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CONDITIONS IN PIANO TRADE OF FRANCE

Jacques Herrburger of Great Piano Action and Key Manufacturing House of Herrburger-Schwander, Paris, Makes Interesting Comparisons with Those of United States.

DIFFERENCES IN TASTE

Small Uprights Comparatively Unknown in France and Reproducing Piano Demands Are Few—Other Interesting Observations by Him.

Jacques Herrburger, son of Joseph Herrburger, head of the great piano action and key manufacturing house of Herrburger-Schwander, Paris, France, and grandson of one of the founders, was an interesting visitor to the United States this month. He sailed for home on the 16th inst. Mr. Herrburger came to America this year mainly to purchase certain kinds of milling and other wood-working machinery for one of the newer Herrburger factories; the one at Epinay, about ten miles from their main factory in Paris.

Mr. Herrburger gives some interesting comparisons concerning American and European pianos. He says that about eighty per cent of the keys manufactured in France are of composition, ivory keys being almost prohibitive in price to the average manufacturer in that country. Only concerns like Gaveau, Pleyel and a few others of the first rank build pianos with ivory keys.

Small Uprights Unpopular.

The small-sized uprights which have proven so popular on this side of the Atlantic are comparatively unknown in France, he says. A small sized grand, however, has been introduced and is becoming very popular, but the smallest upright is about five feet high.

Pianos with less than 8 notes are comparatively unknown in France. Actions are similar to those constructed in this country, except that in France, hand labor still prevails in most operations. An average popular priced grand in France sells retail for about \$750, while automatic pianos bring around \$1,500.

Reproducing Piano Lags.

Up to the present time, the reproducing piano has lagged somewhat, due to the fact that the rolls were manufactured in other countries and did not meet with the approval of the French music lovers. When recording studios are established in France, this condition will be rectified and a limited but growing demand for the reproducing instruments is likely to follow.

Conditions in the piano industry are much better than they were last year. Mr. Herrburger reports that last year, his concern did only about one third as much business as the year before. This was largely due to the fluctuating value of the franc. Prices had to be changed every three months.

There is little foreign competition in France. With the mark equalling six francs, German prices are too high, while American and English manufacturers find it difficult to compete with the domestic makers.

French tastes are conservative and little change has been made in piano design during the past few years. Mr. Herrburger prefers the American style of fall board and the simplicity of American design, but states that it would be futile to attempt such changes in his country.

Admires American Methods.

Mr. Herrburger is a great admirer of American methods of machine production. He visited the Knabe plant and was astounded at the speed and accuracy with which high grade instruments can be produced by American methods. Such plants, he figured, could produce three times as many pianos as are built in all of France.

The glossy or "French" finish is still popular in France. Mr. Herrburger reports that his plant has had some success with lacquer finish as applied to brackets and other action parts. Mahogany and

rosewood are the favored woods for piano case construction in France. The domestic walnut is not at all suitable. It is clear, light in color, and has no grain to speak of.

Bench Replaces Stool.

The piano bench is gradually supplanting the swivel stool in France, but the period model piano is built only on special order for the very wealthy. Mr. Herrburger was surprised to note the great popularity this type of instrument has attained in the United States.

It is interesting to note that French piano manufacturers are buying a percentage of their piano wire in the United States, due to the superior quality being produced in this country.

Although radio outfits are so cheap in France that even the laboring class can afford to own sets, the use of radio has not become so widespread as in the United States.

Phonograph Is Popular.

The phonograph has held its popularity in France and the Columbia Phonograph Co. has secured quite a foothold in that country. Mr. Herrburger finds that the phonograph is a valuable asset to the piano merchant, in that record purchasers often develop into good piano prospects.

The Herrburger business was established in 1815 by the great grandfather of the present head of the house. When founded, the section of Paris where the principal plant is located, at 15 rue d'Evangile, was surrounded by open fields and was rural in aspect. Now it is in the heart of the city.

During the war, the Herrburger plant manufactured wings for airplanes. The woodworking plant was pressed into service to turn out gun cases and other military equipment for the French army.

JESSE FRENCH & SONS PIANOS IN BEAUTIFUL HOMES

New Castle, Ind., Piano Manufacturing Concern Issues a Gorgeous Booklet on Subject.

An elaborate brochure, pictorially-prepared with eye-delighting re-touchings, showing homes of the well-to-do and also interior views with Jesse French & Sons pianos in parlors, music rooms, studios and churches, has just been issued and is being distributed to their dealers and salesmen.

These pictures are of rooms and homes in several widely-separated cities, such as Indianapolis, Denver, Mobile, Montgomery, Ala.; Boston, Nashville, and other places.

Among the homes supplied is shown a Jesse French & Sons Grand in the residence of G. A. Miller, Indianapolis, sold by the E. O. Wilking Music Co.; a grand in the home of J. A. McGuire, Denver, Colo.; a grand in the home of A. M. Helm, Mobile, Ala.; a grand in the home of Frank H. Miller, Montgomery, Ala.; a grand in the home of H. B. Newell, Boston, Mass.

GULBRANSEN CHRISTMAS ADS.

The Gulbransen Company, Chicago, has this year had a tremendous response to its special Christmas advertising service for use by the local dealer. Not only were a large group of illustrations and an assortment of copy available for use of Gulbransen dealers, but in addition three new type advertisements distinctly modern in nature were made available to the dealer. Hundreds of requests for the material have come to the Gulbransen Company Advertising Department. It is estimated that the Christmas advertising placed by Gulbransen dealers throughout the country will have a total circulation of 50,000,000 in large and small newspapers.

PIANO CLUB'S DOINGS.

The Piano Club of Chicago had an overflowing attendance at its Monday luncheon this week. A visitor of note at the luncheon was E. H. Vogel, advertising manager of the Kohler Industries, New York. Greetings and good wishes of the coming holiday season were passed, everybody was sociably inclined, and the announcement was made that one week must be skipped and the next meeting be held on Monday, January 9.

C. J. ROBERTS ADDRESSES RADIO ASSOCIATION

President of the National Association of Music Merchants Talks on Music Merchant as Radio Dealer.

C. J. Roberts, president of the National Association of Music Merchants, was one of the speakers at the meeting last week at the Hotel Commodore, New York, of the Radio Manufacturers' Association. In discussing the value of radio to the music merchant he alluded to the early days of radio when service was non-existent, and a medium-sized city was fortunate to have even one service man who knew anything of consequence about his business.

"Repairs and adjustments which are now readily made by a much larger number of service men were then matters of opinion and disagreement among those who claimed to be experts," said Mr. Roberts.

"I am much gratified to learn that, contrary to what I had previously been informed, from thirty-five to forty-five per cent of from \$300,000,000 to \$400,000,000 gross retail radio business in this country this year has been distributed through music merchants. Dependable statistics are hard to obtain. A very considerable portion of this business has, of course, been due to the sale of radio in combination with phonographs. The store of the music merchant is the natural outlet for radio. All stores of music merchants, including music departments of general stores, should carry radio. Music merchants and their organizations and activities are entitled to the support of radio manufacturers.

"The music merchant has the knowledge and experience necessary to properly sell radio. He and his sales force are accustomed to selling merchandise, not merely accepting orders for it, even to the extent of doing so through house to house canvassing. He is an experienced installment collector, if he is a successful merchant. He is a specialist. Radio should be handled by a specialist. A large percentage of radio sales are made on a partial payment plan of some kind.

"I am anxious for every music merchant in the country to sell radio. I am anxious for every radio merchant in the country to sell other musical instruments—particularly pianos—the basic musical instrument. I am willing to say that, if two men of equal ability, both properly financed, should start in business in any city or community, one handling pianos only, and the other not only pianos but all other musical instruments, including radio, 'everything musical,' in fact, that the general music store would within a reasonable length of time put the exclusive piano merchant out of business.

"I wish to say that the National Association of Music Merchants at their convention at Chicago last year, recognizing the radio as a great musical instrument adopted an interpretative resolution qualifying radio merchants and executives for membership in the association. I would like that information to reach all radio dealers who are not now members of the National Association of Music Merchants."

HEPPE SPONSORS CONTEST.

Over eighty pupils of the public and parochial schools of Ridley Park, Moore, Norwood, Glenolden, Folcroft and Sharon Hill, all places near Philadelphia, were enrolled in a piano-playing contest held recently under the auspices of the Women's Clubs of the respective communities and sponsored by C. J. Heppe & Son, the prominent music dealers of Philadelphia. The winners in the contest were awarded gold, silver and bronze medals and trophies furnished by the Heppe Foundation Fund. Separate contests were held for pupils in the elementary schools and in the high schools.

ACTIVE ORGAN MAN.

W. D. Wood, head of the organ department of Sherman, Clay & Co., San Francisco, is as active as locating a prospect as he is useful in installing an organ. He made a trip to the Pacific Northwest to superintend the finishing touches on the pipe organ being installed in the Rhoades Department Store at Seattle, Wash., and to make plans for installations at Portland, Ore.