

MEDIEVAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT HISTORY

A Chronological Reference Chart (500 AD - 1450 AD)

500 - 1000

Early Medieval Period

Lyre

Plucked string instrument; central to Germanic and Anglo-Saxon courtly poetry.

Monochord

Single-stringed device used primarily for teaching music theory and intervals.

1000 - 1150

Romanesque Era

Organistrum

Early massive hurdy-gurdy requiring two players; used in monastic settings.

Pan Flute

End-blown pipes of varying lengths, common in folk and pastoral music.

1150 - 1300

High Medieval Period

Vielle (Fiddle)

The primary bowed instrument of the Troubadours; predecessor to the viola.

Psaltery

Box-framed plucked zither, often decorated with gold leaf in courtly settings.

Shawm

Powerful double-reed woodwind used for outdoor festivals and dances.

Lute

Introduced via Moorish Spain; became the premier instrument of the late Middle Ages.

1300 - 1450

Late Medieval (Ars Nova)

Portative Organ

Small, lap-held pipe organ used for secular melodies and processions.

Dulcimer

Struck zither using small hammers, creating a distinct percussive resonance.

Gittern

Small, gut-stringed instrument carved from a single block of wood.

Trumpet

Straight natural brass tubes used for military signaling and royal fanfares.