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In 1958, the Samick Piano Co., LTD was founded in South Korea by Hyo Ick Lee as a Baldwin distributor for the country. By the early 1960s, Lee was able to start building and selling pianos under the Samick name. He used mostly imported parts and was only able to produce a small number of vertical pianos due to S. Korea’s struggling economy. Starting in 1964, S. Korea’s economy improved and Lee was able to expand the company to produce more pianos under the Samick name and begin using more parts manufactured in house. “Samick”, according to the company, means “three benefits” alluding to bettering the company through sales, improving the customer’s experience by providing a quality instrument, and contributing to the S. Korean economy as a whole. Let’s see how that plays out.

As the S. Korean economy improved through the 1960s-1980s, Korean wages increased. To continue to compete, Samick opened factories in Indonesia and China because labor was cheaper. It began acquiring defunct names of piano builders from the Great Depression and making pianos under other names such as Hyundai, Kohler & Campbell, Maeari, Steiner, Altenburg, Schumann, Stegler, and evening Baldwin (more about Baldwin in a future issue). In the 1990s, Asia experienced a financial crisis and Samick was forced into bankruptcy.



In 2002, Samick found new financial footing and returned. Their first new acquisition was the C. Bechstein Pianofortefabrik AG in Berlin, Germany. It was considered a partnership to benefit both of the struggling companies. Shortly after, it opened a factory for Bechstein production and distribution in China. Samick's partnership with Bechstein ended in 2009.

The company acquired the name Pramberger in 2005. It reorganized and began manufacturing pianos under the name Wm. Knabe, Sohmer, and Millenium as well. Most of these instruments are/were produced in Indonesia. The higher-level pianos are made in S. Korea and distributed around the USA and Europe through Samick's various distribution centers in those places.

In 2008, Samick acquired the Seiler name and moved production of most of these instruments to Indonesia.

Samick is an interesting company with a complex history. As one can see, pianos made under the Samick name are just one of the pianos made by this company. Samick has a long history of producing pianos for other companies. The general design of these instruments remains consistent while only a few changes are applied to make it look different than the others, one being the name on the fallboard. Many people don't realize that their piano was produced by Samick even though it says "Knabe" on it. Many of these instruments are made in China or Indonesia and show it. The price is generally lower than other competing brands and the quality varies greatly. I have come across Samick pianos I like and others I do not like. They often have a brighter sound and look similar to other Asian brands such as Yamaha or Young Chang.

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*all photos from samickpiano.com

