

Buying a Piano

By H. C. Skinner

Taken as a whole it can be truly said that Providence and Dame Fortune joined hands and smiled generously on the Prairie Provinces this season. In the ordinary course of events there should be a number of pianos purchased by farmers this fall and coming spring. Hitherto many farmers have looked upon a piano as being a luxury and a very expensive piece of furniture that one could well do without. A piano is something more than a mere piece of furniture and its value to the home cannot be measured by money or judged from an ornamental standpoint. Irrespective of where a man lives or whatever his occupation may be, if he is any man at all his first thought is naturally of his home. Those who harvested a good crop and have a little surplus cash to spare doubtless intend converting the fruits of their labors into something permanent and of real benefit to the home. It is to such people that this article is directed. We know of nothing that will add so much pleasure to home life as a good piano.

What Make of Piano Shall I Buy?

That is a question that cannot be answered by one or even a number of people. Opinions differ in this respect for the simple reason that true color and quality of tone are in some indescribable manner related to one's own senses. For instance, you may walk into a piano store and a salesman demonstrates various makes of pianos to you. There is just one piano which appeals to you. Yet your friend who accompanies you disagrees and considers another to be the better. Can you describe just why that difference of opinion should exist? This test may also be applied to a number of pianos manufactured by the same factory and perhaps one will, in your opinion, outshine the others. But if you have decided on the make of piano you intend purchasing, the test is not really worth all the trouble to which many people put it. After all, piano building has become a science and one may reasonably expect any individual factory to build pianos on set lines and specifications. A very good plan is to have the salesman play a certain piece of music on each piano. Choose a selection which always gives you great pleasure to listen to and be careful to observe that the demonstrator treats each instrument with the same firmness, precision or delicacy of touch, whichever the case may be. It is then that this indescribable something makes a definite impression on your senses and you are enabled to make your selection. Amongst professionals it is generally agreed that when a piano is needed to accompany a singer, a soft-tone, light touch instrument is desirable. If, on the other hand, it is required for a pianoforte recital, the professional prefers a firmer action, which apparently gives more brilliance to the interpretation. One thing certain, a light touch instrument, or in other words, the piano with a quick, responsive, free action, is recommended for amateurs.

Beware

It is well to remember that you are not buying a beautiful piece of furniture or the case only. What you are buying is the interior, the frame, strings and action. That is what gives life and durability to an instrument. Price does not always determine the quality of a piano. Don't buy a piano on the strength of a pretty picture. The frame of high grade upright pianos is built to withstand the strain of 40,000 lbs.

A second-hand piano of known make is a better investment than a brand new instrument without prestige or repute. From the foregoing you will gather that we advocate going to see and hear an instrument before purchasing. For the sake of selecting a piano which will send a thrill thru your system and its every note will give you pleasure, we adhere to this advice. In the event of not being able to give a personal inspection, one may be practically assured of positive protection by doing business with a reputable firm which has won its prestige thru long-standing and continuous dealings with the public. No honest piano dealer can afford to sell an inferior article when quality is demanded without injuring the firm's reputation. But you will discover that the salesman can always meet the prospect's pocket as

to price whether you are out to buy in person or by mail. The inferior instrument may be shewn and demonstrated to you. It may be merely touched upon in correspondence. But you will invariably find that a certain instrument is always recommended and guaranteed, while of the other nothing is actually said in its favor and certainly no strong guarantee or positive assurance of durability will accompany the salesman's remarks. That just indicates the difference between a high grade instrument and a piano case.

The Life and Care of a Piano

With proper care a good piano will last a lifetime. There should be no appreciable difference in tone after twelve years. The instrument should not be left closed for long periods. Open frequently and allow daylight to fall upon the keys or the ivory may turn yellow. A piano should not be placed in a damp room nor left in a draught. Dampness is its most dangerous enemy. The strings and tuning pins will rust and the cloth used in the construction of the keys and action will swell, causing the action to either move sluggishly or stick altogether. This occurs chiefly in the rainy season, and the best pianos made of the most thoroughly seasoned materials are necessarily affected more or less with dampness, the absorption being rapid. Extreme heat is scarcely less injurious. When a room is subject to varying degrees of temperature it is a splendid plan to stand a bowl of cold water somewhere in close proximity to the piano. If the instrument is placed at an angle across a corner, the space between the piano and the wall provides an excellent place. Keep the basin well filled and examine frequently. It is surprising how quickly the moisture is absorbed. Never place a piano near an open fire or heater or over or close to furnace registers.

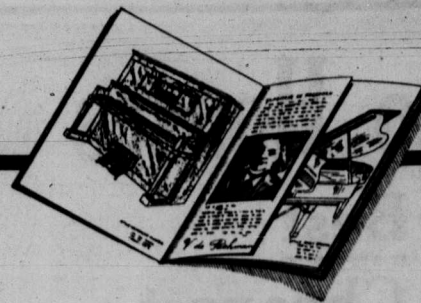
Moths are very destructive to the cloth and felt used in pianos, and may be avoided by placing a lump of camphor wrapped in soft paper inside the case of the piano, care being taken to renew the camphor from time to time. In cleaning, usually all that is required is to dust the case lightly with a piece of cheesecloth. Do not use a coarse cloth or feather duster under any circumstances and do not use a furniture polish of any kind. In years to come your old piano can be made to look like new, and any piano house will tell you they much prefer to work up a finish on a case which has not been subjected to polishes.

More Piano Pointers

Tuning is a most important factor in the care of an instrument. A piano should be tuned at least twice a year. Good months for tuning are October, February and May. This advice is best explained when the changing temperature of the room is taken into consideration. Tune first, we will say a week or so after the heat is put on. Have it tuned once more thru the cold spell and again in the spring when it has accustomed itself to normal atmospheric conditions. The selection of a tuner is of the greatest importance. Never engage a tinker, but a man who makes pianotuning his business. The action of your piano requires attention as often as the piano is tuned. That is why you do not want a tinker on the job, even if he should be gifted with a wonderful sense of pitch.

The Artistic Viewpoint

Some people choose pianos to match their furniture. If by so doing the tone quality is assured, the combination of course is a very happy one. In our opinion, what a farmer needs is a piano that will stand rough wear. Mahogany, for instance, will show every mark and if there are children around it is absolutely impossible to keep them from coming in contact with the piano. Good pianos are now built in fumed oak and other plain finishes. We leave this thought entirely to the discretion of the purchaser. But we would strongly advocate a plain case. Fantastic filigree cases are far from being artistic and have the disadvantage of collecting all the dust imaginable. Lastly, confine your selection to pianos built on the continent of America. Pianos made in other countries will not usually stand the Canadian climate.



Lives of Great Musicians

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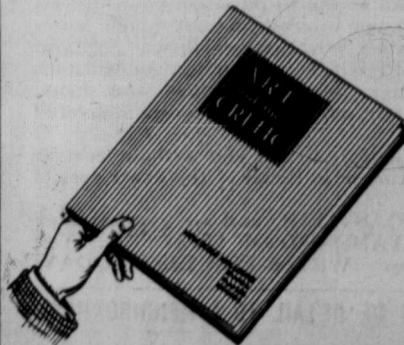
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