



What Is A Harpsichord?

The harpsichord is a musical instrument that looks like a piano but it sounds much different. Like the piano, it is played by means of a keyboard. It produces its sound by plucking a string (rather than striking, as in a piano) when a key is pressed.

The harpsichord was used in Renaissance and Baroque music. The first music written for the solo harpsichord was published around the 16th century. Some of the famous composers that wrote music for the harpsichord were William Byrd, Domenico Scarlatti, J.S. Bach, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

During the late 18th century, it gradually disappeared from the music scene with the rise of the piano, but in the 20th century, it came back. It's being used in historical performance of older music, in new compositions and in popular culture.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was and is a famous composer. He was born in Eisenach, Germany. He was born March 21, 1685. His father was a town musician. In fact, over 300 years of his ancestors all worked as professional musicians. As a child, Bach's father taught him to play violin and harpsichord. His parents had died by the time Johann was ten, so his older brother raised him. His brother, Johann Christoph was the organist at St. Michael's Church, Ohrdruf in Germany and it is assumed he taught Bach much about the organ. He also learned about organ building where he fixed the church organ often.

Johann held three major jobs in his life. He first worked for a duke, then a prince and finally became the director of music at the St. Thomas Church and School in Leipzig, Germany. His job kept him very busy. He became the cantor, organist and music composer and remained there for the rest of his life. In his spare time, Bach conducted a group of musicians and performed at a local coffee house.

He was thought of as just an ordinary musician until about 100 years after his death. At this time, Felix Mendelssohn, another composer conducted a performance of Bach's St. Matthew Passion. Bach composed in many established musical forms, including, for example, the cantata and fugue, and developed them into complex pieces. He composed over 1,100 works in almost every musical genre (except opera).

Bach was married twice and had over 20 children, including four who became famous musicians in their own right, including Carl Philipp Emanuel, Wilhelm Friedemann, Johann Christoph Friedrich, and Johann Christian.

Bach is now known as one of the great geniuses of music.

