the classical period (1750 – c.1810) the piano was the most popular keyboard instrument.

Piano by Broadwood & Sons (London, 1799)

This piano is on display in the Royal College of Music Museum.

It was made by a family company of piano makers, headed up by a man called John Broadwood.

Making a piano involves thousands of tiny parts and takes a lot of time and people to assemble. This piano was made at a time when small family workshops were expanding in factories, and machines were being invented to help speed up the making process.

Pianos like this, were often used as a solo instrument in pieces like concertos.

A concerto is a piece written for one or more soloists and an orchestra. It usually has three movements (main sections) which follow a fast-slow-fast pattern.



Expanding the piano



Jan Ladislav Dussek was a Czech composer and pianist. He lived in London for a few years and made friends with the John Broadwood.

Dussek was one of the first virtuoso pianists – showing off his amazing technical ability to dazzle his audiences. With this solo career, he could afford to be a self-employed musician, without having to rely on a wealthy patron. He got annoyed that the piano didn't have more notes (pianos only had 68 keys to begin with).

Broadwood agreed and worked on extending the range of notes pianos could play. Today, all pianos have 88 keys. Thanks Dussek!

For your GCSE, you might need to know a little about composers and their working lives.

Most people have heard of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart who wrote a lot of classical music for the piano, but have you heard of another famous classical composer called Joseph Haydn?

Who was Joseph Haydn?

Haydn was an Austrian classical composer.

He was a friend and mentor of Mozart and even taught composition to Beethoven!



FUN FACTS!

1	Haydn started out life as a choirboy (but got thrown out for snipping off the pigtail of a fellow choirboy).
2	He pursued a career as a freelance musician but struggled to make money.
3	Eventually he got a job working for an immensely wealthy noble family to compose music and conduct a small orchestra especially for them.

Being supported or employed by a wealthy patron was one of the main ways classical composers made money.

Haydn is sometimes called the 'Father of the Symphony'. He wrote 106 of them! This portrait of him was painted on one of his trips to London, where he composed his *London symphonies*. While he was in London, he played on Broadwood pianos, like the one in the Royal College of Music Museum.



WATCH: RCM Classical Orchestra: Haydn Symphony no 85 'La Reine'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqnp1Z4U9-s>