

# Music of the World

## Chordophones; Keyboard Instruments: Piano

The **Piano**, first known also the pianoforte and the fortepiano, was invented around 1700 by Italian, **Bartolomeo Cristofori di Francesco**. This instrument allowed the player to use a wider range of dynamics than the harpsichord (the louds and softs of music) hence the use of *piano*, meaning soft, and *forte* meaning loud in Italian. In the early 1700's, a German organ builder named Silbermann, added the sustaining pedal, which allowed the player to hold notes out longer. He showed this instrument to J.S. Bach, who did not like the upper string sound.



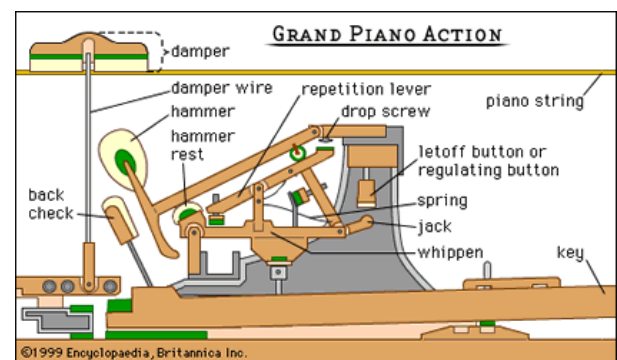
Later, Bach was introduced to another version that Silbermann developed in 1747 and began to help him sell this keyboard instrument that could play loud and soft. Bach composed for it as well.



By the 1820's France became the center of development for the fortepiano where the newly developed cast iron frame allowed a string tension of up to 20 tons (as in our modern grand piano). It was then in France that Frederick Chopin and Franz Liszt began

composing for the piano.

The mechanism of the piano, typically using 88 keys, added three strings to the bass notes to increase richness. Variations on how many strings were grouped together at the top register for improved quality and resonance were made by multiple piano builders. The key is pressed down which raises the *wippen*, forcing the jack against the hammer roller which strikes a felt covered hammer, and depending on how hard one presses the key, vibrates the strings. Because the strings are struck by hammers, the piano is a member of the percussion family.





An upright piano, left, the strings are perpendicular to the keys in a square frame. The Grand piano, right, is not square but is shaped more like the harp with much longer strings. The action on a grand piano is faster than an upright allowing one to play much faster. Together, your family could look inside your own piano to see how it works.

The piano is tuned by tempering the diatonic (12 note) scale. The perfect intervals such as 4<sup>th</sup> and 5ths, are slightly adjusted throughout. A Baby Grand piano is 4 ft. 11 inches, a Parlor Grand is between 5 and 7 feet and a Concert Grand can be as large as 9 ft. 10 inches long!

There are endless styles, genres, compositions and performers on the piano. This is just a small sampling. We have fine pianists in our family. Who are your favorite pianists, your favorite composers and what are your preferred compositions for piano?



**Lang Lang** playing an encore *Turkish March*. Notice the dynamic contrast.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWYmUZTYE78>

**Teddy Wilson** (Columbus, Ohio native) and **Earl Hines**: *All of Me* (My mom listened to Teddy Wilson) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ua0zcZuKBIA>

**Oscar Peterson** always played on a Bosendorfer model piano which has 92 keys: *Sweet Georgia Brown* improvised solo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxB-LbcZITU>

**Chick Corea**, piano, and **Bobby McFerrin**: *Spain*:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_o2RS8WfcbY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_o2RS8WfcbY)

This is **Liberace**, who was an entertainer—notice the candelabra on his piano:  
[https://youtu.be/q9nO9Ro\\_kd4](https://youtu.be/q9nO9Ro_kd4)

**Keith Jarrett** Trio: <https://youtu.be/IBnwDTAoAC8>

The *Brahms Horn Trio* for Piano, Violin and Horn: **Barenboim, Perlman and Clevenger:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiraChiWyVM>

**Khatia Buniatishvili:** Chopin Scherzo No. 3”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBNI2oFPUz8>