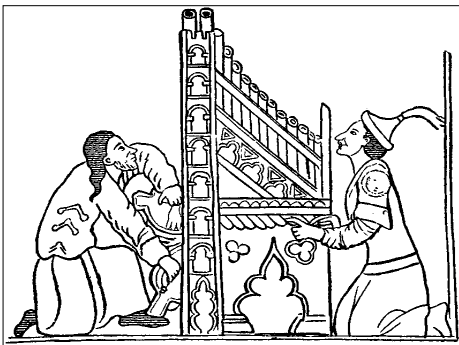


Pipe organs have a long history



*Pipe organs have developed over many centuries.
They were highly popular in Victorian times.*



Bellows were used from the 6th/7th century AD to blow air into pipes

In the beginning

The Greeks invented the first pipe organ (the 'hydraulis' organ) in the 3rd century BC. It used water pressure to maintain wind pressure blowing the pipes.



The Romans used 'hydraulis' organs in their arenas

In the 12th century more sound types were created.

In 1361 an organ with three keyboards and a pedal board built in Germany was described as 'the king of instruments' – a phrase still used today about pipe organs.

At the time of Bach and Handel

In Europe, Bach and Handel played 17th/18th century Baroque organs which gained more tone colours as new types of pipes and stops were developed in a 'golden age' of organ building for churches. In English churches, organs were mostly keyboard only and their range was limited.

Baroque organs were divided into different parts as shown by their casework



St George's Hall, Liverpool opened in 1854 with a Father Willis organ completed in 1855

The Victorian organ boom in Britain

Urban development, permission for catholic churches and the Scottish Free Church movement led to a boom in hall and church building from 1850. This stimulated demand for organs and builders such as 'Father' Willis responded with technical innovations to fill public spaces with bigger and more orchestral sounds.



A 1903 Gavioli fair organ plays on Stony Stratford Lights Switch On day

Self-playing fairground and street organs also became popular at this time and design ideas were shared in fair-ground and 'classical' organ building.



1930s Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ restored and in use at Troxy in London

Organs in the 20th century

Technical innovation continued even after the boom was over – for example, electro-pneumatic action to bring wind to the pipes and electric consoles. The 1920s saw the coming of the 'Mighty Wurlitzer' in cinemas and theatres; drums, bells and piano were added to the pipe organ to make a 'one man orchestra' to accompany silent films. Since then, various types of electronic organs have been developed to imitate the sounds of church and theatre organs.