

# Keying into the Piano

*featuring*



# Kevin Ahfat

Piano

debut atlantic

debut

début atlantique

## Meet Kevin Ahfat!

**“Ahfat is poised to become one of the young heirs of the classical piano realm, with a bold, boundary-pushing, millennial style matched by refined execution.” –Vanguard Seattle**

An artist that “leaves no question about his riveting presentation and technical finesse” (Seattle Times), Canadian pianist Kevin Ahfat is acclaimed to be “poised to become one of the young heirs of the classical piano realm, with a bold, boundary-pushing, millennial style matched by refined execution” (Vanguard Seattle). Possessing “a balanced mix of expressiveness and virtuosity” (Musical America), he “summons plenty of thunderpower in the big moments, but clearly values musicianship over mere showmanship” (American Record Guide). Ahfat was named one of CBC Music’s 30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30 in 2018 and subsequently released a live recording of Brahms from CBC’s Studio 211.

Visit [kevinahfat.com](http://kevinahfat.com) to read up on all things Kevin!



**Now it's time to learn about the piano, starting with its predecessor, the harpsichord!**

# What is a harpsichord?

Harpsichord refers to a musical instrument that looks like a small piano. Harpsichords don't strike the strings as pianos do; the major difference between the harpsichord and piano is that the harpsichord strings are plucked by something called the plectrum, while a hammer strikes the piano strings. You can't change the speed of the pluck on harpsichord strings, which is why you can't vary the volume – while you can change the speed of the hammers striking the strings on a piano to vary the volume.

The harpsichord was one of the most important instruments in European music, reaching the height of popularity from about the 16th century to the early 18th century.

It became fashionable to decorate harpsichords with elaborately painted lids.



## Listening

**Pick a piece of music featuring the harpsichord. Listen online, on CBC radio, or from a CD. What do you hear?**

What piece did you choose? Who was the composer/artist? \_\_\_\_\_

**Listen to the sounds of the harpsichord. Imagine what kind of shape the sound creates and draw below:**

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing the shape of the sound created by the harpsichord.

# Harpsichord vs. Piano

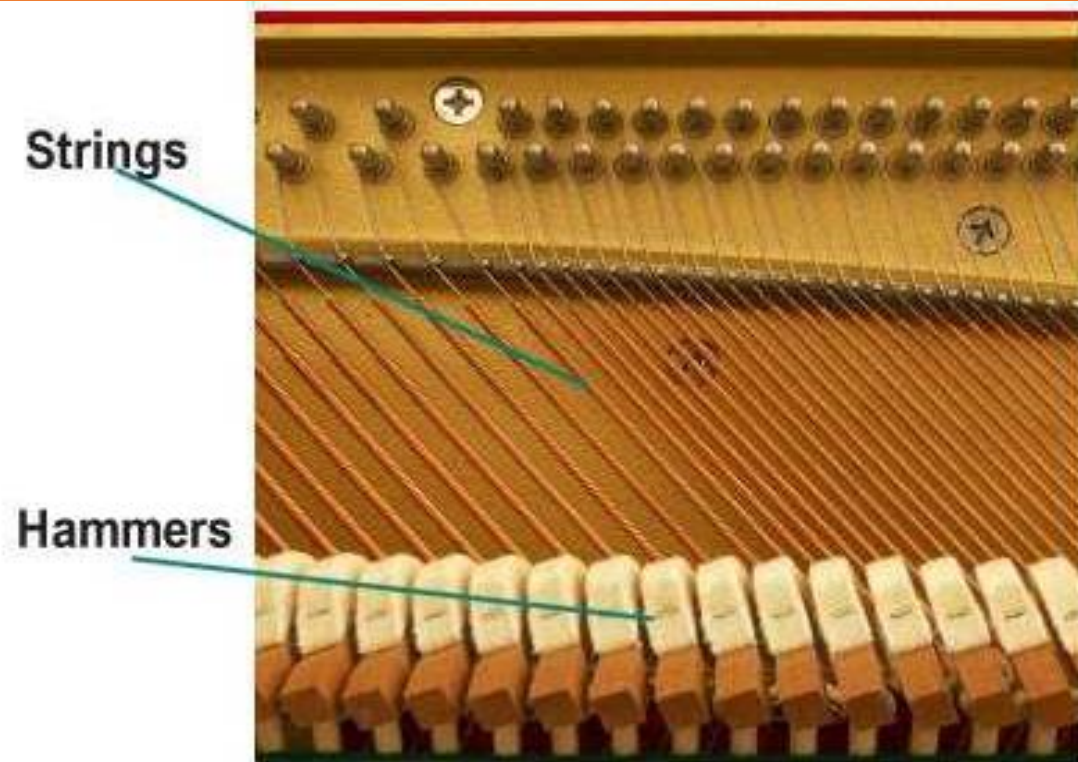
Around the end of the 18th century, harpsichords began losing popularity because of the invention of the piano!

A piano and a harpsichord look similar in the shape. They both play by pressing the keys with your fingers. Are there any differences?

Circle the differences you see!



# HOW DOES IT WORK?



The notes and sounds made by a piano are the result of strings vibrating. The strings vibrate when they are hit by a hammer within the piano!

The piano has **88 keys** all of which play a different note. Multiple keys can be played at the same time to create chords and harmonies.

Even though there are 88 keys on a piano there are more than 88 strings inside it. A typical piano may have as many as 230 strings!

## The Pedals

Pianos generally have two or three pedals that you work with your feet. The right pedal is the most commonly used and is called the damper or sustaining pedal.

When not being pressed, the damper pedal keeps all of the “dampers” on the strings, which keeps the piano quiet when not being played! A damper is made of a soft material, sort of like a pillow, and keeps the string from vibrating and making noise. When you press the damper pedal down, it lifts all of the “pillows” off the string and allows the string to vibrate and produce sound!



# Let's Explore the Sounds of the Piano!



Alberto Ginastera (1916 –1983) was an Argentinian composer of classical music. He is considered one of the most important 20th-century classical composers of the Americas!

Let's Explore Ginastera: [CLICK HERE](#) or visit the Debut Atlantic website to hear Kevin Ahfat perform the Arrogant Cowboy Dance from *Danzas argentinas*, op. 2 (Argentine Dances). Describe what you heard:

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Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856) was a German composer, pianist, and influential music critic. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest composers of the Romantic era.

Let's Explore Schumann: [CLICK HERE](#) or visit the Debut Atlantic website to listen to Kevin Ahfat perform Hide and Seek from *Kinderszenen*, op. 15, "Scenes from Childhood". Describe what you heard!

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Described as a "rising star" by MusicWorks magazine, JUNO-Nominated composer Jared Miller's eclectic music is "playful" (New York Times), "hypnotic" (Sequenza 21), and "highly personal" (CBC Radio.)

Let's Explore Miller: [CLICK HERE](#) or visit the Debut Atlantic website to hear Kevin Ahfat perform Origines: Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris from *Souvenirs d'Europe* (2011). Describe what you heard!

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Modest Mussorgsky (1839 –1881) was a Russian composer and innovator of Russian music in the romantic period. He strove to achieve a uniquely Russian musical identity.

Let's Explore Mussorgsky: [CLICK HERE](#) or visit the Debut Atlantic website to hear Kevin Ahfat perform The Witch Baba Yaga from *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Describe what you heard!

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# How does Kevin Ahfat describe the music?

**Ginastera's Arrogant Cowboy Dance** – Kevin: an arrogant cowboy stomps his feet and dances a wild dance before galloping off into the plains of Argentina

**Schumann's Hide & Seek** – Kevin: children run around the playground trying to catch each other in a quick game of hide and seek

**Miller's Origines: Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris** – Kevin: in the grand spaciousness of Paris' monumental cathedral, the glorious bells ring out and echo in the church and out into the city

**Mussorgsky's The Witch Baba Yaga** – Kevin: the terrifying witch Baba-Yaga jumps up in surprise, and heads on a terrifying chase through the dark forest in the night

## WRITE A STORY

Listen actively with your imagination to the media links above, and imagine you are listening to the music from a movie or story. Let the titles and the sounds of the pieces you listed to inspire your story!

**What would your story/movie be about? Who are the characters and what happens in the story?**

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