

FAN D'ÉRARD

Erard pianos owners and enthusiasts club.

Sébastien Érard (1752-1831) was the founder of the 'Manufacture des pianos Erard' (1780-1959). Among his many inventions, he designed the 'repetition action' now used on all modern grand pianos.

In their early designs, all pianos were straight-strung. When cross-strung pianos became the general rule in the second half of the 19th century, Erard remained faithful to the traditional straight-stringing design, which is now often considered their trademark. This gives its instruments a special character; their evenness, without any discontinuity between the bass and the treble, and sound clarity make for a transparent texture of the music where each individual voice appears. This largely compensates for the relative lack of power compared to modern concert grands.

Erards were the preferred pianos of such great composers as Joseph Haydn in the 18th Century, Franz Liszt in the 19th or Maurice Ravel in the 20th.

Erard opened an English branch as early as 1786, and after the French revolution, part of the production was transferred to London. During most of the 19th century, harps and pianos were manufactured on both sites. Erard London pianos are known for their unusually elaborate cases. Today the interest for romantic pianos in general, and for the 'parallel' sound, is growing back.



Objectives of the Association:

- promote the musical qualities of Erard pianos, which provided the main milestones in the development of the French pianoforte design school;
- encourage and help the preservation, up-keep and knowledge of these instruments;
- study and validate minor, reversible adaptations and repairs which may contribute to easier and more cost-effective maintenance and better long-term conservation.



Actions:

- encourage joint efforts from individuals and organisations to a better knowledge and conservation of Erard pianos built between 1780 and 1959, and when possible, of other contemporary French productions;
- collect and keep records of documents, information, tools and instruments;
- share general interest data and tools which can be useful in restoration work;
- organise or co-organise events centred on Erard pianos;
- facilitate access of the public to pianos in good condition: identify and assess instruments for sale or in search of a good home with the help of our members' network, advise and facilitate contact between owners and professionals for the restoration and maintenance of Erard pianos;
- avoid plain destruction of pianos - whenever restoration is not a realistic option, re-using second-hand parts may help to restore other instruments;
- develop and validate economically sensible and heritage-friendly methods or substitutes for restorations;
- adopt a 'heritage' philosophy, cooperate with museums and contribute to real and virtual museography.





Present activities:

- The *website* shows places accessible to the public, where Erard pianos can be seen, and advertises concerts performed on Erards. A bibliography and discography can be found on the site, which also contains a step by step introduction to maintenance, adjustment and small repairs, and links to specialised professionals.
- *Concerts*: Early piano works nowadays are too often shaped into aesthetics that are irrespective of the way these pieces were thought out and actually played on the instruments used by such great composers as Beethoven, Chopin, Fauré, etc. Our philosophy is to increase the audience and popularity of the rediscovered sounds of Erard pianos. We rely on our members to keep track of such public performances. We are also considering a contribution to an international romantic piano competition on period instruments.
- *Maintenance and restoration*: restore back to playing condition as many relevant instruments as possible. Identify suitable restoration procedures with our professional partners, collect and share acquired experience. Ensure continuity of spare parts production and supply.
- The *conservation of instruments* is essential. We connect members of the association in order to salvage unwanted instruments which might otherwise be lost, help instruments find good homes and potential owners find their dream instrument. A cooperative workshop would enable or facilitate storage, conservation and transmission of knowledge.
- Opportunities for *piano lending* may be opened, in particular to young professional pianists .
- *International exchanges*: we are widening our operating area in Europe and welcome future members who would relay and support our actions abroad.
- *Cultural support*: we wish to set up some restoration projects of pianos of particular interest, under professional supervision. This has to be taken as an opportunity to demonstrate the exceptional craftsmanship of the French piano makers during the romantic period: French patents of this time are still at the heart of modern piano making throughout the world. We are exploiting this opportunity to save our fragile piano heritage.



Regional correspondents:

France

North & Paris:

Xavier Wohleber +33 6 70 52 44 72 — x.wohleber@free.fr

Centre:

Jean Louchet +33 6 73 47 77 07 — jean.louchet@gmail.com

South East:

Jean-François Tobias +33 6 77 42 63 40 — jf@pastafresca.fr

Europe

Germany:

Stephanie and Mathias WEBER +49 179 230 5000 — webersteffi5@gmail.com

Benelux:

Justin Glorieux +32 495 161503 — justinglorieux@gmail.com

Switzerland:

Patrick Penel — patpenel@gmail.com

United Kingdom:

Philippe Bastid +44 7891 395 000 — philippebastid@aol.com

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<http://www.fanderard.org>



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