

Piano

The Classical Piano Method

Method Book 1

Heumann



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HANS-GÜNTER HEUMANN

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Based on many years of experience teaching children, young people and adults, Hans-Günter Heumann has written a great number of internationally successful and award winning publications, and has composed and arranged piano music in a range of styles for beginners to advanced students.

Having developed successful, methodical concepts for learning how to play the piano for all age groups and abilities, Hans-Günter Heumann's work has been translated into many different languages and sold millions of copies, an indication of the wide-spread appreciation of his work.

His publications *Klavierspielen – mein schönstes Hobby* and *Piano Kids* (both published by Schott Music) have become two of the most significant piano methods in the German language.

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Lesson 1

The Piano and its Precursors



The piano was invented in 1700 by the Italian musical instrument maker **Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655-1731)** in Florence. This was certainly one of the greatest inventions of the time. There is a plaque in the Basilica di Santa Croce in his memory.

Three well-known keyboard instruments may be regarded as its precursors: The **clavichord**, the **harpsichord** and the **spinet**.

On these instruments it was not possible to play gradually louder or quieter. This was only possible on the piano, with its small felt hammers striking the strings. The instrument was originally named **Hammerklavier** (hammer piano) to reflect this. A larger form of this piano is the grand piano.

Because of this, Cristofori called his invention **gravicembalo col piano e forte** meaning a large harpsichord which can be played both loudly and softly.

From this the Italian term **pianoforte** or **fortepiano** was derived (Ital. piano = quiet, forte = loud). Today the term has been shortened to **piano**.

The term 'piano' is now often used as a collective term to refer to both upright and grand pianos. In an upright piano the strings are vertical, whereas in a grand piano the strings are horizontal.



clavichord



harpsichord



Cristofori's grand piano



spinet



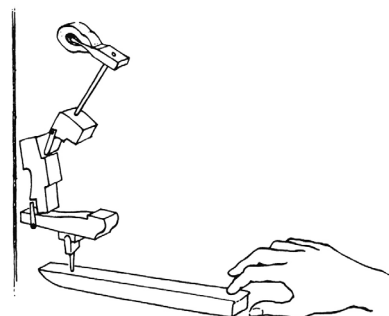
grand piano



upright piano

How are Sounds Produced on the Piano?

When you press a key down, a small felt hammer inside the instrument hits a steel string and makes it sound. This produces a note. There is one hammer for every note on the keyboard.

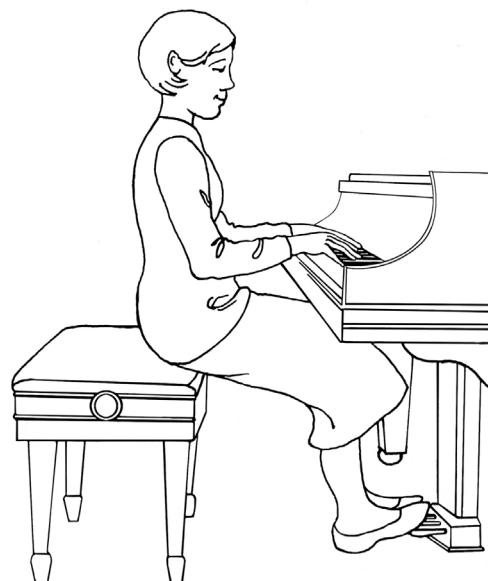


How to Sit at the Piano

Sit in an upright but relaxed position at the centre of the keyboard.

Sit towards the front edge of the stool, so that your feet are firmly on the ground. Your distance from the piano should be such that your hands comfortably reach the keys. The keys should be struck towards the edge, and the weight of your body should be supported by the spine rather than by your arms or legs. Sit close enough to the piano so that your knees are slightly beneath the instrument.

Your arms should remain relaxed and the shoulders should not be raised. There should be a space between your upper arms and the sides of your body.



Hand and Finger Position

Your fingers should touch the keys so that the forearm, wrist and back of the hand form a straight line. The height of the piano stool should be adjusted accordingly.

Your fingers should be softly curved, as though you were holding a small ball in your hand.

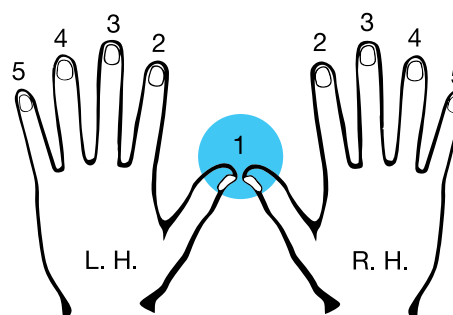
Only your fingertips should touch the keys; the fingernail should be at right-angles to the key.

Your thumb should be gently rounded.



Fingering

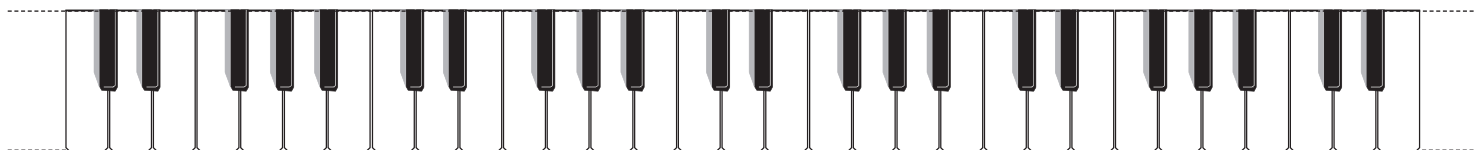
For playing the piano, each finger is given a number. These numbers appear above or below the notes, indicating which fingers to play the notes with. The figures are known as fingering and should always be followed precisely.



Lesson 2

The Keyboard

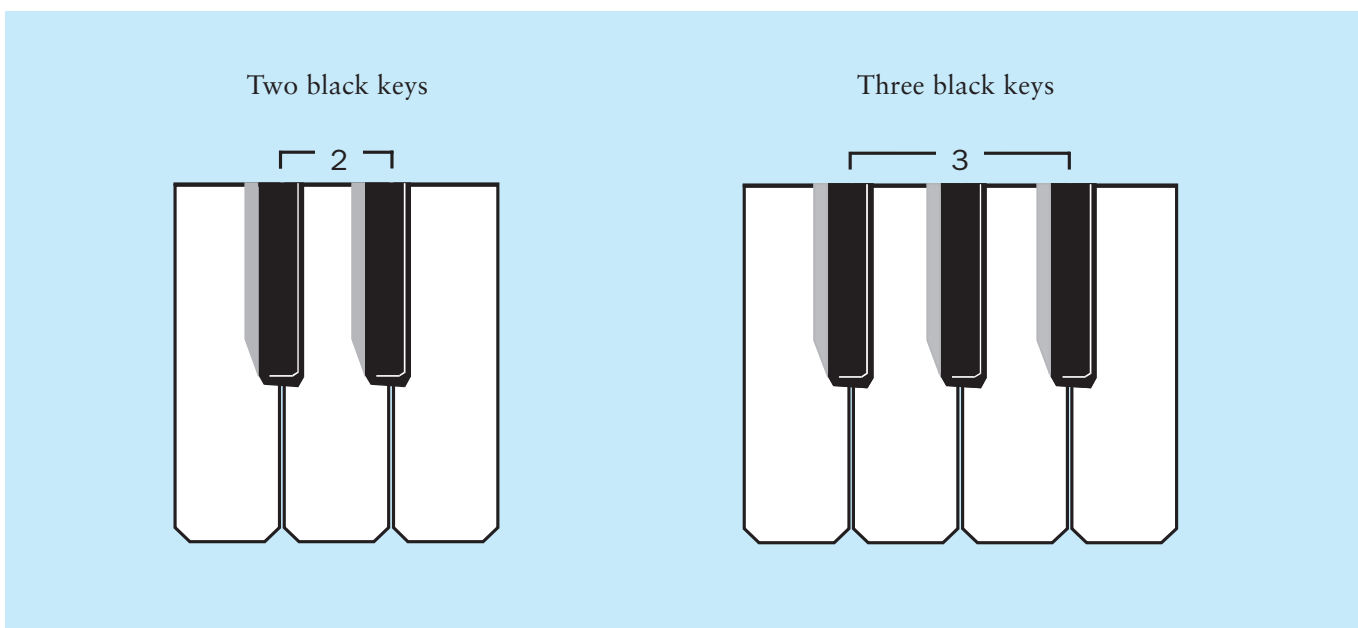
All the keys on the piano together make up what is known as the **keyboard**. It consists of white and black notes. The piano keyboard usually has 88 keys.



low – downwards ← keyboard → upwards – high

The Black Keys

The black keys are arranged in groups consisting of:



The Beat in Music

Music usually has a regular beat, similar to the beating of the heart. The beat or pulse can have different tempos – from very slow to very fast.

The following exercises and pieces should be played slowly at first with each note held for the same duration.

