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Dear Piano Teacher

Just about the time I was sending out my last newsletter, I became aware of the new *Acoustic and Digital Piano Buyer*. This publication is a guide for the consumer that is now **available free online** at <http://www.pianobuyer.com>, as well as being available for purchase in a paper format.

This publication comes from Larry Fine, who has published several editions of *The Piano Book*. This book, which has gone through several editions, together with annual supplements, has served as a standard reference for piano buyers for two decades. The new online product now makes much of the information from the original books easily available to a wider audience. **I heartily recommend it to you and to the families of the students whom you teach.**

There are three articles in the current online issue that I think are particularly helpful. One is “Piano Buying Basics”. The others are “The New-Piano Market Today” and “Buying a Used Piano”. These articles highlight an interesting situation that faces us as players, teachers and technicians.

Here's the picture:

- **Good new and used pianos are available if a consumer knows how to look for them.**
 - New pianos, particularly mid-range consumer-grade pianos, are being described as “the best they've ever been” in terms of quality.
 - A substantial number of not-too-old, well-built instruments are present in our communities, many of them not being used. A lot of Asian pianos have appeared in North America since the early 1960's. Some of these are of very good quality, others are of more modest quality. Most are well designed, but often require some set-up and regulation before they will best serve the student.
- **The majority of the most visible used pianos offered for sale are poor choices for students.**
 - Most high-quality full-size upright pianos were built before the stock-market crash of 1929 and have accumulated **substantial wear and tear**. Reconditioning or rebuilding can restore many of these instruments to a high level of performance, but most shoppers purchasing an older piano have no intention of investing anything significant in it other than tuning, obvious repairs, and perhaps refinishing.
 - Pianos built from about 1930 to the early 1960's are likewise aging, and in increasing need of reconditioning.
 - From the 1960's onward, North American builders of consumer-grade pianos cheapened

their products to try to compete on price with the Asian imports. Ultimately they did not succeed, and disappeared from the marketplace. But as a result of their strategy, we find high numbers of pianos in Canadian homes that were not built with a firm commitment to quality, and that are rather disappointing musically.

I invite you to read these articles for yourself, and to consider with me how we might best counsel those families we are serving in regard to the instruments on which their children will practice.

As a piano technician, **I think a lot about what I can do to help** ensure that student have the best chance of practicing on instruments that will **reward them for the time and effort they are investing**. Accordingly, I am pursuing the following goals:

- To provide quality piano tuning, and to find ways to encourage customers to invest in related work that will make their instruments more musically responsive.
- To help families with children in lessons consider the replacement of their piano, and to make appropriate referrals, when their instrument is not serving them well, and when reconditioning and rebuilding are not the wisest options.
- To provide informational resources to music educators that will embolden them and help them raise awareness of the importance and the possibility of playing well-maintained, musically responsive instruments.
- To make available thoroughly reconditioned pianos on an affordable rental basis. My hope is that if families can experience first-hand what it means to work with an instrument that actually delivers what it ought to musically, they might have the courage to take the plunge and invest in the purchase of a quality instrument that will serve them well in the long term.

I would be very interested in receiving feedback from you in regard to this fourth and newest goal. Does this strike you as something that would be helpful to you and to the families you serve as a teacher? Please consider dropping me an email or giving me a call to tell me what you think.

It is my pleasure to serve you through these information pieces I am sending you from time to time. I trust you are finding them encouraging and helpful. I am archiving all of these documents on my website, and am more than happy to make paper copies available to you at no cost in whatever quantity might be useful to you and your students.

Have a great spring!

Sincerely,

Floyd Gadd
Piano Technicians Guild Associate Member