

Music of the World

Chordophones

Keyboard Instruments: Clavichord and Clavinet

The **Clavichord** was invented in the early 14th century for the purpose of accompanying song and primarily used for practice, since it was not very loud. The short staccato sound is made by brass or brass and iron strings that are paired like lute strings. A brass tangent that looks like the end of a screwdriver, is pressed onto the strings and held there as long as the key is depressed. By striking the keys harder, the volume can be increased and, conversely, can be softer with less weight from the fingers. When the key is released, the string is dampened. The strings have multiple bridges so that different keys and tangents (the striker) can actually play the



same strings, giving them different pitches due to the length of the strings at each bridge. This is unique to the clavichord and is referred to as *fretting* because the strings can be divided by the bridges like frets on a lute or guitar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcfl3lYQy9M>

Clavichord Prelude in C major - Antonello:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWOHzki9TGg>



Some later clavichords were made with just one pair of strings for each note, instead of sharing strings using bridges. These are referred to as *unfretted* clavichords.



The **Clavinet** is an electronic amplified version of the clavichord (making it also an electrophone) that was a German invention by Ernst Zacharias (right) in 1964 (made by Hohner) to be used for funk, jazz-funk, reggae, rock and soul. They stopped



making it in the 1980's and started making electric pianos with clavinet patches, but they did not have the same sound. There are a great number of recordings using the Clavinet which is still popular. Here are a couple of my favorites:



You Haven't Done Nothing by Stevie Wonder:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hYPl3f_npw

Chameleon by Herbie Hancock:

<https://youtu.be/GAlejqkd-gg?t=3084>