

OED³ s.v. *harmonica*:

harmonica, n.

Pronunciation: /hɑ:'mɒnɪkə/

Forms: Also 17 *armonica*.

Etymology: feminine of Latin *harmonicus* harmonic adj. and n., used subst.

1. Name of several different musical instruments.

a. An instrument invented by Dr. B. Franklin, consisting of a row of hemispherical glasses fitted on an axis turned by a treadle and dipping into a trough of water, played by the application of the finger; an improvement of the earlier 'musical glasses'. Also applied to other forms in which the tones are produced in various ways from graduated glass bowls or tubes.

b. An instrument consisting of a row of glass plates mounted on a resonance-box and struck with hammers.

c. A kind of mouth-organ; also applied to other wind-instruments with reeds.

(See also harmonicon n.)

1762 B. Franklin *Let.* 13 July in *Exper. & Observ. Electr.* (1769) 433 In honor of your musical language, I have borrowed from it the name of this instrument, calling it the *Armonica*.

1777 T. Campbell *Philos. Surv. S. Ireland* xliv. 452 The invention of the *musical glasses*, now improved into the *harmonica*.

- 1831 T. Carlyle in *Fraser's Mag.* Mar. 143/2 His genius is not an Æolian harp..but a scientific harmonica.
- 1863 J. Tyndall *Heat* viii. §301 The flame would sing..as in the well known case of the hydrogen harmonica.
- 1880 G. Grove *Dict. Music* I. 663 The name Harmonica is now used for a toy-instrument of plates of glass hung on two tapes and struck with hammers.
- 1880 A. J. Hipkins in G. Grove *Dict. Music* I. 667 In England keyboard harmonicas with bellows were known by the name of Seraphine.
- 1895 *Montgomery Ward Catal.* 241/1 Concert harmonica, 10 double holes, 40 reeds, brass reed plates, celluloid covers, absolutely perfect in tone.
- 1938 S. G. Hedges *Hohner Harmonica Band Bk.* iii. 15 Harmonicas are made in several keys, the principal being G and C.
- 1966 L. M. Fox *Instruments Pop. Mus.* xiii. 84 Some harmonicas have a slider stop which can switch into play a second row of reeds tuned a semitone higher.
- 1973 *Advocate-News (Barbados)* 24 Feb. 3/6 (adv.) Attention all musicians... Just arrived:—..Harmonica Holders.

2. Name given to different organ-stops.

- 1852 tr. J. J. Seidel *Organ & its Constr.* 98 Harmonica..is a register of a most refined, delicate tone.
- 1876 J. Stainer & W. A. Barrett *Dict. Musical Terms* 217/1 *Harmonica*..A name sometimes given to a mixture stop on foreign organs.
- 1880 G. Grove *Dict. Music* II. 601/1 On Solo Manual..Harmonica, 4 ft.

OED³ = Simpson, John (ed.) (2000– [1884–1928¹]): *Oxford English Dictionary. The definitive record of the English language.* Oxford: Clarendon: <http://www.oed.com>.