

# PIANO

## DESCRIPTION

- The piano is a keyboard percussion instrument, made of wood.
- The main body of a piano includes metal strings and small felt-covered hammers that strike the strings. The strings are attached to a metal frame called a plate. If the plate lies flat, extending away from the keys, the piano is known as a grand piano. If the plate sits up and down, facing the keys, the piano is known as an upright piano.
- A piano has 88 keys—52 white keys and 36 black keys.
- Within the piano there is also a wooden board that vibrates when the keys are played. This is known as the sounding board.
- Eventually, foot pedals were added—one to sustain the sound (damper pedal) and one to soften it (una corda pedal). In many pianos, a middle pedal (sostenuto pedal) has been added, which makes it possible to sustain only some notes.

## HOW TO PLAY

- The player presses down on the keys with the fingers. This causes a small felt hammer to strike the strings inside the piano. When the key is released, a damper silences the strings. This is called the "action" of the piano.
- The keys of the piano may be played lightly and gently or firmly, with gusto. Your touch will effect the volume and the tone.
- The fingers need to be strong, independent, relaxed, and flexible. They should be somewhat curved, with the wrists held slightly above the keys.

## SOUND

- It's hard to describe the sound of a piano. Each piano has a slightly different sound; and each pianist creates a different sound on each and every piano. Some pianists have a heavy touch on the keys and some a lighter touch
- Playing the piano involves a combination of melody lines, harmony lines, and chords.
- Through practice, a pianist develops his own technique and sound on each instrument.

## FUN FACTS

- The piano was invented in the early 18th century by Bartolomeo Cristofori of Florence, Italy. It was similar to a harpsichord, another keyboard percussion instrument. The first pianos were smaller than the piano we know today.
- The harpsichord has a keyboard like a piano, but the strings are plucked by picks rather than struck by small hammers.
- Look inside a piano sometime. You'll see there are over 225 strings. Each of the higher treble notes has three strings. The tenor and high bass section of the piano have two strings per note, while the low bass notes only have one string each. Watch what happens to the hammers and dampers when a note is hit and when the sustain pedal is held.
- The piano was originally called a pianoforte, which is a combination of the Italian words for "soft loud."

## SOUND SAMPLES

TRACK 34 - I Love a Piano

# PENGUIN ON THE PIANO

