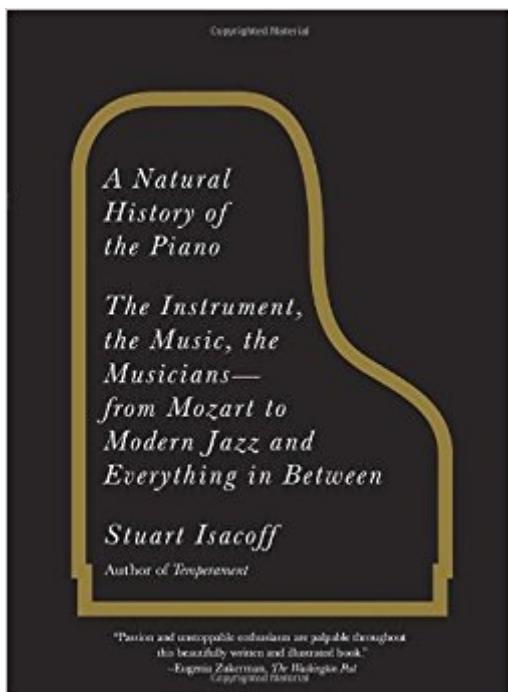


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# A Natural History Of The Piano: The Instrument, The Music, The Musicians--from Mozart To Modern Jazz And Everything In Between



## **Synopsis**

A fascinating celebration of the piano, including tales of its masters from Mozart and Beethoven to Oscar Peterson and Jerry Lee Lewis, told with the expertise of composer and author of *Temperament*, Stuart Isacoff. This history takes us back to the piano's humble genesis as a simple keyboard, and shows how everyone from Ferdinando de' Medici to Herbie Hancock affected its evolution of sound and influence in popular music. Presenting the instrument that has been at the core of musical development over the centuries in all its beauty and complexity, this explores the piano's capabilities and the range of emotional expression it conveys in different artists' hands. *A Natural History of the Piano* is fast-paced and intriguing, with beautiful illustrations and photos, a must-read for music lovers and pianists of every level.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Isacoff's, "A Natural History of the Piano," is an extraordinarily well researched and well written tribute to the instrument that has enriched Western Civilization for the past 300 years. No page has been left unturned (literally) as Isacoff weaves a poetic dance with his own flowing prose, reinforced by hundreds of resources and quotes from renowned artists, relative to the context. I thank him for introducing me to artists that, once glorious stars, have all but vanished in the kaleidoscope of time: Hazel Scott (check her out on youtube!), Art Tatum, Emil Giles, Tatiana Nikolayeva, Menahem Pressler (still alive and well at age 88), to name only a few. If it were not for this book I would never have heard of them. Isacoff tells us that Mozart didn't set eyes on a piano until he was in his

mid-twenties (which bore only a remote resemblance to the piano of today) and that he played on a piano that had a pedal-board, much like the modern organ, whose soft, loud and sustain pedals were operated by the knees pushing appropriate levers. "For the first performance of the D minor Piano Concerto, Mozart played not with two limbs but with four!" Unfathomable! As well as many comments by prominent performing artists, Isacoff inserts several "asides" into each chapter to educate the reader, ie: the first piano was a five-octave instrument, in the late 1700's it grew into a six and a half octave piano, by the end of Beethoven's life it was seven octaves. (The modern piano extends that by three notes.) We are told the weight of the cast iron plate (300 lbs. Approx) the string tension it holds, (20 tons), the patents that marked its evolution and the makers responsible for the patents: Erard, Pleyel, Broadwood, Chickering, Steinway, etc.

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