

Detailed Information on Piano Grading

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Grading

**"The name of a great piano is always a certain guarantee.
Nowhere is the value of a name more evident than in fine pianos"**

In most advertising materials, it is common to refer to an instrument as being of a specific grade. Originally, pianos were not graded. Each manufacturer strove to produce the best instrument possible. Since pianos were then a rarity, the price was usually high. With the advances of the industrial age, improvements in machinery and manufacturing techniques and more efficient methods, means were employed by which musical instruments might be produced more and more rapidly.

With the appearance of the Commercial grade pianos, things changed and, with every new advance, there came a reduction in cost, and, finally, a proportionate cut in the selling price. Often, the public could not discriminate and often, external appearances served to satisfy many who, having no real consciousness of either mechanics or music, might easily be misled concerning the character of instruments sometimes offered by unscrupulous salesmen. So it became necessary for the manufacturers to indicate the quality of their productions, and the word "grade" was adopted for the purpose. Thus degrees were applied, and we find pianos are now classified into five basic groups.

High Grade Piano

Instruments constructed along the lines and in accordance with such principles as create in the finished product all those characteristics that mark the highest attainments in piano production. Instruments in this class are made in the factories of ambitious manufacturers who spare no expense in either the materials used or in the execution of the plans according to which the piano is designed and built. "They employ the finest and most beautiful of rare woods, the best of ivory and other materials, and will not tolerate the slightest infraction of the rule embodied in their principle of combining in the best possible way the very best means to the highest end. And in the making of pianos of this grade there is the fundamental basis of a musical scale which has been tried and found flawless. In this grade of pianos the cost is entirely subordinated to the paramount purposes of obtaining, through perfect workmanship and the use of perfect materials, perfect results." As a result, these instruments are costly and inhibit the idea of competition between the high and lower grades of pianos.

High-grade instruments should be chosen intelligently, and in any reliable piano store they are the easiest to select, because all well-conducted piano houses are proud of the 'leaders' and mark those instruments plainly. However, in this day and age, with individuals selling their own instruments, it's always best to hire a professional technician to evaluate any instrument prior to its purchase. In a phrase, 'it's still buyer beware' in the private sector.

Medium Grade or Popular Piano

One of the possible mistakes made by the piano-buying public is equating the term "medium grade" with mediocre. The fact is, "the good medium grade piano, produced by the honest manufacturer, represents the golden mean, the substantial middle ground, and is a perfectly safe piano to buy." It may not be 'the best' or meet the most exacting requirements of the artist; nor is it designed to 'fill to the uttermost the most esthetic demands, so far as elaboration and ornamentation are concerned." But the medium grade pianos may be relied upon to withstand hard usage and give much satisfaction in any household.

Commercial Piano

The main characteristics of Commercial pianos is usually indicated in the descriptive adjectives used to designate its quality. The idea of musical exactness is not the primary consideration, and though never eliminated from thought, the manufacturer cuts costs (and quality) to insure large sales at low prices. The commercial piano is not designed for the musical expert nor for the well-to-do customers "who are willing to pay a liberal price for correspondingly costly materials and workmanship." Usually the price is quite consistent with the quality.

It is, however, equally true that commercial grade instruments often possess real merit in the realm of durability for they are designed to provide many years of service in a commercial environment. And even though they are produced for a little money as possible, responsible manufacturers realized that their commercial reputation was always at stake and only rarely produced inferior instruments.

Trade-Mark Piano

"A Trade-Mark piano is one that bears some regularly adopted name, which is the copyrighted property of the makers of the piano or the dealer who sells it. Or it may be the name of the piano merchant who offers it for sale." "Any dealer may have his name placed upon pianos of commercial grades, and the only way to judge of the reliability of such pianos is to be sure of the responsibility of the dealer who sells them.

"Usually pianos that bear the individual names of merchants or firms may be classified as trade-mark pianos." And the quality of such instruments is most typically relative to the quality of the individual merchant or piano house.

Special Name Pianos

The subject of Special Name pianos has caused much confusion in the piano industry and in the minds of perspective buyers. "In earlier days such pianos were designated as 'stencil' pianos." As a rule, such pianos are of the lowest price and designed for commercial use. Over the years as production techniques have improved, many of these pianos have become "standardized" in their production, and "while not of the musically ambitious kind, the strictly commercial instruments are generally regarded as recognized articles of sale." Furthermore, it is fairly safe to say the stigma or so called 'stencil evil' in the piano business no longer exists "in anything like the

degree it assumed in former years when it was often employed to prey upon famous instruments."

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