

LESSON 09

Struck String Instruments

Struck string instruments are string instrument such as the **piano**, **harpsichord** or **dulcimer** which produce sound by vibrating strings

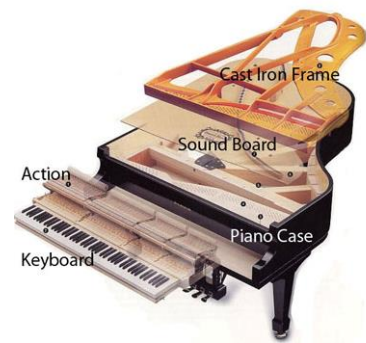
The Hammered Dulcimer



The hammered dulcimer is a percussion-stringed instrument which consists of strings typically stretched over a trapezoidal resonant sound board. The hammered dulcimer is set before the musician, who in more traditional styles may sit cross-legged on the floor, or in a more modern style may stand or sit at a wooden support with legs. The player holds a small spoon-shaped mallet hammer in each hand to strike the strings. The dulcimer, in which the strings are beaten with small hammers, originated from the psaltery, in which the strings are plucked.

The Piano

The piano is a musical instrument played using a keyboard. The word piano is a shortened form of pianoforte, the Italian word for the instrument. The Italian musical terms piano and forte indicate "soft" and "strong". The greater the velocity of a key press, the greater the force of the hammer hitting the strings, and the louder the sound of the note produced. Even though a piano has strings, it is usually classified as a percussion instrument because the strings are struck rather than plucked (as with a harpsichord or spinet). Modern pianos have two basic configurations (with subcategories): the grand piano and the upright piano. However, despite their differences, they all share the same basic anatomy: keyboard, action, case, soundboard, frame, strings and structure.



The Harpsichord



The harpsichord is a keyboard instrument played by means of a keyboard in which the strings are plucked. It became enormously popular throughout Europe. The instruments could vary significantly from each other, with different configurations for keyboards, foot pedals, and hand stops. The cases housing the mechanisms were often exquisite works in themselves, featuring inlays, paintings, and other fine surface decorations. The earliest references to such instruments date to about 1400. The oldest surviving harpsichords date from the 1500s, by which time the instrument's complex mechanism had been perfected. The plucked strings of the harpsichord have a rich sound whose clarity informs the complex contrapuntal melodies of baroque music. Almost every baroque composer wrote for the harpsichord, as either a solo or a continuo instrument. It was one of the most important keyboard instruments in European music from the 16th through the first half of the 18th

century. The term harpsichord denotes the whole family of similar plucked-keyboard instruments, including the smaller virginals, cembalo, and spinet.