

## Course Content - Piano

### Historical Facts about the Piano

- The piano belongs to two instrument families
  - Percussion – because you have to hit or strike the keys to make sound
  - String – because it is the strings in the piano that make the sound
- The Piano was invented by Bartolomeo Cristofori in the early 1700s
- Bartolomeo invented the piano because he wanted to improve the sound and performance of the Harpsichord
- The Harpsichord was smaller than the piano and had less keys. No matter how it is played the volume stays the same
- The Harpsichord had 66 keys and the piano has 88 keys
- Over the years many improvements have been made with the piano such as
  - Strings were made from stronger steel so they could be tuned more efficiently
  - More strings were used to create richer and fuller sounds
  - All piano materials became stronger to help keep the instrument in tune and sounding great
- Piano/Keyboard instruments can play rhythm and melody at the same time

### Piano Types

- **Grand Pianos** have a frame and strings that are placed horizontally
- **Upright Pianos** are more compact because the frame and strings go vertically

### Piano Parts

- **Case:** is made of bent wood and wraps around all the other parts of the main body of the piano
- **Pin Block:** is made of hardwood and holds the tuning pins in place
- **Plate:** what the strings attach to
- **Soundboard:** is the main way the sound travels from the strings
- **Strings:** also called “piano wires” because they are made of metal. The shorter in length the string is, the higher the note
- **Tuning Pins:** Where the strings are tied off at the ends of the piano
- **Keys/Keyboard:** Piano keys are often made of woods that are strong but not too heavy. White keys used to be covered with a thin layer of ivory to make them look and feel good to touch, but because ivory came from endangered species like elephants, manufacturers started using plastics instead
- **Hammers:** The hammers “hit” the strings to create the sound

### Music in Life Lesson:

The Music in Life lesson is a moment to engage in active listening. The Music in Life lesson song for this course is "Brave" by Sara Bareilles. Students are invited to think about how the music makes them feel, think, and move. Music is an individual experience; active listening encourages students to choose their own musical path.

### Pianists from the Past

- **Sergie Rachmaninov (1873-1943)** was an amazing Russian composer and pianist
- **Amy Marcy Beach (1867 –1944)** was an American composer and pianist. She was the first female composer to achieve great success on the international orchestral stage
- **Glenn Gould (1932-1982)** was a Canadian pianist who was one of the most popular artists of the twentieth century.
- **Mitsuko Uchida (1948-)** was born in Japan but calls England her home
- **Arthur Rubinstein (1887-1982)** was a Polish pianist, best known for the fantastic way he played the compositions of Chopin.
- **Clara Haskil (1895-1960)** was a Romanian Pianist and was especially famous for the way she played the works of Mozart

### Pianists from the Present

- **Liberace** was known for his wild stage shows and he wowed fans with all kinds of piano music
- **Thelonious Monk** was an American Jazz pianist and composer
- **Tori Amos** is a female singer/songwriter who has won lots of awards, including 8 Grammys
- **Billy Preston** was an American musician whose piano work included R&B, rock, soul, funk, and gospel.
- **Vanessa Carlton** is an American singer/songwriter and her piano playing on her song won her a Grammy!
- **Elton John** is a fantastic piano player and lots of his songs are huge hits. He's had over fifty Top 40 hits
- **Ryuichi Sakamoto** is a Japanese musician, composer, pianist, and actor
- **Regina Spector** is a singer/songwriter/pianist, who's well known for her catchy piano songs and performances