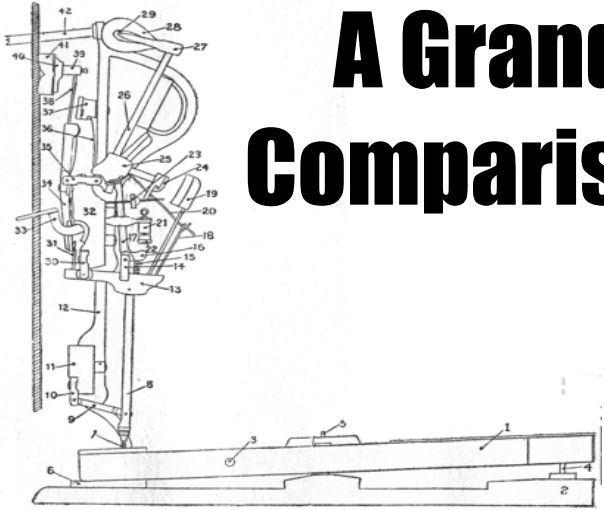


# A Grand Comparison



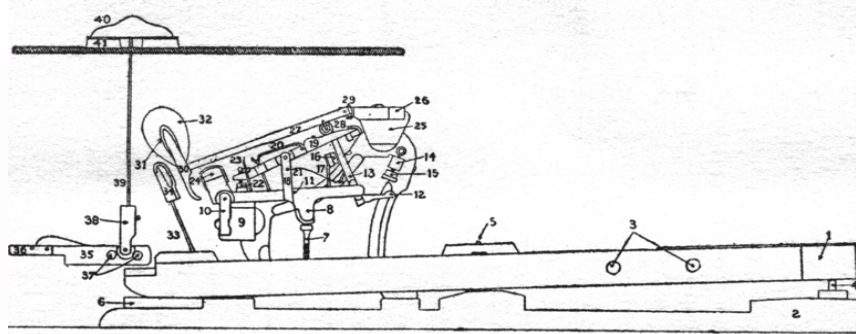
Grand pianos rely on gravity for most of their function. As gravity is constant and does not differ from note to note, key to key, grand pianos essentially function better than upright pianos when the action is well regulated.

Is there a difference between a grand piano and an upright piano? They both have keyboards and make music, right? Therefore, how could they be different? Does size matter? These are important questions to ask when deciding to purchase a piano. Let me give you some insight as to how these beasts differ.

Grand pianos, besides the obvious difference in shape, are more refined than upright pianos. Originally, there were only grand pianos until the need for a smaller instrument to fit into a cramped apartment in Paris or Vienna existed. Grand pianos rely on gravity for most of their function. As gravity is constant and does not differ from note to note, key to key, grand pianos essentially function better than upright pianos when the action is well regulated. They also have a few more parts in the action and something called a repetition lever. The repetition lever allows a grand piano to repeat a note when the key rises only halfway back to rest position instead of all the way back up. This permits playing notes extremely quickly on the same key with

minimal effort. Grand pianos have long keys making it possible for the action to be balanced efficiently allowing for a precise and consistent feel with little variation.

Because the nature of the case, a grand piano can be made quite long (concert grands can measure up to 9 feet, and certain ones even a little longer!) making the clarity of notes superb and volume and projection great. They can have such a big sound that they can be heard over an orchestra without amplification.



Upright pianos are not quite as effective as grand pianos. The action, being tilted 90 degrees in comparison with a grand piano, is unable to rely on gravity to reset the parts and must use springs instead. Each key has its own set of springs to bring it back to rest position, causing possible variance between the feel notes and certain wear over time. Upright actions do not have a repetition lever, making repetition of a note half as fast as compared to grand actions. The player must allow the key to rise fully after depressing it, letting the parts reset, before the key can again be played. Manufacturers have experimented with more springs to cause faster repetition in upright pianos, but failed due to lack of practicality.

Upright piano keys are about  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  as long as grand piano keys. The contact point between the key and mechanism within the two instruments are distinctly different, causing each action to have an individual feel overall. The balancing of the separate actions is not the same.

When upright pianos were in their infancy, piano builders attempted to make them as large as grand pianos to allow someone to have the sound of a grand piano without taking up as much space. Due to practicality for ceiling room, ability to be tuned, and the danger of tipping over, (not to mention how heavy they were!) especially tall uprights were abandoned for shorter models. The problem with shorter pianos is that the strings need to be thicker to make up for the loss in length and shorter strings don't vibrate as well as thinner strings. Ultimately, this causes a loss of clarity in tone and pitch in the lower registers (bass notes) of the instrument.

Essentially, upright pianos are good for those with minimal space who are not playing especially complex, fast music, but for those that need an instrument to play difficult, quick passages as found in Liszt or Prokofiev's music, a grand piano is a must.

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