

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 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? _____

Describe the sounds you hear; what is the timbre? _____

How do harpsichordists demonstrate musicality if the dynamics (loudness) cannot vary? _____

Harpsichord vs. Piano

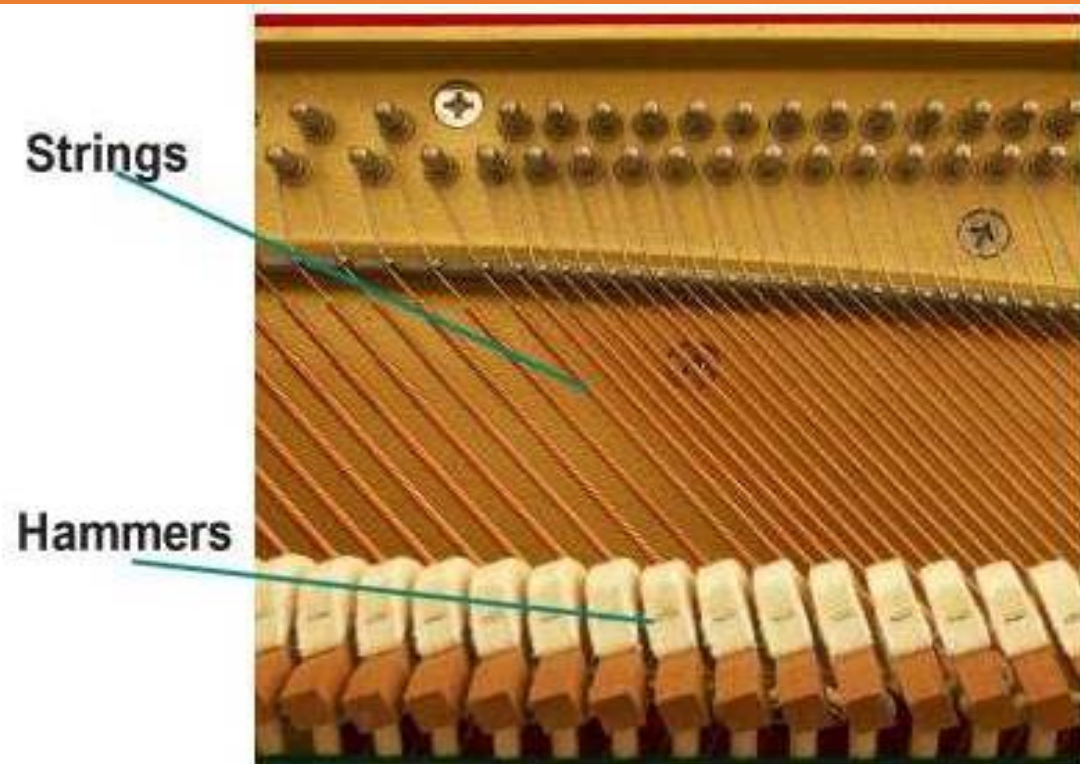
Around the end of the 18th century, harpsichords began losing popularity because of the invention of the piano!

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!

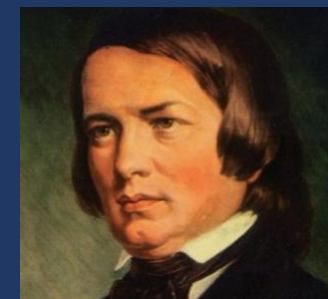


Alberto Evaristo Ginastera (1916 –1983) was an Argentinian composer of classical music. He is considered one of the most important 20th-century classical composers of the Americas!

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).

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. Schumann left the study of law, intending to pursue a career as a virtuoso pianist. His teacher, Friedrich Wieck, a German pianist, had assured him that he could become the finest pianist in Europe, but a hand injury ended this dream, so he focused on composing.

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



Described as a "rising star" by MusicWorks magazine, JUNO-Nominated composer Jared Miller's eclectic music is "playful" (New York Times), "hypnotic" (Sequenza 21), "phantasmagorical" (Lucid Culture) 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).



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. Many of his works were inspired by Russian history, Russian folklore, and other national themes.

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*.



SUMMARIZE A FILM PLOT

Listen actively to the media links above, and imagine you are listening to the music from a movie.

The composers chose the titles of each piece to correspond directly with the sounds they were trying to create in the music. Let the titles and the sounds inspire your story!

What is the plot of your movie? How does each selection of music enhance the story and characters?
