

release so as to allow the string to vibrate freely. Various claims have been made for the invention. It was the opinion of the late A. J. Hipkins—than whom no greater authority on the history of the pianoforte ever lived—that it must be credited to Bartolomeo Cristofori, an Italian harpsichord maker, and the date of 1709 is assigned to the invention.

Considering that the balanced hammer device meant all the difference between formal and artistically rendered music, it seems strange that the invention did not become immediately popular and widespread. Yet this was not so. Frederici introduced it into Austria in 1758, Zumpe into England in 1760, and Erard into France in 1777; but the principle was the right one. As time went on, composers and players appreciated this invention; makers vied with each other in perfecting the hammer mechanism and making it obedient to the fingers of the players. Then with a new instrument of greatly extended compass new music arose; the old methods of plucking the string, or striking it a feeble blow with a little metal tangent, fell into desuetude. Little by little the sensitiveness, the tone, and the sustaining effect of the pianoforte grew, and now we have acquired the splendid instrument of to-day, powerful, pure in tone, responsive to the touch, capable of perfect accent, and of as much refinement of expression as can be obtained from a complete orchestra of skilled instrumental players.

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