

*Piano* **BUYER'S GUIDE**



STEINWAY & SONS



## *The Steinway & Sons* PIANO BUYER'S GUIDE

Each STEINWAY & SONS piano is handcrafted, one at a time, taking almost a full year to complete. We are proud to say that many of our artisans who handcraft today's pianos are second and third generation STEINWAY craftspeople, carrying forth a STEINWAY family tradition.

It is easy to find a piano that costs less than a STEINWAY, but it is impossible to find a piano that will offer more heritage, more renown or a greater return on investment. For more than 165 years, authentic STEINWAYS have had an unrivaled record within the piano world for maintaining their value. Over a

## *Steinway & Sons* IS HERE TO HELP

A well-constructed piano will add beauty and elegance to your home and will provide a lifetime of musical enjoyment. It is the perfect instrument for beginning music students as well as seasoned musicians. But we understand that the process of selecting the right instrument may be challenging. This special Piano Buyer's Guide will help you assess your desires, fine tune your preferences, and select the perfect piano for your specific needs.

In the world of musical instruments, there are pianos – and there is STEINWAY & SONS. You get more out of a STEINWAY piano, because a great deal

span of decades, properly cared-for STEINWAYS regularly increase in value – often well beyond the original purchase price.

There are many pianos that you and your family will grow out of. But there is only one that you'll grow into — a STEINWAY & SONS piano.

The piano has captured the hearts of artists and music lovers for more than three centuries, and now it's captured yours. Your decision to bring a piano into your home and into your heart is a decision to embrace the joys of music, heritage, artistry, and tradition.

more goes into it. For more than 160 years, STEINWAY & SONS pianos have been the instrument of choice for more than 95% of the world's performing artists, and we've built our name and our reputation on a commitment to one simple word: quality. Our pianos are far more than instruments – they're investment-worthy, exquisitely-crafted family heirlooms to be treasured and enjoyed for generations to come. We'd like to share with you a bit of the knowledge we've amassed about what makes a piano work well, and what makes a piano play well. Armed with this information, we think you'll find the piano that speaks directly to you.



“A STEINWAY is a STEINWAY,  
and there is *nothing like it in the world.*”

**ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN**



*The Magic* OF MUSIC

*Sit Down, Close Your Eyes,* **TOUCH THE KEYS, AND LISTEN.**

It's simply magic, isn't it? Actually, it isn't. The piano works through a complex but highly mechanical process developed in the early 1700s and perfected over the last three hundred years. Simply put, when a player's finger strikes a key, it sets the key action (a series of levers connected to a felt hammer) in motion.

The hammer strikes a metal string, or a combination of strings, which causes them to vibrate. These vibrations are transmitted from the strings to the

soundboard through bass and treble bridges, and the soundboard converts the vibrations into what is known as piano tone. It also amplifies the notes so that they can be heard.

There are over 12,000 specific parts in the typical piano, all of which must function with ease and accuracy to produce the music we love.

*“Build the best piano possible.”*

**HENRY ENGELHARD STEINWAY, 1797 - 1871**



STEINWAY & SONS

“The STEINWAY piano is *always my great friend,*  
*and my companion* in my music and my work.”

**ALICIA DE LARROCHA**



## *How a Piano* **WORKS**

### *The* **CASE**

A piano's outside cabinetry is known as the case, and it is often the piano's most visual feature. A high-quality case adds beauty, strength, and support to the piano. The single most important piece of the case is the rim, which in the finest pianos like a STEINWAY is made of multiple laminations of hard rock maple. Strong beams or braces in the bottom of a grand piano or in the backs of an upright piano provide additional support.

### *The* **PLATE**

Inside the piano, a cast-iron plate provides the strength to support the string tension. The plate is often called the "backbone" of the piano, and indeed, it must be exceptionally strong in order to withstand over 20 tons of string tension. The cast-iron plate is installed in the case above the soundboard and is often painted gold, polished, and decorated with the logo of the manufacturer.

STEINWAY pianos are well known for the strength and beauty of their cases. The patented process used to make a STEINWAY rim was a major technical innovation invented by STEINWAY & SONS in 1878; as it did then, this process today yields a rim of superior strength and tonal quality. For braces and posts, STEINWAY pianos use spruce, a wood known for its superior tensile strength.

In grand pianos, the plate, soundboard, and strings are horizontal, while in upright pianos, these three components are vertical.

STEINWAY fabricates plates in its own foundry to exacting standards using a sand-casting method.



## *The* **SOUNDBOARD**

The soundboard converts the vibration of the piano strings into audible tones. Manufacturers of fine pianos craft the soundboard from high-quality solid spruce, which allows the soundboard to transmit and amplify sound better than lesser woods.

The soundboard has a curved crown to provide the proper pressure against the strings for maximum sound projection. Ribs are placed on the underside of the soundboard in order to maintain the crown, distribute tone along the soundboard, and provide strength.

STEINWAY soundboards are made of the highest-grade close-grained, quarter-sawn Sitka spruce from British Columbia and Alaska. This wood is

## *Bridges*

Soundboard bridges are glued to the top side of the soundboard to transmit the vibrations from the strings to the soundboard. The better the quality of the materials, the better the tone.

STEINWAY & SONS bridges are constructed of vertically-laminated hard rock maple with a solid maple cap. They are bent to a specifically-defined contour

chosen for its superb acoustic qualities and is hand-selected to be free from defects. Individual pieces of spruce are matched to produce soundboards of uniform color and tonal quality.

The soundboards found in STEINWAY pianos are double-crowned and feature STEINWAY & SONS' exclusive Diaphragmatic design. The Diaphragmatic Soundboard, patented in 1936, features a soundboard that tapers in thickness from the center to the edges. This design permits freedom of movement and creates a richer, longer lasting tonal response.

to assure optimum sound transmission. The bridge is measured for specific height requirements for each individual piano and is hand-notched for precise individual string bearing. The bridges are then glued and doweled into the ribs to assure the structural integrity of the entire soundboard.



## *Strings*

A modern grand piano has between 230 and 264 strings – between one and three strings for each of the 88 notes. Most piano makers use three strings for tenor and treble sections and use single or double strings for the bass keys. The bass strings are routinely “overstrung” above the treble strings to provide more length and better tonal quality. On December 20, 1859, Patent #26532 was granted to HENRY STEINWAY JR. for the Overstrung Plate, whereby the longer bass strings were drawn over sections of other strings.

Treble strings are made of high-quality steel, and bass strings are made of copper-wound steel strings. The strings are all uniformly spaced with one end coiled around the tuning pins, which in turn are inserted in a laminated wooden block called the pinblock or wrestplank.

The tuning pins keep the strings taut and are held in place by friction. When

aligned properly, the hammers will strike only the strings for the note intended, not the strings of neighboring keys.

A number of factors can affect the physical properties of the strings, including humidity, sunlight and temperature, and even type and frequency of playing. The strings found on a STEINWAY piano are made of the best high-tensile steel. The bass strings are wound with pure copper, and the tuning pins are premium steel with rust resistant nickel-plating.

STEINWAY also employs front and rear duplex scales. STEINWAY’S unique relationship with Hermann von Helmholtz (the first physicist to study string vibrations) led to the development and STEINWAY patent in 1872 of front and back aliquots, allowing the traditionally dead sections of strings to vibrate with other strings for a richer tone and longer sustain.

## *The WRESTPLANK/PINBLOCK*

The wrestplank (or pinblock) is a multi-laminated block of wood into which the tuning pins are inserted. Wrestplanks in the finest pianos are made of hard rock maple, and the tuning pins are force-fitted into the pinblock to maintain the piano strings under extreme tension. The quality of the wrestplank is also very important in keeping the piano in tune.

The STEINWAY Hexigrip wrestplank/pinblock, patented in 1963, is made from seven thick, quarter-sawn maple planks, with each layer aligned from 45 to 90 degrees from each other so the grains grip each tuning pin from all angles. This ensures that at least one layer has its grain directly in line with the stress acting on each pin. The result: a piano that is easier to precisely tune and that will stay in tune longer.





## *Keys and* **ACTION**

There are 88 keys on a modern piano – 52 white keys and 36 black keys (the chromatic notes) – spanning seven and one-third octaves. Piano keys are typically made of spruce with a polymer surface. Today's polymer key surfaces are more durable, do not yellow over time, and are easier to replace than their ivory predecessors.

Each of the keys on a piano transmits its movement to a small, felt-covered wooden hammer which strikes one, two, or three strings when the note is played. The hammers are evenly aligned and have the ability to reset quickly and repeat any note rapidly.

Dampers are felt-covered action parts that, when placed against the strings, dampen the vibration. There are fewer than 88 dampers on a piano because the notes in the high treble area of the piano do not need dampers, due to

their short length of sustain. The damper (or sustaining) pedal raises all of the dampers, which allows sound to continue even after the key is released.

In a grand piano, gravity assists the action. In an upright, springs return the hammer to its resting position. This difference typically allows a grand piano to repeat notes faster and more reliably than an upright. The keys of a STEINWAY & SONS piano are constructed of Bavarian spruce. The quarter-sawn maple action parts are mounted on a STEINWAY Metallic Action Frame, which consists of seamless brass tubes with rosette-shaped contours, force fitted with maple dowels and brass hangers to assure the stability of the regulation.

In 1936, STEINWAY & SONS designed the Accelerated Action (featured on the New York STEINWAY) in response to demands for a quicker responding action.

## *The* **PEDALS**

STEINWAY grand pianos have three pedals. The rightmost pedal is called the damper (or sustain) pedal and acts to sustain tone. The left pedal is called the *una corda* or “soft” pedal. When it is depressed, the keyboard action shifts slightly to the side, causing the hammers to strike the strings differently, thus softening the note. The middle, or *sostenuto* pedal, sustains a single note or group of notes without sustaining subsequent notes played. While a few

uprights (like the New York STEINWAY) have a true *sostenuto* pedal, the middle pedal on most upright pianos sustains the bass section by lifting the dampers off the bass strings only.

STEINWAY grand and upright pianos feature fully-functional *una corda*, *sostenuto*\* and damper pedals made of solid brass.

\* NOT AVAILABLE ON HAMBURG MADE UPRIGHTS.



“STEINWAY is *the only piano* on which the pianist can do  
*everything he wants and everything he dreams.*”

**VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY**

# *Selecting* A PIANO



## *Selecting a Piano* THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Your piano will make music and memories in your home for years and generations to come. And now that you understand the basic elements of a piano's

construction and operation, you're ready to make some final decisions about the instrument that's right for your space, for your abilities, for your dreams.

## *Grand* OR UPRIGHT

The size of the room where your piano will be placed is an important consideration. Sound quality and volume are directly related to the size of the piano's soundboard and the length of its strings. Therefore, the larger the piano, the better it will sound. But make no mistake: a high-quality upright is a better choice than a low-quality grand.

The major difference between an upright and a grand piano, other than looks and size, is the position of the soundboard. In a grand piano, the soundboard and strings are positioned horizontally; in an upright piano, they are positioned vertically. Thus, in a grand piano the action works with gravity and is more responsive than an upright.

STEINWAY'S upright pianos range from 43-52 inches high and take up about the same amount of floor space (5 feet in width, 2 feet in depth) regardless of height. An upright is a great choice where space is limited, but a piano that is too small for its space will look like an afterthought and will not fill the room with sound.

The Family of STEINWAY-Designed Pianos includes STEINWAY & SONS, BOSTON, and ESSEX brands. Each brand offers complete lines of grand and upright pianos able to meet any space and performance criteria. Whether you're looking for an upright piano for a smaller space or a grand piano to fill a larger space, there is a STEINWAY piano that is perfect for you.



## *Style* **AND FINISH**

Pianos are produced in a variety of styles to accommodate different tastes and décor. From a traditional ebony or mahogany finish – in either polished or satin – to an exotic wood or limited edition custom piano, the piano you choose will make a striking statement and will introduce elegance and artistry to a room like no other piece can.

## *Sound* **AND TONE**

Several factors play into the sound of a given piano, including size, quality of components and overall construction. Sound quality and volume are directly related to the size of the soundboard and the length of the strings. A larger soundboard will create a larger volume of sound, and longer strings will result in greatly enhanced tone – particularly in the bass section.

In addition, every piano has its own distinct “voice,” which is determined by the age of the piano, the condition of the hammers, and how the piano has been

## *Sensitivity* **AND TOUCH**

The touch of the piano is another measure of personal taste. Some players like a light action, while others prefer to feel more resistance when they press the keys. Be sure to play a variety of pianos and notice how the action of the piano keys feels when you play. Are the keys lively and responsive or stiff and sluggish?

While they may look very different on the outside, each STEINWAY piano represents the highest quality musical instrument in its category. You can choose a style that suits your décor and still be confident that it will perform to the exacting standards upheld by STEINWAY & SONS for more than 160 years.

prepared or maintained. Temperature and humidity will affect the sound of a piano, and the acoustics and furnishings of a room will also factor into the sound that the piano produces. For example, plush carpets, draperies, and upholstered furniture will tend to absorb sound, making the piano sound softer. Wood and tile floors tend to produce a brighter, more vibrant resonance.

A more responsive piano will allow for greater ease of playing and tonal expression. Remember, a qualified technician can often adjust the action to accommodate varying tastes.



## *Quality* OF CONSTRUCTION

Two pianos may look very similar but vary widely in price. Top quality manufacturers pride themselves on the quality of their craftsmanship and focus on the sourcing of their materials, knowing that the best materials will produce the best pianos. For instance, you'll want to look for a soundboard made from long-grain spruce as opposed to a laminated material.

A piano should be equally attractive inside and out, even to the layperson's eye. The finish should be free from nicks and marks and should be even in appearance.

The grains in the soundboard and veneer should be aligned both for aesthetic value and tonal quality. The plate should be polished and attractive, and every moving part should repeat its movement with ease and accuracy. The

lid, music desk and fallboard should move without undue exertion. In short, the piano should look like a magnificent piece of furniture and should respond like a precision instrument.

The mission of STEINWAY & SONS' founder HENRY E. STEINWAY was to build the best piano possible. The craftspeople of STEINWAY & SONS continue to uphold that mission to this day.

STEINWAY & SONS is committed to maintaining the talent, diligence and tradition of expert workmanship unique to the STEINWAY family of piano builders.

Only STEINWAY & SONS is relentless in its pursuit of perfection, and only STEINWAY can say that every one of its pianos is indeed a work of art.



## *When Considering* **A USED PIANO**

If properly maintained, a STEINWAY will last for many decades and provide musical enjoyment to multiple owners. Some older pianos have wonderful musical and aesthetic character and can be an excellent value for a discerning buyer.

When considering a used STEINWAY, be sure to work with an official STEINWAY dealer and insist on a warranty. If you are dealing with a private sale through an individual, have an experienced, certified piano technician review and evaluate the piano for possible shortcomings. The evaluation should provide a detailed report on the condition of the piano and its parts.

## *Choosing* **A DEALER**

It is said that if you don't know your jewels, know your jeweler. The same is true for pianos – it's always best to rely on a reputable dealer.

At STEINWAY & SONS, we select our piano dealers with the same care and attention to longevity that we put into our pianos. Authorized STEINWAY dealers are the leading piano retailers in their markets and are active supporters of music arts and education in their regions. They are held to high standards both by STEINWAY & SONS and their communities. Many STEINWAY dealers have been representing STEINWAY for generations.

If you are considering the purchase of a used or restored STEINWAY piano, we strongly recommend that you get written confirmation that every part used in the piano's restoration is a genuine STEINWAY part. Most STEINWAY dealers offer a range of used grand and upright pianos. In addition, STEINWAY & SONS operates a large restoration facility at its factory and provides factory-certified pre-owned pianos and vintage Heirloom Collection pianos, as alternatives to new pianos. Ask your local STEINWAY dealer for details. The dealer can also provide you with a list of certified piano technicians in your area. For more information on buying a used or restored STEINWAY piano, visit [www.usedsteinwaypiano.com](http://www.usedsteinwaypiano.com).

STEINWAY & SONS provides a comprehensive dealer training program through its William Steinway University, educating dealer salespeople and management staff in every aspect of STEINWAY representation, including sales, customer service, concert and artist activities, institutional sales, and technical service.

And then there's the STEINWAY Promise – assurance that the full purchase price of the BOSTON or ESSEX piano you select today can be applied as a credit toward a future purchase of a new STEINWAY grand piano.



*“I have long admired STEINWAY pianos  
for their *qualities of tone* clarity, pitch consistency,  
touch responsiveness and *superior craftsmanship.*”*

**BILLY JOEL**



*For Today* **AND TOMORROW**

## *Servicing* **YOUR PIANO**

Routine service is an important part of piano ownership. There are three basic steps in maintaining the sound of your piano: tuning, which brings the piano back to pitch; voicing, which affects the piano's tone; and regulation, the adjustment of the action mechanism which affects the touch of the piano.

Tuning and voicing are different aspects of adjusting the piano to its optimum standard of performance. Tuning is the adjustment of the piano's strings to the correct pitch. Voicing is the adjustment of the piano's tone or sound and

## *Tuning* **YOUR PIANO**

A piano on a showroom floor will have been tuned to international standards several times before it left the factory. Unfortunately, no matter how well a piano is tuned, atmospheric variations can bring it off pitch. Ideally, a piano should be located out of direct sunlight and away from heating and cooling ducts and should be kept in an environment where the relative humidity is between 40 and 60 percent.

With normal use and conditions, a piano should need only periodic tuning, perhaps twice a year. For reference, a concert piano is tuned before every

is done by softening or hardening the hammers and adjusting various parts of the piano's keyboard mechanism. Regardless of its original voicing, every piano will acquire a somewhat brighter tone with time as the hammer felts become compacted the more they are struck against the strings.

performance and a piano in a professional recording studio is tuned several times per week. Tuning is a craft practiced by professionals and, for best results, no one other than a trained technician should tune your piano. If you need a referral for a qualified piano technician in your area, contact your authorized STEINWAY dealer (visit [www.steinway.com/dealer](http://www.steinway.com/dealer) to find your dealer).





## *Voicing*

Some pianists prefer “bright” voicing, while others prefer a more mellow sound. Regardless of its original voicing, every piano will acquire a somewhat brighter tone over time. Under normal conditions, your piano should be voiced every two to three years. In the voicing process, the resiliency of the hammer felts is

## *Regulation*

Over a period of two to three years, the action of your piano will vary somewhat from the evenness established at the factory and will need regulation by a trained technician. The need for regulation is a reflection of the way that the piano is used. For reference, the action of a concert grand is regulated before

## *Finish/Care*

Your piano will likely be a showpiece in your home. Use a piece of clean cheesecloth — lightly dampened with plain water — to wipe away dust and fingerprints. Waxing the instrument is not recommended, as it eventually results in an unattractive build-up that must be professionally removed. The

## *Moving*

If you move your piano, either to a different location within the home or to an entirely different venue, use only professional piano movers who will have the equipment necessary to keep the instrument safe in travel. Grand pianos weigh

adjusted with special tools and then all notes are balanced so that the tone is uniform throughout the keyboard. This is a job requiring special skills and should be done only by a professional piano technician.

every performance. STEINWAY & SONS is deeply committed to the continuing education of piano technicians and provides experienced piano technicians with comprehensive training at the C. F. THEODORE STEINWAY Technical Academy.

piano keys, both black and white, should be cleaned with a lightly dampened cloth. Avoid getting moisture on the sides of the keys.

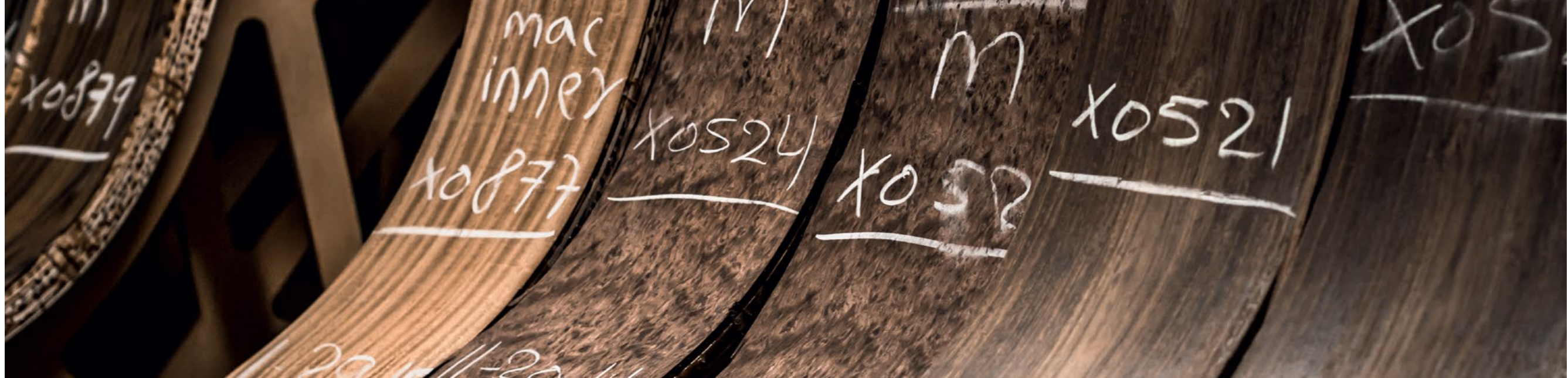
Interior cleaning by a professional should be arranged through the STEINWAY & SONS service department or an official STEINWAY dealer.

roughly 100 pounds per foot of length. Don't forget to have an experienced technician check and tune your piano after every move.



*“There is a constancy, not only with the house of STEINWAY,  
but with their beautiful pianos.”*

**VAN CLIBURN**



## *The Family* OF STEINWAY-DESIGNED PIANOS

Whether you are a concert pianist, composer, music educator, or simply a person who

finds music essential, there is a STEINWAY that will meet your individual preference.

### *Steinway* PIANO

Ebony grands and uprights, our most popular pianos.

STEINWAY Art Case pianos, designed in collaboration with notable artists.

The Limited Edition Collection, which commemorates both people and events in the history of the piano.

The Crown Jewel Collection, comprised of classic furniture styles and exotic veneers and finishes including East Indian Rosewood, Macassar Ebony, Santos Rosewood, Mahogany, Walnut, Kewazinga Bubinga, Figured Sapele, Dark Cherry, and African Pommele. In selecting these Crown Jewel Collection wood species, STEINWAY & SONS adheres to the environmental protection guidelines of the

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

The Legendary Collection, comprised of re-creations of one-of-a-kind pianos from STEINWAY's history. There have been three created thus far: The Alma-Tadema, designed with fine-art decorations by world-famous artist Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema in 1887; the Peace Piano, a re-creation of the piano originally designed for the U.S. Pavilion of the 1939 World's Fair; and the White House Piano, a replica of the piano that has graced the East Room of the White House since 1938.

### *Boston* PIANO

The Boston line, available in a wide variety of sizes and finishes, is unrivaled in its class and unmatched in value. Designed with the STEINWAY "Model A" wide-tail design to allow substantially more soundboard area than other pianos

of the same length, the BOSTON has a unique and powerful sound that has been impressing performers and audiences alike for over 20 years.

### *Essex* PIANO

In addition to the traditional styles and finishes, the STEINWAY-designed ESSEX piano line features beautiful, traditional furniture styles and finishes at a truly

exceptional price and value.



*“It takes two individualities, two beings for chemistry to happen.*

*Thank you for providing pianos that have personality and, even more importantly, soul.”*

**HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD**

*See* **THE DIFFERENCE**    *Hear* **THE DIFFERENCE**    *Feel* **THE DIFFERENCE**

Selecting a piano is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and deserves much consideration. You owe it to yourself to research your options and choose the very best piano you can afford. And you should always keep in mind that quality manufacturers build the highest quality products.

Since 1853, STEINWAY pianos have set the standard for sound, touch, and beauty. That is why STEINWAY pianos continue to be the overwhelming choice of pianists, composers, and performers around the world. The STEINWAY-designed

BOSTON piano joins STEINWAY as the exclusive choice of major music festivals, including Aspen, Tanglewood, Brevard, and Bowdoin, and in receiving rave reviews from performing artists, music conservatories, and piano educators worldwide. And the STEINWAY-designed ESSEX piano offers the budget-conscious consumer a high-level musical and aesthetic experience. If you're unsure about which sound you prefer, you can take comfort in the fact that most artists who play for a living choose pianos from the STEINWAY family.

STEINWAY. BEFORE IT MAKES A SOUND, IT MAKES A STATEMENT.



STEINWAY & SONS

We build our pianos to match the expectations  
*of the world's most demanding critics*  
— people who love music.



**NEW YORK**

STEINWAY & SONS • ONE STEINWAY PLACE, LONG ISLAND CITY, NY 11105 • 1.800.STEINWAY (1.800.783.4692)

**HAMBURG**

STEINWAY & SONS • RONDENBARG 10, D-22525 HAMBURG • +49.40.85 39 10

**WWW.STEINWAY.COM • WWW.STEINWAY.DE**