

CLASSICAL PERIOD MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

A Chronological Evolution (1750 - 1820)

Transition from Baroque to Classical

c. 1750

The Fortepiano

Bartolomeo Cristofori's invention supersedes the harpsichord. Introduced dynamic range (soft/loud) via hammer-strike action, becoming the definitive solo instrument for Mozart and Haydn.

1760s

Standardization of the String Quartet

The grouping of two violins, viola, and cello becomes the standard chamber ensemble. String construction focuses on increased tension for larger concert halls.

1770s

The Clarinet

Officially integrated into the symphony orchestra. Mozart's late works popularize its use for its vocal-like qualities and wide tonal range.

1780s

Natural Horn Improvements

Development of "hand-stopping" techniques allows players to reach more chromatic notes before the invention of valves.

1800s

The Orchestral Flute

Transition from wooden one-key flutes to multi-keyed models, allowing for greater technical agility and better intonation in remote keys.

c. 1810

The Modern Harp

Sebastien Erard patents the double-action pedal harp, allowing the instrument to play in every key, moving it from a novelty to a permanent orchestral fixture.

1820

Trombone Expansion

Primarily used in church music, Beethoven introduces the trombone into the symphonic mainstream (Symphony No. 5) to expand the orchestra's power.