

EVOLUTION OF KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

3rd Century BC

Hydraulis

The earliest known keyboard instrument, using water pressure to regulate air flow through pipes. Invented by Ctesibius of Alexandria.

14th Century

Clavichord

A portable rectangular instrument where metal tangents strike strings. Notable for its expressive dynamic sensitivity on a small scale.

15th Century

Harpsichord

Defined by a mechanism that plucks strings with a quill. Dominant during the Baroque period, but lacked dynamic variation through touch.

1700

Pianoforte

Invented by Bartolomeo Cristofori. Introduced a hammer mechanism that allowed the player to vary volume (soft/loud) based on touch.

1860s

Modern Grand Piano

The introduction of the cast-iron frame and over-stringing allowed for much higher string tension, greater volume, and a wider tonal range.

1935

Hammond Organ

An electromechanical organ using rotating tonewheels to generate sound. It became a staple in jazz, blues, and rock music.

1964

Moog Synthesizer

The first commercial voltage-controlled modular synthesizer, revolutionizing music production with purely electronic sound generation.

1983

Digital Synthesizers & MIDI

The release of the Yamaha DX7 and the standardization of MIDI allowed keyboards to communicate with computers and other hardware.