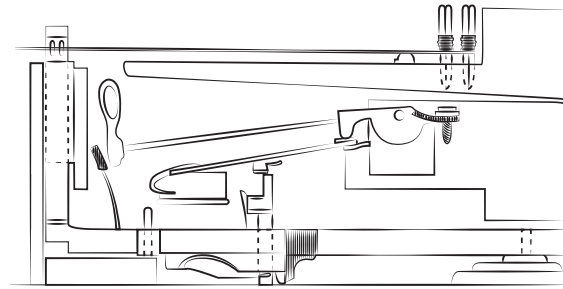


The History of the Piano

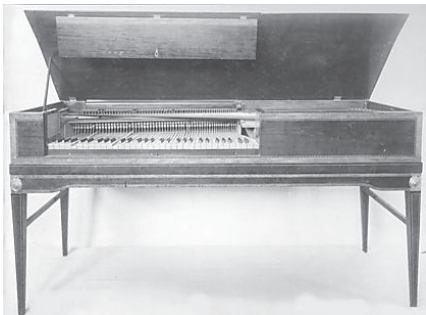


The piano is one of the world's most well-known musical instruments. It has the elements of both a stringed instrument and a keyboard instrument.



The Cristofori piano is the smallest and the very first original piano. In 1694 Bartolomeo Cristofori was able to perfect the mechanism of the hammer. He enabled the downward pressure on a key to project a small hammer upwards to pound a string, which is where the sound of a piano comes from.

Sebastian Lengerer created the Viennese piano in 1773, which had very narrow keys. Ferdinand Hofmann improved this design by building it with mahogany, which gave it a lighter, delicate sound. This was the piano that greats like Mozart and Beethoven were known to play.



Over the years, the piano's many flaws were solved by a number of different piano makers. A big breakthrough came with the creation of the "double escapement" mechanism by Sebastien Erard. His Collard & Collard piano allowed notes to be played very quickly,

without having to wait for the key to reset. Additionally, it was noticed that square-shaped or rectangular pianos had poor or limited sound quality. So to solve the problem, piano makers began raising the lids on their square pianos to improve sound quality. This innovation is still seen in grand pianos today. In 1857, the modern Steinway Model D piano was invented, and is very similar to the pianos you see today. It was made from a single piece of maple, which helped to give each individual piano a particular sound and character.

Today's modern pianos have a total of 88 keys and just 3 foot pedals -- one for dampening the sound and two for sustaining the sound.



Comprehension:

1. In your own words, how does a piano's sound work?

2. What did the "double escapement" mechanism do?

3. Name three improvements that make the modern piano what it is today.

