The Best Piano Service Ever!!! by Luna Rose - Musely

They have a lovely family. This is an old picture, but you get the vibe :)

Their work is amazing. I haven't found anyone with such quality work. This is one of

Dr. Jens Uwe Witter and his wife Trudy started the company in 1982, Germany.

Arizona Daily Star

SERVING TUCSON SINCE 1877 • THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2005

HISTORIC PIANO GETS NEW LIFE

› PRESIDENT CALVIN COOLIDGE'S 1909 GRAND RESTORED ‹

A small plaque *with the history of the Coolidge piano, now restored, and ready for the New Apostolic Church in Ontario, Calif.*

By Lori J. Long
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

When it comes to the looks and structure of a historic piano, some telling details can be found about a previous owner.

A look at the worn and subtle indents in the ivory keyboards of a piano once owned by President Calvin Coolidge of fers some clues to the man who served as the 30th president of the United States.

"This piano was used for someone who played very well," said Jess Writer, owner of Antique Pianos, an East Side business specializing in piano restoration, repair, refinishing and tuning.

This spring Writer was given the job to restore a 1909 Mason & Hamlin Boston grand piano that served as the president's last piano for Coolidge.

Writer's job was to preserve the piano and restore it to its original condition.

Standing inside his repair studio, Writer tapped at the worn and indented ivory keys.

"This (piano) wasn't just looked at. Someone played it quite a bit," Writer said.

Further noting the worn "heaviest felt" inside the piano, Writer said that too was a telltale sign of the piano's frequent use.

"It's like a car tire. If the tires are worn out, you know it's been driven a lot," he said.

Writer, 43, immigrated to the United States from Germany with his wife, Trudy, and their two children in 1988. He was raised in Leipzig, Germany, and was influenced by his father, a professional pianist, to study music.

As a young man, Writer said he had a choice to either go to medical school or pursue his musical interests.

"But what I do is medicine," Writer said of piano restoration. "I can have a 100-year-old patient and I can bring them back to life."

Writer eventually earned a Ph.D. in music and wrote an encyclopedia that identifies and catalogues more than 10,000 German pianos.

During the Coolidge piano restoration, Writer said he also found some tired piano needles and pieces of sheet music under the piano's sound board. He's keeping the scraps in a plastic baggie.

For the past five months, Writer has been repairing the 4-foot-long mahogany piano and is getting it ready for its move this week to the New Apostolic Church in Ontario, Calif.

Writer is a member of the New Apostolic Church, 8880 E. Pima St., in Tucson and donated a restored piano to the congregation last year. When California church members were in Tucson last year, they asked Writer if he could find a piano to restore for their church.

After a few months, Writer found the presidential piano at Hackenberg & Sons Pianos, 420 E. Broadway.

Mark Hackenberg, an employee at Hackenberg & Sons Pianos, said a con tractor traded in that piano at their store earlier this year.

"We thought it was strange that someone traded it in since it holds a lot of historical value," he said.

After authenticating the piano with dealers, Hackenberg and Writer found out it was owned by Coolidge and that it had found its way to Detroit.

Rather than try to restore it, the Hackenbergs decided to let Writer buy the piano for the Ontario church.

Kevin Theleker, regional director of the Ontario church, then gave Writer a $14,000 donation from a church member to buy the piano and cover the costs for restoration materials.

But because the piano was so old, some pieces weren't readily available and had to be custom made, Writer said.

John Ely, president of Cybernetic Research Labs, a manufacturing facility in Tucson, created an "upgrade" piece need ed for the piano, which holds piano strings in place.

Without charge, Ely looked at a plan for creating an upgrade piece and created a model on a computer program, found the material and fabricated the part needed for the restoration.

"We wanted to be a little part of it," Ely said. "We felt like we should help to preserve a piece of American history."

Theleker said the church has no plans to sell the piano, even with some appraisers setting a price of at least $200,000.

"We place a higher sentimental value on it," Theleker said. "Our intent is not to sell it but to enjoy it."

"It's a historical treasure," Writer agreed. "You can't place a price on that."

■ Contact reporter Lori J. Long at 807-8454 or llong@azstarnet.com

LEARN MORE

■ For more information about Antique Pianos, call 882-2662 or visit www.antique pianos.com.

Photos by Greg Hoyos | Arizona Daily Star

Jess Writer *and his wife, Trudy, sit at the restored 1909 Mason & Hamlin Boston grand piano that belonged to President Coolidge.*

They have been in several newspaper articles and have a few documentaries published about them.

Dear Jens-

Thank you so much! The family loves the piano, especially my mom's brother. It brings back great memories for all of us. You're work was awesome. I will send the rest before the fourteenth of February. God bless you and your family. Anne