What Is The Difference Between a Grand Piano and an Upright Piano

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Other than aesthetics, a grand piano is larger and generally a nicer piece of furniture, there are two other very important differences: Touch and Tone.

Touch for a performer is the most important. Both beginners and professionals will appreciate a good touch. In a grand piano, our old friend gravity is taken full advantage of to “reload” the note for the next strike. This allows for a much simpler mechanism, which translates to a more direct connection between the player’s finger and the sound produced. The mechanism, called the action, is very different between a grand and an upright. In an upright piano, there are extra springs, levers and cotton straps as well as silk cords used to help a hammer “reload”. This more complicated action results in a less direct connection between the fingertip and the resultant sound. It is also much easier to control the dampers of a grand piano as once again, you are working against gravity. In an upright piano, the dampers are held in place against the strings by means of a spring. While gravity’s strength can be relied on to be consistent, springs can differ in strength from one to another or as they age.

The Tone of a grand piano will always be better than that of an upright piano, all other things being equal. The reason for this is that there are zero obstructions between your ear and BOTH sides of the vibrating soundboard. In an upright piano, the soundboard is located at the back of the piano, so the sound bounces between the soundboard and the wall the piano is placed against. In the front, the sound bounces around inside the piano cavity (between the soundboard and the lower kick board). This produces a more muffled or less live sound than what is produced from a grand piano soundboard.

To sum up: a grand piano will offer more control of the music as well as a richer palette of sounds (or tones) to use.


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