

GETTING STARTED ORGANS



■ The first pipe organ's secret ingredient was water. Invented in the third century B.C. by the Greek inventor Ctesibius, it relied on water pressure to create wind that blew steadily through panpipes. Ingenious as this invention was, it wasn't until thousands of years later that the organ underwent major innovations and burgeoned throughout Europe. By the 1600s, massive pipe organs were common in churches throughout the westernized world.

Depending on the builder and resources, pipe organs could have one or two manuals (keyboards) plus a pedal board to play bass lines with the feet. Music of this period sometimes contained complex pedal parts, which called for a specialized, accomplished musician. Some of the pipes were 16 feet long. Many of the consoles (cabinetry) and pipe chambers of the period were ornate and delicately carved. Composers and performers in the Baroque era included Bach of Germany, Frescobaldi of Italy, Soler of Spain, Buxtehude of Denmark, and Couperin of France. Much of their music was composed for church services and festive occasions.

English organ builder Robert Hope-Jones (1859-1914) was one of the earliest innovators to harness the power of electricity to replace more primitive mechanisms for creating wind supply. The absorption of his company by The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in the early 1900s coincided with the advent of motion pictures.

Between the 1850s and 1920s, pump organs were another notable option for organ players. At the peak of popularity around 1900, a wide variety of styles were being produced. These ranged from simple models with plain cases, and only four or five stops (if any at all), to large instruments with ornate cases, up to a dozen stops, and other mechanisms such as couplers. From the 1930s on, pipeless electric instruments, such as the Hammond B3, gained popularity and almost completely replaced pump organs. They are smaller and cheaper, and (much to rock bands' satisfaction) portable. This is the organ sound you hear in Spencer Davis Group and The Animals.

The next revolution in electronic keyboard instruments was the development of the integrated circuit. Today we see a range of electronic keyboard organs that combine sampled organ sounds with an endless range of other instrument voices.

TRY THIS!

If you're a sitting down for the first time at an organ with foot pedals, you might be a little confused. Keep your right foot on the volume pedal and pivot the left heel/toe on natural/flat. Or to ease in, try tapping up and down the octave on a natural C for a few beats. You can try left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot; next, play a C scale with your right hand; then left; then both. This simple exercise will ease your brain into connecting the musical synapses between your hands and feet.

TRADITIONAL PIPE ORGAN

This instrument's ability to play across a wide range of low to high tonalities made it an ideal accompaniment to singers in a congregation. Mozart dubbed this the "king of instruments." Given its tone and size, it's no wonder.



PUMP ORGAN



Pump organs use foot pedals to create the wind pressure necessary to produce sounds. Smaller, cheaper, and more portable than pipe organs, reed organs were widely used in smaller churches and in private parlors in the 19th century.

HOME ORGAN



The invention of the electronic organ took organ playing from churches to average households. Easier to play than traditional organs, they offer musicians a far wider range of sounds and capabilities.