

What is special about this piano in a purely musical sense? What characteristics distinguish it from the same Steinway Model A (New York or Hamburg) made today? Please mention its cabinet and its particular scale.

Prior to 1900, anyone who wanted to hear symphonic music or grand opera – and did not live near a big, cosmopolitan city like Chicago, New York or Philadelphia—would have to travel by train or buggy for that experience. The scores of these major works, however, were often transcribed for piano (for four hands) so that appreciative audiences could at least hear these great works on the parlor grand. Those pianos (and the Steinway Model A we call “Carrie” is one) were designed specifically to be an instrument capable of bringing majestic symphonic and opera music into the home.

The grands created during this period had character and registrational color that complemented this music. Today’s piano makers have smoothed out those special orchestral tonal qualities. In addition, the nearly universal system of tuning referred to as “equal temperament” has further removed the key color to the point that the raised keys do not satisfy as either a sharp or a flat. Even the materials used in the older instruments, especially the piano castings, had identifiable tonal qualities not found in later instruments. New pianos, for instance, have very hard castings as compared to the old, which were very soft and produced a deep, rich resonance.

The ideal formula, we feel, is a soft casting and a hard rim (American hard-rock maple). Modern pianos are often luan mahogany. Carrie is ideal.

We call this piano Carrie because it once belonged to Janesville, Wisconsin native Carrie Jacobs Bond. It’s fair to say that Mrs. Bond was to early 20th century popular music what Carole King is today—her songs were widely known and performed.

The Model A restored here at Farley’s Restoration Studio is refinished in hand-rubbed ebony satin finish. It has a double bead molding around the rim and its legs are round with 28 flutes that add to its dignity. Its castors are hidden so it looks as though it is floating and its elegant music desk is delicately scrolled.

The Steinway Model A pianos of Carrie Jacobs-Bond’s time can’t be compared to modern Steinways. Farley House of Pianos strives in the restoration detail to re-create the instrument in such a way as to reflect the 1895 tone, timbre and touch. Mr Farley’s knowledge of pianos from that time and a demanding attention to detail gives us assurance that we’ve hit the mark with Carrie. Some features unique to most fine grands of that time include the use of Eastern white spruce for the sounding boards. This lumber is integral to the piano’s character. In fact the entire tonal design of the instrument rests on the use of this material and this is the wood used for the restoration of Carrie’s soundboard. It is vastly different than Sitka spruce which became the preferred “premium” material of production piano manufacturers and is uncharacteristic for authentic restorations. Also noteworthy is that Model A’s retain Steinway’s three bridge system (as do the larger concert grands). This brings the tenor-voice bass strings closer to the center of the soundboard. These iron-wound strings create a palette of tone very nearly that of cellos and double basses in an orchestra.

Farley’s maintains a craftsman-centric restoration shop with a team of five technicians that specializes in restoration of fine American instruments. As a boutique restoration facility we

receive concert instruments from all over the United States both from public institutions and universities as well as private owners and collectors. Our client and admirers list includes some of the world's best concert pianists—including Paul Badura-Skoda of Vienna, Daniel Del Pino of Spain and Ilya Yakushev of Russia—as well as well-known Americans such as Peter Serkin and the great jazz artist Dick Hyman. Mr. Hyman, who recently gave a concert at our facility, loved the Mason and Hamlin CC Model provided for him here that he recorded “Dick Hyman’s House of Pianos” CD on it.

What is special about its original owner? And how does that have relevance to music-lovers today?

Before she became America’s pre-eminent turn-of-the-century female tunesmith, Carrie Jacobs Bond lived a struggling, impoverished life in a simple cottage in Janesville, Wisconsin. Left as a widow with a young son and no resources other than an ability to teach and play piano, Carrie sold her household goods in order to survive. What she did not sell, however, was her beloved Steinway Model A piano. It is that piano that ultimately made her wealthy and the founder of a music publishing empire.

That piano is presented here, painstakingly and reverently restored by Tim Farley and the master piano technicians at Farley’s House of Pianos in Madison, Wisconsin.

Born in 1862 in a brick farmhouse just outside Janesville, Wisconsin, Carrie taught herself to play piano, picking out tunes after hearing them sung or whistled just once. By the time she was six she was able to play Liszt’s Second Hungarian Rhapsody by ear and was presented at local events as something of a prodigy. Born well-to-do, Carrie’s father lost the family fortune in a commodities financial panic and died soon after the debacle, forcing Carrie to marry hastily and ill-advisedly in 1880 to a man from whom she was quickly divorced. In 1887 she married again, this time to a doctor who served the iron mining towns of northern Michigan. Throughout this time Carrie was writing music, “heart and home” parlor pieces that were the fashion of the day—simple and sentimental.

Dr. Bond, however, refused to allow her to attempt to publish her works. On a snowy day while walking home Dr. Bond found himself in the middle of a rambunctious group of boys and their snowball fight. He slipped on ice, fell, crushed several ribs and subsequently died. Carrie was now forced to move to Chicago, where she rented rooms and had visitors—as it happens a performer and his agent—who noticed the piano in Carrie’s home and manuscripts on the music desk. He asked if she would play “I Love You Truly” and he was smitten by the song’s lilting melody and heartfelt lyrics. He asked if he might perform it. Soon the song had a small following. Jessie Bartlet Davis, the diva of the Boston Opera Company, became acquainted with the song and loaned Carrie \$500 to have it and six other songs published in a folio: “Seven Songs as Unpretentious as the Wild Rose.”

The provenance of this instrument is truly special. Imagine performing Carrie Jacobs-Bond’s songs on the piano on which they were composed. Imagine the piano fully restored so that the original symphonic sound and color spectrum is available for our 21st century ears. I can truly say that anyone rehearsing with me at my home with any kind of musical ear notices the beauty of

sound my piano has and I receive compliments constantly about the piano. It raised the level of everyone's performance of any music Bach – the present.

What is the reputation both nationally and perhaps internationally of the restorers? Do you have personal, first-hand knowledge of their work?

I own an 1885 Steinway C lovingly restored by Tim Farley. I have known Tim Farley and his work for 25 years. He has sold pianos in the Philadelphia area simply because people have played my piano and trust me when I say I can guarantee Farley's work 100%. Jeffrey Brillhart (Music Director at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church) bought his restored Steinway A from Tim Farley over the phone and he is thrilled. Farley also restored the 1895 Steinway D that now resides at The First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Tim Farley is a most gifted wood worker and my Steinway ebonies each have a pear wood inlay. The keyboard itself is a work of art.

Soon after my Steinway C was delivered I received a call from Peter Serkin's agent to see if Mr. Serkin could use my piano for a concert in Philadelphia. The answer was no, but I was very honored that such a famous pianist is aware of the importance of sound and quality evidenced in all of Farley's pianos.

And what would be its particular use at PCCH? What kind of programs would be best heard on it, especially those outside the congregation?

This past January, Lyric Fest presented Biography in Music: Johannes Brahms. As I was playing a full program of Brahms music on the Yamaha currently in the sanctuary, I was constantly struggling to create a sound that is appropriate for Brahms substantial song accompaniments and the many colors needed for each song. My ear is so used to the sound world created by my Steinway at home that I am able to make adjustments in touch and weight of attack with a less than adequate piano, a monochromatic instrument at best, but it was very frustrating. I called Mr. Farley and described the beautiful space at The Chestnut Hill Presbyterian Church and the need for a piano that is sturdy, will stay in tune, will produce years of beautiful sounds for performing groups and loyal listeners. He told me that he was restoring Carrie Jacobs Bond's piano and I truly could not believe it! This past April I played this incredible piano and came back completely obsessed!

Needless to say, Lyric Fest would benefit immensely from such an instrument. In the summer of 2015, I played several pieces at one of The Crossing's Month of Moderns concerts. We all know the reputation of The Crossing. Chestnut Hill Presbyterian should have a piano that rises to the level produced by this fine choir, as it uses our piano for performance and rehearsal. As far as Northwest Philadelphia, PCCH **IS THE** music center. With a fine piano, there could be a chamber music series, the PA Commonwealth Choirs would have a terrific instrument and piano student recitals would be brought to an extremely high level. I remember when I was able to play recitals during my MANY years of private lessons on a fine instrument at the university recital hall. I was inspired to play better and actually looked forward to recital playing!

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