

"Your Money's Worth"
by Sylvia Porter

Hints on Buying That Used Piano

WASHINGTON - "Good used pianos are extremely hard to find, even pianos that are worth reconditioning or rebuilding at considerable cost," says Carl D. Schmeckel, a professional piano technician - rebuilder with a background of 45 years in music and author of the just published "piano Owners Guide."

The old uprights, Schmeckel adds "are long overdue at the piano graveyard. Only a very few if the older grand pianos (the high-quality brands) are even worth the cost of resurrection."

These may be overly harsh judgement and may be deeply discouraging to the countless hundreds of thousands of you eagerly seeking a good used piano at a tolerable price - but the blunt fact is that piano shops across the land today cannot make even a slight dent in the demand for good used instruments.

The fact also is that if you buy a used piano from another source, you may be getting an instrument passed from owner to owner countless times over the years, subjected to unbelievable neglect and not much more than plain junk.

Here are other points on used instruments Schmeckel makes in his guide, the first book ever written to help us - piano buyers and owners.

- **On old Upright Pianos:** at least 80% of these neglected instruments are not worth the cost of moving them. Another 18% may be worthy of restoration at considerable cost - beginning at about \$200.00. Probably no more than 2% have had proper service one of these are negligible.

- **On old Grand Pianos:** most available used grands - that have ever been rebuilt - are hopeless wrecks, and this includes many famous brand-name pianos. Your chances of acquiring a usable or repairable old grand are little better than your odds of getting a decent old upright.

- **On small vertical Pianos:** at least 90% of the small used vertical pianos available on the used piano markets today are the remnants of low-priced "junk" pianos sold new a decade or so ago.

Thus, the age of such a piano is meaningless. Most of the small verticals, in Schmeckel's opinion, were "junk when they were first manufactured and service neglect has only finished the job."

In sum, Schmeckel offers these basic money-saving guides to you on purchase and maintenance.-

***Facts to consider when buying a used piano privately:
*If you don't know pianos, know your piano store!
*Buying a used piano privately can be dangerous and costly.**

What appears to be a rare bargain may prove to be a real liability. unless you are a piano expert, your best assurance is to rely on the judgement of the most experienced dealer in your area with a proven record of integrity and fair dealing. it is unwise to pick up an old piano privately "to get started with". a poor piano offers discouragement to the child and is at best, a questionable investment for the parent.

Here are just a few of the many danger areas encountered when a non- expert piano buyer buys a piano privately:

1. Plate - may be cracked or broken which cripples the piano musically and renders it useless.
2. Strings - bass strings may be "tired and tubby", totally devoid of tone.
3. Sounding board - may be cracked or worse yet, may have lost crown to become totally deficient.
4. Ribs - may be broken or pulled away from soundboard.
5. Bridges - may have lost proper bearing, be broken, split or cracked, necessitating a major expense.
6. Tuning pins - may be loose, may have been previously "doped", may require oversized pins, may require new pin block. avoid, like the plague, any piano with pins showing evidence of having been pounded.
7. Pin plank - may be split and is very costly to repair. since this is concealed, experienced judgement is required.
8. Actions - may be literally worn out rendering piano useless. if re-bushing is required. this is very costly. a complete regulation requires much time of an expert and is expensive if properly done.
9. Hammers - may be worn out or improperly filed so as to require replacement - another costly repair.
10. Trap work - the internal leverage controls of the expression pedals may need complete overhauling.
11. Refinishing - many people learn to their sorrow that refinishing a piano is not a home do-it-yourself project; that it requires much hard work and know how best left to a skilled craftsman. good refinishing work is expensive.
12. Infestation - Damage caused from Termites, Roaches, etc. may also infest other areas of your home.