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PIANO

EDITED BY
David Rowland



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Bibliographical abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used:

AMZ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*

EM *Early Music*

ML *Music & Letters*

MQ *The Musical Quarterly*

MT *The Musical Times*

New Grove Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1980)

Pitch notation When referring to keyboard compasses the following notation has been used, which is similar to, or identical with, that most commonly found in the literature on the keyboard:



Introduction

DAVID ROWLAND

The Cambridge companion to the piano brings together in a single volume a collection of essays which covers the history of the instrument, the history of its performance and a study of its repertory. Each chapter is written by a specialist with access to the most recent research on his or her topic, but all the authors have written accessibly, with the student of the instrument, or an enthusiastic amateur, in mind.

Chapters 1–3 bring together as much up-to-date piano history as is possible in the space available. In recent years, some extremely important work has been published on the early history of the piano. Stewart Pollens's *The early pianoforte* and Michael Cole's *The pianoforte in the Classical era* between them provide a comprehensive survey of the technical developments which took place in the eighteenth century. These developments are summarised in chapters 1 and 2 along with information about the specific kinds of instrument played by the early pianists. Necessary technical terms are explained in the glossary at the end of the volume. The equivalent history of the piano in the first half of the nineteenth century is much less well documented and a new, detailed history of the piano in the nineteenth century is urgently needed. It is remarkable that Rosamond Harding's book *The piano-forte*, first published as long ago as 1933, remains the standard text for this period. Nevertheless, new work is emerging in this field by scholars, curators and restorers and it has been possible to draw on much of this material for the brief history of the piano found in the remainder of chapter 2 and in chapter 3. Cyril Ehrlich's *The piano: a history* continues to be a major source of information for the piano industry in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Many issues in the early performance history of the piano are intimately associated with the nature of the instruments themselves. It is not possible, for example, to assess whether Mozart composed some of his earlier music for the piano, or for the harpsichord or clavichord, without a knowledge of the general availability of pianos in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. Likewise, an understanding of the differences between English and 'Viennese' pianos is crucial to an understanding of some of the performance issues associated with the music of Beethoven and his contemporaries. For reasons such as these, the study of piano performance to c.1825 will be found alongside the history of the

instrument in chapters 1 and 2. The way in which later pianists played is investigated in two chapters. Chapter 4 assesses those pianists whose playing styles can be studied only through written sources – concert reviews, memoirs, letters and so on. Chapter 5 studies those pianists who belong to the recording era.

Part 1 of this volume, which deals only with instruments and performers, concludes with an examination of the precise way in which sound is generated in a modern grand piano, and how that sound is transmitted to an audience.

Part 2 concerns the repertory of the piano. Rather than devote single chapters to studies of the sonata, the concerto and so on, authors have written about the music in the wider context of its performance setting and stylistic development. The discussion begins in chapter 7 with an examination of the emergence of a ‘standard’ repertory in the nineteenth century (which continues to form the basis of the repertory for most modern pianists). Even by the early years of the century, an enormous volume of music had been written for the piano; yet only a small proportion of what was written came to be played by subsequent generations, and an even smaller proportion of it has come to be considered ‘canonic’ or ‘exemplary’. Chapter 7 explores how and why this was so.

Chapters 8–10 examine the piano music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in some detail. The way in which composers wrote for the instrument at the time was shaped by a variety of factors. For early pianists such as Mozart the sonata was the most common vehicle for solo expression; yet within a generation, sonatas were no longer in widespread fashion and composers were beginning to concentrate their energies on shorter, ‘character’ or dance pieces. At least part of the reason for this change lay in the rapidly increasing public demand for shorter works, many of which were written for the burgeoning amateur market catered for by a growing publishing industry. At the same time, a distinctive piano style emerged which displaced a keyboard style capable of realisation on the harpsichord and clavichord as well as on the piano. Virtuosos of the piano emerged who achieved celebrity status in their public performances. These pianists wrote difficult concert études and concertos for themselves to play in public; but they also wrote more intimately for the salons in which they performed and for the amateur, domestic market (chapter 9). Within the concert and salon repertory towards the middle of the nineteenth century there was a strong interest in musical elements of eastern Europe (such as the Polish ingredients in Chopin’s music, or those from Hungary in Liszt’s). These and other nationalistic elements from, for example, Russia and Scandinavia, are reviewed in chapter 10. The twentieth century has seen many new developments in piano writing.

3 Introduction

Many novel techniques emerged during the first half of the century (chapter 11) and there has been an increasing appreciation of the 'popular' styles of ragtime, blues and jazz (chapter 12). Many classically trained pianists now play music in these styles and the cross-over of 'art' music and 'popular' music styles can be seen in integrated works by composers such as Gershwin.

This volume, in common with all of the others in the *Cambridge companion* series, cannot claim to be comprehensive. Nevertheless, it will give the reader a breadth of information on the subject rarely found elsewhere, written by specialists who have made their own thorough studies.

PART ONE

Pianos and pianists

1 The piano to c.1770

DAVID ROWLAND

Italy and the Iberian peninsula

Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655–1732) is generally credited with the invention of the piano in Florence at the end of the seventeenth century. Although some earlier accounts of keyboard actions survive, it is only from Cristofori that a continuous line of development can be drawn.¹

Cristofori entered the service of Prince Ferdinando de' Medici in 1688 as curator and instrument maker. In this capacity he maintained harpsichords, spinets and organs and made a variety of keyboard (and possibly stringed) instruments.² His work on the piano may have begun as early as 1698, certainly by 1700,³ and in 1709 or 1710 Scipione Maffei noted that Cristofori had 'made three so far, two sold in Florence, one to Cardinal Ottoboni'.⁴ In 1711 Maffei published a detailed description of Cristofori's pianos, including a diagram of the action (Fig. 1.1).⁵

The action in Maffei's diagram works in the following way: as the key (C) is depressed one end of the intermediate lever (E) – which pivots around the pin (F) – is raised. This causes the escapement (G) to push the hammer (O) towards the string (A). The escapement then 'escapes' from contact with the hammer and allows it to fall back to its resting position, on a silk thread (P). When the key is released, the escapement, which is hinged and attached to a spring (L), slides back into its resting position and the damper (R) – which had been lowered when the key was depressed – comes back into contact with the string in order to damp the sound.

Many aspects of piano design evidently continued to occupy Cristofori, since the three surviving pianos by him, dated 1720, 1722 and 1726, as well as a keyboard and action of c.1725, differ from each other and from Maffei's description in certain aspects of their mechanism and construction. Nevertheless, all of the existing instruments share certain characteristics: they are lightly constructed, compared with later pianos, and have small hammers (in two of the pianos, made only of rolled and glued parchment covered with leather). The instruments produce a gentle sound and their keyboard compass is just four octaves (1722, c.1725 and 1726) or four and a half octaves (1720) – considerably smaller than the five octaves or so of the biggest harpsichords of the time.

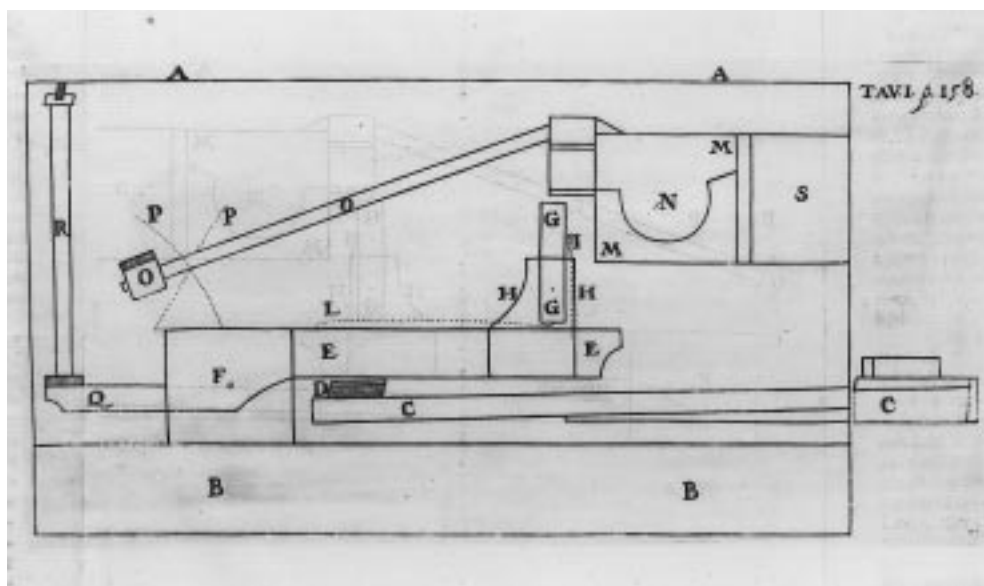


Figure 1.1 Maffei's diagram of Cristofori's piano action from the *Giornale de' letterati d'Italia*, 5 (1711).

whom was probably Giovanni Ferrini (*fl.*1699(?)-1758) who, like his teacher, made harpsichords as well as pianos in Florence.⁶ Indeed, his only surviving instrument with piano action is a combination harpsichord/piano, with an upper and lower manual operating the piano and harpsichord respectively. Such combination instruments continued to be popular throughout the period during which the relative merits of the two types of keyboard instrument were debated – until at least the 1780s. In the meantime, the fame of the Florentine makers spread to the Iberian peninsula, where other makers began to construct instruments based on Cristofori's design.⁷

Who used these early pianos, and for what purpose? Very little evidence has survived but it is likely that a number of well-known musicians encountered pianos in southern Europe during the early decades of the century. George Frederic Handel (1685–1759) may have seen Cristofori's instruments in Florence and Rome. Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757) almost certainly played a number of Florentine pianos: he stayed in Florence for several months in 1702 and he taught Don Antonio of Portugal, the dedicatee of the first music known to be published for the piano – twelve sonatas by Lodovico Giustini (1685–1743), which appeared in Florence in 1732. He was also employed at the court of Maria Barbara of Spain, who owned five Florentine pianos, according to an inventory made in the year following Scarlatti's death.⁸ Farinelli, the



Figure 1.2 Piano by Cristofori, 1720.

famous castrato and Scarlatti's colleague in Spain for twenty-two years, also owned a piano dated 1730, according to Burney.⁹

From the start, the piano seems to have been regarded as a solo instrument. Maffei wrote that 'its principal intention' was 'to be heard alone, like the lute, the harp, the six-stringed viol, and other most sweet instruments'.¹⁰ Giustini's sonatas were written for solo piano, and Farinelli played solos on his piano when Burney visited him in 1770. It has also been suggested that a significant proportion of Scarlatti's sonatas were written for the piano, though the evidence cannot be regarded as conclusive.¹¹ Nevertheless, early pianos had certain shortcomings as solo instruments and Maffei was the first to voice a common complaint of the eighteenth century: 'this instrument does not have a powerful tone, and is not quite so loud' as the harpsichord.¹² Perhaps it was this problem that caused Maria Barbara to convert two of her Florentine pianos into harpsichords.¹³ Whatever the extent of the piano's use for solo performances, it also had some success in accompanying one or more other instruments

in chamber music: Maffei and several other eighteenth-century writers recommended its use in this way.

Germany and Austria

The history of the piano in German-speaking lands is complex. Christoph Gottlieb Schröter (1699–1782) claimed to have invented a keyboard action in 1717 for an instrument in which the strings were struck by hammers.¹⁴ The inspiration for Schröter's invention was Pantaleon Hebenstreit's (1669–1750) performance on the 'pantalon'. Hebenstreit's pantalon was an enlarged dulcimer measuring about nine feet in length which had one set of metal strings and one of gut. It was played with wooden beaters held in the hands, and had no dampers. The pantalon was reputed to be extremely difficult to play and expensive to maintain, but its sound was much admired and a small, elite group of performers toured Europe throughout much of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ By designing a hammer action operated from a keyboard Schröter no doubt wished to capture the sound of the pantalon while avoiding the strenuous efforts required of a performer. He presented his solution in the form of two hammer-action models – one striking the strings from below, the other from above – to the Elector of Saxony in Dresden in 1721. However, no complete instrument ever seems to have been made, and Schröter's contribution to the development of the hammer-action instruments with keyboard was probably confined to some articles in eighteenth-century German journals. The idea of the keyed pantalon lived on, however. A number of instruments survive with bare wooden hammers which are called 'pantalon' in the literature of the time. The term *pantalonzug* ('pantalon stop') is also commonly found to describe the stop or lever which removed the dampers from the strings (equivalent to the right pedal on a modern piano), in imitation of the undamped sound of the pantalon.¹⁶

Early piano making in Germany seems to have been concentrated in the area just south of Leipzig. Gottfried Silbermann (1683–1753) worked in Freiberg and Christian Ernst Friederici (1709–80), reputedly Silbermann's pupil, worked about sixty miles to the west, in Gera. Silbermann was making pianos in the early 1730s.¹⁷ No details of these instruments survive, but it is possible that they followed Cristofori's design, published by Maffei in 1711 and subsequently in German translation in Mattheson's *Critica musica* (Hamburg, 1725). One of Silbermann's early instruments evidently failed to satisfy Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) who, according to his pupil Johann Friedrich Agricola, had 'praised, indeed admired, its tone; but he had complained

that it was too weak in the high register, and was too hard to play'. Agricola goes on to describe how Silbermann was angered at Bach's reaction, but decided nevertheless

not to deliver any more of these instruments, but instead to think all the harder about how to eliminate the faults Mr. J. S. Bach had observed. He worked for many years on this. And that this was the real cause of the postponement I have the less doubt since I myself heard it frankly acknowledged by Mr. Silbermann. Finally, when Mr. Silbermann had really achieved many improvements, notably in respect to the action, he sold one again to the Court of the prince of Rudolstadt. Shortly thereafter His Majesty the King of Prussia had one of these instruments ordered, and, when it met with His Majesty's Most Gracious approval, he had several more ordered from Mr. Silbermann.¹⁸

In fact, according to Forkel,¹⁹ the King ordered a total of fifteen pianos from Silbermann, and prior to the second world war three of these instruments still existed. Now only two of the King's pianos survive, one of them dated 1746. In addition, however, there is another grand piano by Silbermann dated 1749 in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nürnberg.²⁰

The actions of the surviving Silbermann pianos resemble the extant Cristofori instruments extremely closely and suggest that Silbermann copied one of Cristofori's later pianos. The instruments by the two makers differ in some respects, however. Not surprisingly, the appearance of the case of Silbermann's pianos resembles that of contemporary German harpsichords, as does the range of the instruments – just under five octaves with FF as the lowest note. The devices to modify the sound of the instrument are also different. Cristofori included just one on his instruments – a pair of stop knobs to shift the keyboard laterally, thereby causing the hammer to hit only one string, the precursor of the modern *una corda* and probably a legacy from Italian harpsichords which often had two registers operated by means of stops. Silbermann included two tone-modifying devices, neither of which was the *una corda*. One was a stop knob which operated a mechanism to introduce small pieces of ivory between the hammers and the strings, producing a harpsichord-like sound. The other was a stop which was used to raise the dampers from the strings – the precursor of the modern damper or sustaining pedal.

According to Agricola, Silbermann's later pianos were approved by J. S. Bach, whose visit to Frederick the Great's court in 1747 was also reported in a contemporary newspaper. The King evidently

went at Bach's entrance to the so-called forte and piano, condescending also to play, in person and without any preparation, a theme to be executed by

Capellmeister Bach in a fugue. This was done so happily by the aforementioned Capellmeister that not only His Majesty was pleased to show his satisfaction thereat, but also all those present were seized with astonishment.²¹

Further evidence of Bach's approval is his signature on a voucher for the sale of one of Silbermann's pianos to Count Branitzky of Poland dated 9 May 1749.²² Despite Bach's fascination with the piano, however, the instrument cannot have been of any significance for his keyboard music written before the 1740s – Silbermann's improved pianos were not made before then.

By the middle of the eighteenth century German pianos were being made in forms other than the conventional grand. The upright grand came to be associated with northern European makers, especially Christian Ernst Friederici, although a similar instrument by the southern European maker Domenico del Mela (1683–c.1760?), of 1739, survives. In 1745 Friederici published an engraving of one of his upright grands and at least one, possibly more, of his is still in existence.²³ Friederici is also credited with the invention of the square piano, which was being made in Germany around the middle of the eighteenth century.²⁴ Square pianos were much smaller and cheaper than either the conventional or upright grand, and were ultimately to become extremely popular in the home, but in mid-eighteenth-century Germany they had a formidable rival in the clavichord, which keyboard players continued to use until at least the end of the century.

Much of what happened to the development of the piano in German-speaking lands in the third quarter of the eighteenth century is shrouded in uncertainty. One of the most important makers during this time was evidently Johann Heinrich Silbermann (1727–99; Gottfried's nephew) in Strasbourg, some of whose pianos from the 1770s survive.²⁵ His instruments share many features of those made by his uncle, Gottfried Silbermann: pianos by both makers have transposing devices which are operated by moving the keyboard laterally and the actions of both makers are similar, even to the extent of having hammers made from rolled parchment covered with leather (rather than wood and leather), as on two of Cristofori's pianos. But apart from these instruments, the absence of other grands as well as the lack of detail in contemporary literature, make it impossible to describe how, when and indeed if any developments took place. One thing at least is clear, however, the piano did not immediately take the place of either the clavichord or the harpsichord in the affections of keyboard players. On the contrary, the piano seems to have been regarded as just one possibility among others. Many sources could be quoted to illustrate this point. One of the earliest, and probably the best known, is Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–88), who wrote in 1753:



Figure 1.3 Clavichord by Christian Gotthelf Hoffmann, Ronneburg, 1784.

something remains to be said about keyboard instruments. Of the many kinds, some of which remain little known because of defects, others because they are not yet in general use, there are two which have been most widely acclaimed, the harpsichord and the clavichord. The former is used in ensembles, the latter alone. The more recent pianoforte, when it is sturdy and well built, has many fine qualities, although its touch must be carefully worked out . . . It sounds well by itself and in small ensembles. Yet, I hold that a good clavichord, except for its weaker tone, shares equally in the attractiveness of the pianoforte and in addition features the vibrato and *portato* which I produce by means of added pressure after each stroke. It is at the clavichord that a keyboardist may be most exactly evaluated.²⁶

C. P. E. Bach must have written this after several years' experience of Silbermann's pianos at Frederick the Great's court. Further evidence for the limited progress of the piano in the region comes from Jacob Adlung, who spent all of his adult life in Erfurt, not far from Gera, where Friederici worked, and even closer to Rudolstadt, where Silbermann had sent a piano in the early or mid 1740s. In 1758 Adlung wrote that he had not yet



Figure 1.4a Square piano by Zumpe, London, 1766.



Figure 1.4b Detail of Zumpe piano showing (inside the case, to the left) the sustaining handstop which raises the bass dampers from the strings, the small, leather-covered hammers and (at the top of the photograph) the wooden levers on which the dampers are mounted.

seen a piano, although he was aware that the instrument was known in a number of places, and he knew of Friederici.²⁷

The slow progress of the piano is underlined by Charles Burney's account of his journey to Germany and Austria in 1772 which reveals much concerning keyboard history and performance. Over a period of several months he heard many keyboard players, both in public and in private, but there are relatively few accounts of performances on the piano. Only harpsichords and harpsichordists are mentioned in his account of Coblenz and Frankfurt. In Ludwigsberg Burney met Christian Friedrich Schubart (1739–91) who 'played on the clavichord, with great delicacy and expression' and then later in the day 'played a great deal on the Harpsichord, Organ, Piano forte, and Clavichord'.²⁸ In Munich Burney heard several harpsichord performances, but none on the piano, and in Vienna, out of a total of some fifteen accounts of keyboard playing in public and in private, only one was on a piano: a 'child of eight or nine years old' played 'upon a small, and not good Piano forte'.²⁹ In Czaslau Burney heard clavichords and in Dresden a harpsichord, but it was only when he arrived in Berlin that he heard pianos again. Agricola 'received me very politely; and though he was indisposed, and had just been blooded, he obligingly sat down to a fine *piano forte*, which I was desirous of hearing and touched it in a truly great style'.³⁰ Of Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1721–83), however, Burney noted that

the harpsichord, which was his first, is likewise his best instrument . . . He played at my request upon a clavichord, during my visit, some of his *fugues* and church music . . . After this he had the complaisance to go with me to the house of Hildebrand, the best maker of harpsichords, and piano-fortes, in Berlin.³¹

The mention of Hildebrand as a piano maker is interesting, since it demonstrates that by this time other makers besides the Silbermanns and Friederici had set up in business. Indeed, a brief article published in 1769 reports that Johann Andreas Stein (1728–92), who was to become one of the most important late-eighteenth-century piano makers, had already been working to improve the piano for the previous ten years.³² Stein had worked with the Strasbourg Silbermanns in 1748 and 1749 and is usually associated with the so-called 'Viennese' action (see chapter 2).

England

The early history of the piano in England is sketchy. According to Charles Burney 'The first [piano] that was brought to England was made by an

English monk at Rome, Father Wood, for an English friend (the late Samuel Crisp . . .).³³ Crisp spent some time in Italy in the late 1730s and it seems likely that Father Wood, of whom nothing is known, made a copy of a Cristofori-type piano. The action of Wood's piano cannot have been very sophisticated since 'the touch and mechanism were so imperfect that nothing quick could be executed upon it, yet the dead march in Saul, and other solemn and pathetic strains, when executed with taste and feeling by a master a little accustomed to the touch, excited equal wonder and delight to the hearers'.³⁴ Burney relates how Crisp sold the piano to Fulke Greville for 100 guineas and elsewhere describes how he became accustomed to the touch of the instrument during a prolonged stay in Greville's house, which must have been in the late 1740s.³⁵ Again, according to Burney, this piano remained unique in England 'till Plenius . . . made a piano-forte in imitation of that of Mr. Greville. Of this instrument the touch was better, but the tone very much inferior'.³⁶ Roger Plenius (1696–1774) came to England having worked for some time in Amsterdam. He was in London by 1741 and the records of his bankruptcy in 1756 show that in December 1741 he borrowed £1100, presumably to set up in business. After making his copy of Greville's piano Plenius evidently asked Burney to demonstrate it in public, but Burney declined because 'I had other employmt^s w^{ch} I liked better than that of a shew-man'.³⁷ Presumably this discussion took place after Burney returned to London from Greville's estate and before he went to live in Kings Lynn, that is, in the years 1749–51, or after Burney again returned to London in 1760.

Meanwhile an English cleric, William Mason journeyed to Hanover where he purchased a combination piano/harpsichord. On 27 June 1755 he wrote to his friend Thomas Gray: 'Oh, Mr Gray! I bought at Hamburg such a pianoforte, and so cheap! It is a harpsichord too of two unisons, and the jacks serve as mutes when the pianoforte stop is played, by the cleverest mechanism imaginable'.³⁸ Unfortunately, no details of this instrument survive.

In 1763 Frederic Neubauer advertised 'harpsichords, piano-fortes, lyrachords and claffichords' for sale in London.³⁹ No records survive to show whether or not he sold any instruments, but the mention of pianos in the same advertisement as lyrachords possibly suggests the work of Plenius: the lyrachord was a peculiar invention of his, and he had probably made a piano by this time.

From 1766 there is incontrovertible evidence of piano making in London in the form of some existing square pianos by the German *émigré* Johann Christoph Zumpe (*fl.* 1735–83), who had settled in London in about 1760 (Figs. 1.4a and 1.4b). Zumpe began to make pianos in the mid

1760s and within a very short time his instruments, as well as similar models by other makers such as Johann Pohlman (*fl.*1767–93), had become extremely popular. This was doubtless partly due to their price – half that of a single manual harpsichord and much less than a grand piano (see below) – as well as their touch sensitivity, though that was limited by today's standards. A nineteenth-century member of the Broadwood family summed up the characteristics of these instruments well:

They were in length about four feet, the hammers very lightly covered with a thin coat of leather; the strings were small, nearly the size of those used on the Harpsichord; the tones clear, what is now called thin and wiry; – his object being, seemingly, to approach the tones of the Harpsichord, to which the ear, at that period, was accustomed . . . Beyer, Buntebart and Schoene – all Germans – soon after this introduction by Zumpe, began making Pianos, and by enlarging them, produced more tone in their instruments.⁴⁰

Johann Christian Bach (1735–82) quickly took advantage of the new interest in square pianos. On 17 April 1766 the London *Public Advertiser* announced the publication of Bach's 'Six Sonatas for Piano Forte or Harpsichord' Op. 5, which were presumably intended for performance on Zumpe's instruments. Bach also seems to have become an agent for Zumpe: on 4 July 1768 his bank account at Drummond's shows a payment of £50 to Zumpe (enough, probably for three pianos – see the prices quoted below) and Bach helped Madame Brillon in Paris to acquire an English piano sometime before Burney visited her in 1770.⁴¹

The grand piano took rather longer than the square to come into popular use in England. Americus Backers (*fl.*1763–78) was the first maker of significance. He probably began to make grands in the late 1760s, and an instrument of his dated 1772 still exists (Fig. 1.5).⁴² By the time Backers made this instrument he had refined the action to the extent that other makers of English grands such as John Broadwood (1732–1812) copied its essential details. The 1772 Backers is bichord throughout (unlike some of his later pianos – see Burney's letter below) and has the two pedals that were to be standard on English grand pianos thereafter; a damper or sustaining pedal and a *una corda* pedal. Backers appears to have made about sixty pianos before his death in January 1778 and for most of this time he seems to have been the only maker of grand pianos in London. One of his instruments was probably rented by J. C. Bach, who made a payment of ten guineas to Backers on 17 February 1773. Backers also earned Burney's respect, judging from the latter's comments which also sum up the state of the English piano industry in 1774. Burney wrote to Thomas Twining on 21 January:



Figure 1.5 Grand piano by Americus Backers, London, 1772.

[Ba]ckers makes the best Piano Fortes, but they come to 60 or 70 £, with 3 unisons – & of the Harpsichord size – Put *them* out of the question, & I think Pohlman the best maker of the small sort, by far. Z[u]mpe WAS the best, but he has given up the business. – Pohlmann then for 16 or 18 Guineas makes charming little instruments, sweet & even in Tone, & capable of great variety of piano & forte, between the two extremes of pianissimo & fort^{mo}. Those for 16 Gn^s only go to double G, without a double G[#]; but for the 2 Gn^s more he has made me two or three with an octave to double F & F[#] with a double G[#].⁴³

The piano was adopted for public performance relatively quickly in England. The first recorded occasion was 16 May 1767, when Charles Dibden (1745–1814) accompanied Miss Brickler in a ‘favourite Song from Judith . . . on a new instrument called piano-forte’ at Covent Garden.⁴⁴ The first solo performance seems to have been a piano concerto played by James Hook (1746–1827) on 7 April 1768, possibly on a Backers grand.⁴⁵ Within just a few years, most of the prominent keyboard players in London were performing in public on the piano. There were notable exceptions, however. Ironically one was Muzio Clementi (1752–1832), the so-called ‘father of the pianoforte’. Despite the fact that his publications of the 1770s all stipulate the piano or harpsichord on their title pages, six out of seven public performances that he gave in the period 1775–80, and for which it is possible to identify the keyboard instrument, were given on the harpsichord.⁴⁶

The piano may have featured relatively early in professional concerts in London. In a domestic setting, however, and outside of the capital, the harpsichord persisted much longer. This is illustrated in the number of harpsichords still made in the 1770s and 1780s by firms such as Broadwood (see also chapter 2). Some insight into domestic music making is also to be found in the account books of Thomas Green, a keyboard tuner in Hertford: although he tuned a piano as early as 1769, he continued to tune and purchase harpsichords right up to the end of his career in 1790.⁴⁷

France

Apart from some drawings of hammer actions submitted to the Académie Royale in Paris in 1716 by Jean Marius, the first reference to a piano in France is an advertisement dated 20 September 1759 which describes in some detail the ‘newly-invented harpsichord called *piano et forte*’.⁴⁸ Nine months previously, the keyboard player Johann Gottfried Eckard (1735–1809) had arrived in Paris with Johann Andreas Stein, both having visited the Silbermann workshop in Strasbourg *en route*. Perhaps Eckard, who stayed in Paris, had begun to act as Silbermann’s agent. Whether or not this was so, there is clear evidence that Silbermann’s pianos became known in Paris in the 1760s. An advertisement for one of his pianos, with transposing device, appeared in the *Avant Coureur* in April 1761. In 1769 an article in Hiller’s *Nachrichten* reported that ‘Mr. Daquin . . . organist at Notre Dame’ had a Silbermann piano which he compared with his harpsichord: ‘the harpsichord is the bread, and the fortepiano a delicate dish, of which one will soon be sick’.⁴⁹ Later eighteenth-century dictionary

articles also relate how Silbermann's pianos were especially well known in France.

Two grand pianos of the 1770s by J. H. Silbermann survive, and it was probably for this type of instrument that Eckard published the first music for the piano in France – his Op. 1 Sonatas, which were advertised in the French press on 28 April 1763. The title page mentions only the harpsichord but an explanatory note inside mentions the possibility of harpsichord, piano or clavichord. His Op. 2 was advertised for harpsichord or piano in the following year. By this time, in addition to Silbermann's imported instruments, there is evidence of grands being produced in Paris by local makers: an inventory detailing the belongings of Claude-Bénigne Balbastre's (1727–99) wife, of 1763, mentions a 'clavecin with hammers' by François-Etienne Blanchet (c.1730–66),⁵⁰ in whose workshop was found a similar, but unnamed, instrument in 1766.⁵¹ Blanchet's work was continued by Pascal Taskin (1723–93), who was making grand pianos at least as early as the mid 1770s, and some of whose pianos survive.⁵² Other Parisian makers followed, such as Jacques Goermans (1740–89).⁵³

Makers of square pianos in London quickly made inroads into the Parisian market: J. C. Bach acted as an agent for Zumpe in the sale of at least one square piano (see above, p. 17) and we know from Burney that Zumpe himself had been in Paris in 1770.⁵⁴ Burney himself advised Diderot on the cost of a Zumpe square which was quoted at the apparently inflated price of twenty-eight guineas.⁵⁵ The number of imports from England at this time can be judged from the comments in the French press. The *Avant Coureur* of 2 April 1770 reported a performance on a new piano designed by Virbès, describing the instrument as 'in the shape of those from England'. The same newspaper printed a poem entitled 'L'Arrivée du forte piano' ('The arrival of the forte piano') which read:

What, my dear friend, you come to me from England?

Alas! How can we declare war on her? ⁵⁶

In 1773 the French music publisher Cousineau announced that he had 'several excellent English pianos' for sale,⁵⁷ and a number of later sources made it clear that a large proportion of pianos sold in France in the 1770s and 1780s came from England.

Far from attempting to resist this trend, some French keyboard makers themselves imported English square pianos. In 1777 Pascal Taskin evidently owed money – sufficient for two square pianos – to Frederick Beck (fl.1756–98) in London,⁵⁸ and in 1784 the same maker ordered four more pianos from Broadwood.⁵⁹ Such was the popularity of English squares that by the time of the Revolution the vast majority of pianos owned by

the nobility were made by Zumpe, his successor Schoene and others such as Beck and Pohlman.⁶⁰ In the face of this flood of imports a number of French makers began to produce copies of English square pianos. The first appears to have been Johann Kilian Mercken (1743–1819) – a 1770 piano of his survives. Mercken was followed by several other Parisian makers, one of whom was Sebastian Erard (1752–1831), whose firm was to become very influential in the subsequent history of the piano (see chapters 2 and 3).

The impression gained from a study of the introduction of the piano into France is that square pianos became very popular as domestic instruments, presumably on account of their size and low cost, while grand pianos took much longer to be preferred over harpsichords. Perhaps this is not surprising in view of the magnificence of many mid-eighteenth-century French harpsichords which still survive. Certainly the French were strongly attached to the harpsichord as we have seen from Daquin's remarks, as well as comments such as those by Voltaire, who considered the piano to be a tinker's instrument compared with the harpsichord.⁶¹ It is unsurprising therefore that the piano only gradually came to be preferred in public performance. Despite the fact that a piano was first heard in public in Paris as early as 1768, the harpsichord still featured on more occasions than the piano a decade later at the Concert Spirituel. From 1780 onwards, however, the piano was used as the main keyboard instrument.