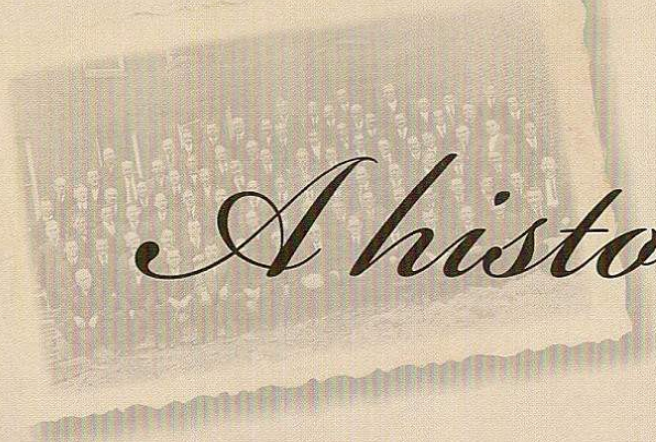
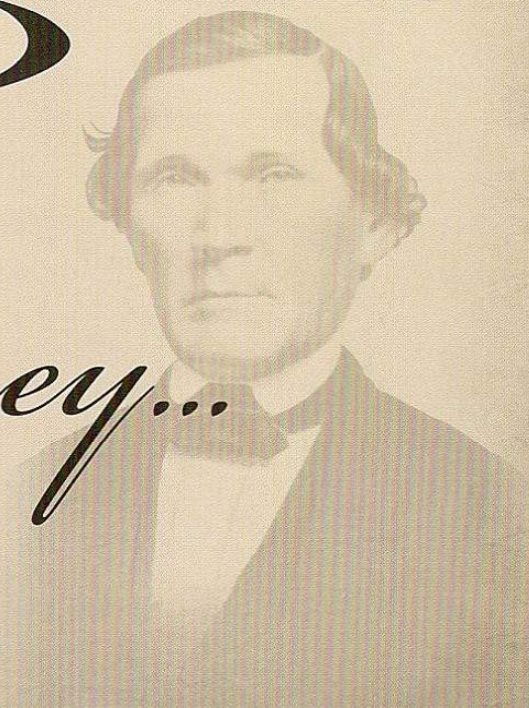




# Knabe

*A historical journey...*



# The Journey

**1803**

Valentine Wilhelm (William) Knabe is born in Kreuzburg, Germany.

**1833**

William immigrates to the United States, settling in Baltimore, Maryland. He begins working for Henry Hartye, a well-known piano maker.

**1839**

Knabe and William Henry Gaele establish a partnership under the name of Knabe & Gaele.

**1855**

The company is renamed William Knabe & Co. and establishes itself as the finest piano maker in the industry.

**1879**

The Japanese Government begins to import Knabe pianos for use in public schools.

**1891**

Knabe sponsors Tchaikovsky's appearance as guest conductor to open Carnegie Hall in New York.

**1820's**

William learns the art of piano making through apprenticeships across Germany, gaining the reputation of being an outstanding piano maker.

**1837**

The Knabe business is founded by William Knabe in the city of Baltimore.

**1852**

After the admission of Edward Betts as partner, Knabe & Gaele reorganizes as Knabe, Gaele & Co.

**1864**

The company is left in the capable hands of sons William and Ernest upon the passing of William Knabe.

**1880's-  
1890's**

Knabe becomes the official piano of the one-year old Metropolitan Opera House, and is selected for the new, historic Paramount Theatre in New York.

# *of* Knabe

**1926**

The Knabe piano is once again chosen as the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera, an honor held for over 40 years.

**1957**

Elvis Presley purchases and refinishes a Knabe grand piano that would be featured in Graceland's music room until 1969.

**1989**

PianoDisc acquires the Wm. Knabe & Co. name.

**2007**

SMC celebrates the 170th anniversary of Wm. Knabe & Co. and releases elegant, limited edition grand and upright pianos.

**2011**

SMC unveils complete line of Knabe products.

**1908**

William Knabe & Co. is purchased by the American Piano Company.

**1932**

Knabe becomes part of the Aeolian-American Corporation after the American Piano Corp. merges with the Aeolian Company.

**1965**

A Knabe piano once again resides in the White House, under the term of President Lyndon B. Johnson.

**2001**

SMC secures licensing agreement for the Knabe brand and begins sales and distribution.

**2009**

SMC purchases Wm. Knabe & Co. brand from PianoDisc and begins American assembly of Wm. Knabe & Co. brand Concert Artist Series in Gallatin, TN.

**Today**

SMC continues the rich tradition of manufacturing Wm. Knabe & Co. grand and vertical pianos.

*And so it begins...*



Knabe's rich history began more than 200 years ago when Wilhelm (William) Knabe was born in Kreuzburg, Germany. Knabe learned the art of cabinet and piano making through apprenticeships, dedication and hard work. After immigrating to the United States, Knabe began work under Henry Hartye, a well-known piano maker, followed by establishing his own business of buying, selling, and repairing pianos from inside his home. He later partnered with Henry Gaehle to form the piano company Knabe & Gaehle, the genesis of Knabe's storied history.

Knabe & Gaehle built high-quality grands, uprights, and squares at a small factory in Baltimore at the rate of five per week. Although a modest output by today's standards, Knabe pianos still managed to compete with other well-established American manufacturers. After the admission

of Edward Betts as a partner in 1852, Knabe & Gaehle reorganized as Knabe, Gaehle & Co., but the partnership dissolved in 1855. As a result, Knabe founded his own firm, Wm. Knabe & Co., establishing itself as the finest piano maker in the market. Despite the hardships that accompanied the split, including fires that destroyed both of his piano factories, Knabe went on to win the Maryland Institute Exhibition over 20 other manufacturers. In 1860 Knabe built a large factory in Baltimore, occupying two city blocks and employing over 300 workers. With the outbreak of the Civil War and the resulting decline of the southern market, the company managed to keep afloat by expanding its markets into the growing American west.

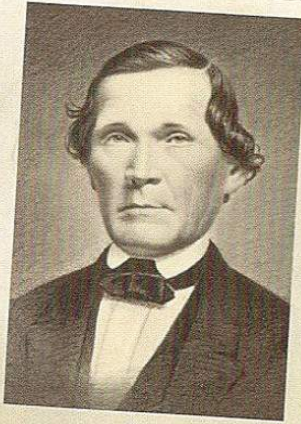
*"They reflect monumental credit on American achievement; they are perfection."*

— Richard Strauss, leading German composer

# William Knabe

## The man behind the name

The Knabe name is legendary, and it began in the town of Kreuzburg, Germany on June 3, 1803 with the birth of Wilhelm. As a child he wanted to follow the path of his father by becoming an apothecary (similar to a pharmacist), but the French invasion of Germany prevented him from doing so. Instead, he learned the art of cabinet and piano making through apprenticeships, traveling throughout Germany for several years while mastering the trade. Through hard work and dedication, Knabe acquired a reputation for being an outstanding piano maker.



In 1831, Knabe met Christina Ritz, which resulted in an engagement of marriage. William accompanied his fiancé's family as they immigrated to the United States, with the intention of becoming a farmer. During their voyage, Ritz' father became ill and died, so Knabe and his bride-to-be remained in Baltimore and familiarized themselves with the language and customs of the United States. Knabe found work under the well-known piano maker Henry Hartge and eventually abandoned his plans of becoming a farmer and moving to Hermann, Missouri, where Ritz's brother resided. After several years of diligent labor and saving money, he established his own business of purchasing, repairing and selling used pianos from his home. In 1839, Knabe partnered with Henry Gaehle to form the piano company Knabe & Gaehle, the genesis of Knabe's storied history.

William Knabe always pursued the piano making trade with pride, energy and dedication. Throughout his life, he always maintained strong character and a kindly disposition, qualities that were very respected by those who he touched. He was known as a generous man who believed in taking care of his employees, and instituted the tradition of an annual holiday and picnic to all workers and their families. He was also well-respected by his peers, and upon his death in 1864 was honored by businessmen for his integrity, skill and ingenuity.

William Knabe passed away in 1864 but left the company in good hands with his sons Ernest and William, Jr. taking over. Knabe pianos continued to gain recognition for their superior sound quality and beauty of cabinetry, and to support the growing demand built modern factories and opened salesrooms in New York City and Washington. The company manufactured roughly 1,000 pianos per year. By the turn of the century, Knabe grew to be one of the most respected pianos, very popular among consumers and professionals alike.

From the very beginning, William Knabe committed himself and his company to building fine, high performance instruments. Through the years, Wm. Knabe has been a part of such establishments as the American Piano Company, Aeolian Corporation, and Mason Hamlin. Today, Knabe is the premium piano for Samick Music Corporation (SMC), one of the world's largest musical instrument manufacturers. SMC is proud to continue the manufacturing and production of these fine works of art, known throughout the world for their beauty of sound and cabinetry.

Many of the early upright and grand piano designs, originally created by Wm. Knabe and seemingly lost to antiquity, have been recovered by SMC, while many of those wonderful early design concepts have been incorporated into the Knabe pianos of today.

# Francis Scott Key

## A Star-Spangled Knabe



On September 14, 1814, during the War of 1812, a lawyer-poet was detained on board a British boat just prior to the attack on Fort McHenry. This man was Francis Scott Key, and he had gone there to gain the release of his friend, William Beanes, who had been taken prisoner. Key was captured and detained on board overnight. All night long the two men paced the deck trying to catch a glimpse of the American flag waving over the fort. By dawn's early light, it was still there. So moved was Key by this victory that he took an envelope from his pocket and wrote the words to the now famous song "The Star-Spangled Banner." Soon everyone in the land was singing the words to the tune of "To Anacreon in Heaven," an old English marching song.

In 1838, Francis Scott Key commissioned Knabe & Gähle to custom-build a square grand piano for his home. This lavish, hand-carved piano's detail extended around all four sides of the rosewood case and down its massive legs, while the keys were surfaced with expensive mother-of-pearl. The piano was used by Key until his death in 1843 and currently resides at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, TN.

## THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER.

O! say can you see by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming,  
And the rocket's red glare, and the bomb's bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there:  
O! say, does the star-spangled banner yet wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze o'er the towering steep,  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream:  
'Tis the star-spangled banner, O, long may it wave,  
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,  
A home and a country should leave us no more?  
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave,  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,  
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand,  
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation,  
Blessed with victory and peace, may the Heaven rescued land,  
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation.  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto—"In God is our Trust!"  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,  
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.



# *Hans von Bülow*

## *Conductor's Commitment to Knabe*

Hans von Bülow is generally regarded as one of the most famous conductors and preeminent executive musicians of his time. Bülow, chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, arrived in America in 1889 and immediately committed to exclusively using Knabe grand pianos for all of his recitals in the United States.

Bülow conducted his first orchestral concert in the U.S. at the Metropolitan Opera House in front of over 2,000 guests, including many of New York's musical elite. He then performed inside New York's Broadway Theatre, followed by repeat performances in Boston and Philadelphia. He then made a return to the Metropolitan Opera House to conduct his "farewell" program.

Bülow was the first to perform the complete cycle of Beethoven's piano sonatas, recognized by many as the most important collections of works in the history of music. Franz Liszt, considered by some in the 19th century to be the greatest pianist of all time, anointed Bülow as his "successor" as the world's leading virtuoso.

*"Knabe pianos have sound and touch more sympathetic to my ears and hands than all others."*

— Hans von Bülow, world-renowned 19th Century German Conductor

# Carnegie Hall Opens

## Knabe Makes History

Herrn William Knabe et Co.  
geehrte Herren!

Es macht mir viel Vergnügen Ihnen zu sagen, wie sehr  
ich mich über das schöne Knabe-Flügel gefreut, das  
ich Gelegenheit hatte hier für meinen Privatgebrauch  
zu besitzen. Es verbindet mit grosser Tonfülle eine so  
sehr sympathische edle Klangfarbe und perfekte  
Mechanik. Ich freue mich auf die Aussicht bei  
meinem (wie ich hoffe) sehr baldigen zweiten Besuche  
Amerika's nicht wieder einen Knabe Flügel's  
bedenken zu können. Sie bestens grüssend  
zeichnet  
P. Tschai'kovsky

New-York, den 19 Mai, 91.

(TRANSLATION)

Messrs. Wm. Knabe & Co.  
Baltimore, Md.

Gentlemen:

It gives me much pleasure to tell you how much I have been delighted with the beautiful Knabe Grand which I have had for my private use. It combines with great volume of tone, rare sympathetic and noble tone color and perfect action. I rejoice at the prospect that on my second visit to America, which I trust will be soon, I shall again be able to secure the use of a Knabe Grand.

With kind wishes,

Most truly,

P. TSCHAIKOVSKY.

"THE GREAT RUSSIAN COMPOSER WHOSE OR-  
CHESTRAL WORKS AND OPERAS ARE WELL  
KNOWN TO ALL MUSICIANS AND MUSIC LOVERS"



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the world's greatest conductor of his time, was the guest of honor for the official opening of Carnegie Hall in 1891. A Knabe piano was featured during that historic event as Tchaikovsky ushered in the evening's concert and led the New York Music Society's orchestra in his Festival Coronation March.

"The beautiful Knabe Grand combines with great volume of tone, rare sympathetic and noble tone color and perfect action." — P. Tchaikovsky, great Russian Composer

# Metropolitan Opera House

Decades of Performance

## Metropolitan Opera House

Knabe became the official piano of the New York Metropolitan Opera House in 1926, with a grand piano being played by some of the greatest artists of that celebrated organization. Knabe would hold that distinguished honor for more than 40 years.

## Metropolitan Opera House

April 23, 1926.

Wm. Knabe & Co.

New York City, N. Y.

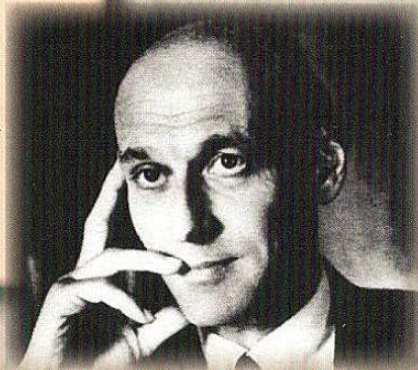
Gentlemen:

Every moment with my Knabe is a delight. It is like another voice. A tone lyric, warm and glowing, responding with generous sympathy to whatever the artist may require of it, is an attribute of only the greatest of pianos - and in the Knabe is found in richer measure than any other.

Yours sincerely,

*Hasselmann*

DISTINGUISHED CONDUCTOR, METROPOLITAN OPERA COMPANY



"Experience has proven that we can always depend on Knabe."

— Rudolf Bing, Director of the New York Metropolitan Opera, 1950-1972

The Literary Digest for December 8, 1926 23

## I DO NOT CARE TO SING ALONE

BY

*Madame Jeritta*

SOPRANO  
METROPOLITAN OPERA  
COMPANY

★

Opera stars do not sing alone. If accompaniment is important in opera, it is vital in concert work. Here the singer relies entirely on the piano. Only when the piano's tone harmonizes completely with the singer's voice do you have that "sweetest strain" — a song in which the singer has been lost.

I realized this during my concert tours on the Continent. But it was not until after my arrival in America that I found the piano which possesses this sympathetic (and quality in the highest degree — the Knabe. When first I heard it, I was startled, so humanly eloquent was it. In its warm, rich tone, I seemed to hear myself singing. And soon I was singing. But I did not sing alone. The voice of the Knabe rose with my own and blended into it. My solo was a duet — and our duet was a solo.

Since then the Knabe has been my closest musical companion. It sings with me in my home in Vienna, and in my home in New York. It appears with me on the Metropolitan stage, and on the concert platform. And whatever I sing, the Knabe seems to express my emotion with a delicacy that defines every subtle shade of feeling. So the Knabe has become to me not only a perfect accompanist, but an inspiration, too, ever urging me to sing my best.

Like Madame Jeritta, you want a piano that can mirror your moods in music. Hear the Knabe — the humanly sympathetic quality of its tone. Then you will know why Jeritta chose it — why Ponselle, Martinielli and many others have chosen it, too. Why it is the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera Company. Why it is the ideal piano for your home.

A 10% down payment places the Knabe in your home — you have years to pay the balance. Prices from \$875 to \$1,500. Period models from \$1,300.

Wm. Knabe & Co.

NEW YORK

BALTIMORE

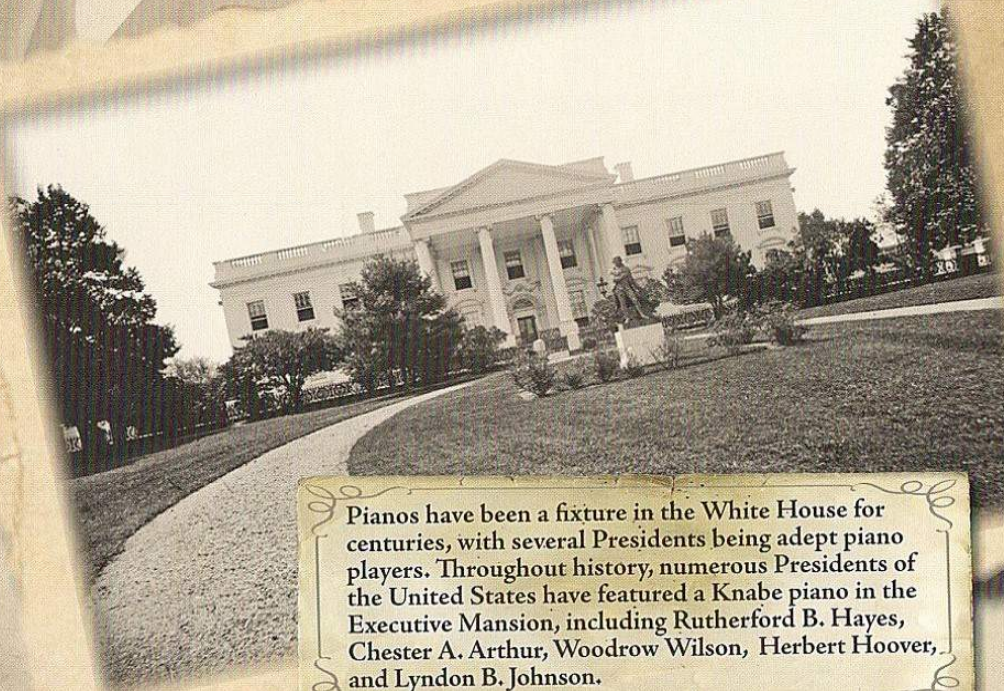
The **Knabe** piano

OFFICIAL PIANO OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA COMPANY



# White House

Knabe in the Oval Office



Pianos have been a fixture in the White House for centuries, with several Presidents being adept piano players. Throughout history, numerous Presidents of the United States have featured a Knabe piano in the Executive Mansion, including Rutherford B. Hayes, Chester A. Arthur, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Lyndon B. Johnson.

## A KNABE IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

*From the Baltimore American.*

There was seen yesterday at Messrs. Knabe & Co.'s factory a magnificent concert grand, just finished by them for the Presidential mansion. President Arthur, who is a thorough connoisseur of music, in selecting a piano for the White House decided in favor of the Knabe Piano as his preference, and ordered accordingly the instrument referred to. It is a concert grand of beautiful finish in a richly carved rosewood case, and of superb tone and action—an instrument worthy in every respect of the place it is to occupy. It was shipped to its destination yesterday.

# *Albert Einstein*

## *Knabe Meets Kinetics*



Albert Einstein not only had a passion for physics but also a love for music. In fact, he once stated that he would have preferred to have been a musician rather than a theoretical physicist. Einstein was the proud owner of a Knabe piano and a skilled pianist, performing in concerts for charity throughout his life.

Astoundingly, his devotion to music and mathematical theories often merged. According to his wife Elsa, Einstein had an interesting habit of entering his living room and sitting down at his piano while in deep thought, playing several chords, and retreating to his study to resume working on scientific and mathematical theorems.



*"I often think in music. I get most joy in life out of music."* — Albert Einstein, Theoretical Physicist

# Elvis Presley

## Knabe



AND THE



## King



An exquisite Wm. Knabe & Co. piano, housed at the historic Ellis Auditorium in Memphis, TN for over 25 years, was purchased by Elvis Presley® in 1957. Manufactured in 1912, amazingly it is the very same piano played at revivals that Elvis attended during his youth. The "King of Rock and Roll" had this prized possession refurbished in white with gold trim, personally supervising the refinishing process. The Knabe piano and matching bench were moved into his music room at the newly built mansion. Several photographs of Elvis standing beside this piano were taken inside Graceland. This Knabe piano was featured in his music room from 1957 to 1969.



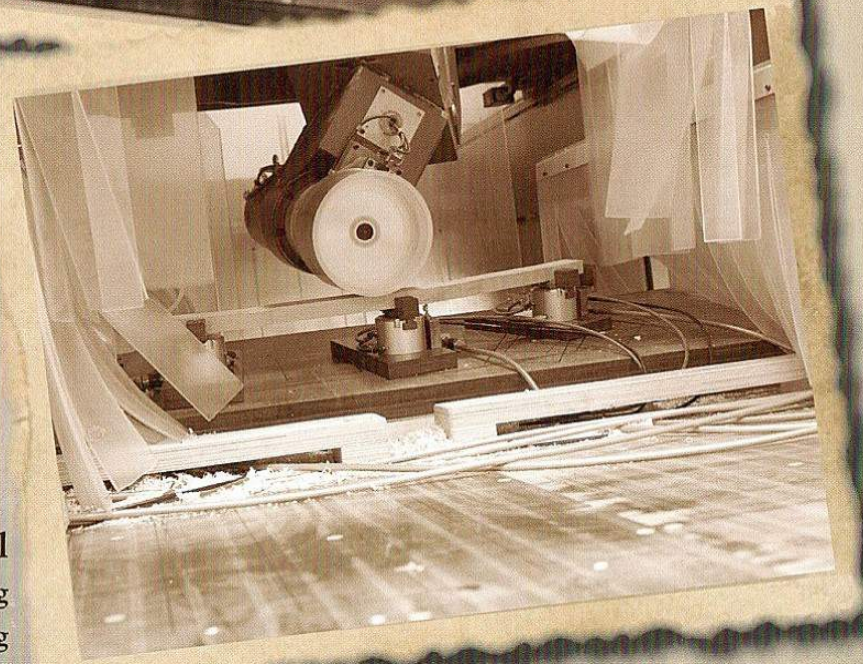
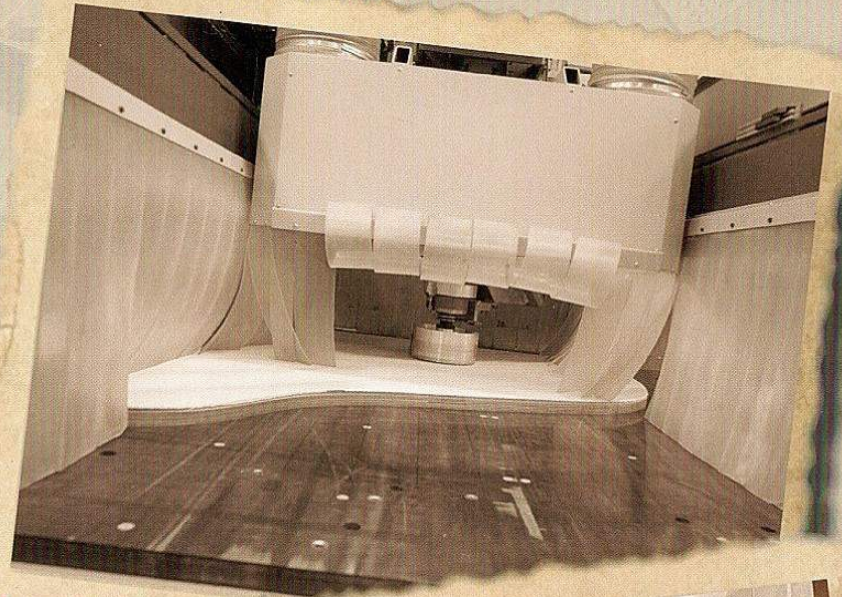
# *Unmatched Craftsmanship*

The craftsmanship that makes the Knabe one of the world's best pianos is not the acquisition of one generation but a pedigree of skills that have run through more than three hundred years. Making a great grand piano starts with the determination not to compromise in any aspect of the design, materials, or craftsmanship.

The Knabe piano is beautifully crafted with tonal quality likened unto the trained human voice. For the home, community center, school, or grand concert stage, the Knabe is the world's best performance piano. From the carefully hand-laid, tapered solid Canadian spruce soundboard, to the specially selected oak and maple that is hand bent into the finest and strongest rim in the piano industry, to the final touches of the master technicians that regulate the premium action and German hammers, every step in the creation of this marvelous instrument is the work of master craftsmen.

## **Computer Numerical Control**

By the application of the most advanced piano engineering technology, Knabe ensures high accuracy manufacturing and transparent distinctions in sound.



# Philosophy

When William Knabe built his first piano in 1837, he achieved what others had sought to do but never accomplished, setting a new standard for piano craftsmanship. The Knabe piano had a sweetness and clarity of tone that no other instrument could produce. This quality has characterized every Knabe piano ever built and continues today, and it's a philosophy that distinguishes Knabe.

Knabe pianos are handmade, limited production pianos created in the finest tradition of over 300 years of piano crafting. Production pianos have their place in the world of music. They are tonally consistent and durable, but they lack the "soul" of a handcrafted instrument. Each handmade Knabe has its own personality. When you play a Knabe, you will sense the difference.

Original Knabe concepts such as the solid spruce soundboard shape and dimension, bridge placement, and overall structural design add to capturing the critical essence of the Knabe piano along with the original Baltimore scale on many Knabe models. Only woods, metals, glues or natural fabrics best for each particular purpose are ever permitted in a Knabe. The only wood used for Knabe pin planks is winter-cut, quarter-sawn, northern hard rock maple for added strength and holding power. For other woods, we search the globe, 17 areas in all, for the rarest varieties to provide the specific grain and texture required for each application.



# Superior Performance

The rich and wondrous tonal quality of the Knabe has often been described as the nearest approach to the human singing voice. No piano in the world has a voice quite like it. So distinctively mellow, so warmly melodic, it is often compared to the lyric richness of a glorious human voice.

Its reputation for matchless tone and flawless beauty of encasement is the result of undeviating adherence to the conviction that in piano making there is no detail that does not deserve the closest attention and care. This policy is accepted as a trust by craftsmen who consider it a privilege to add their skill to the creation of pianos worthy of the Knabe prestige.

Knabe's innovative American design team creates Knabe grand pianos that produce the same warm singing tone of bygone years. We have scoured the world for the finest material and components to ensure that performance and durability continue for generations.



## THE HOUSE OF KNABE

Endorsed by His Holiness POPE LEO XIII  
Pope Leo XIII, desiring to give proof of his sovereign consideration to Wm. Knabe & Co., Piano Manufacturers, New York, Baltimore and Washington, has this day given to them, according to the brevette reproduced herewith, the title of  
**PURVEYORS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC PALACES**  
including the privilege of using in their announcements  
**THE COAT OF ARMS OF HIS HOLINESS**  
The Vatican, May the Ninth, Nineteen Hundred and One.

Endorsement letter from Pope Leo XII. Direct from The Vatican, this letter from 1901 states His Holiness giving Wm. Knabe & Co. the title of "Purveyors To The Holy Apostolic Palaces" for its superior performance.

*"The sweetness of its tone transports the soul and makes one dream of worlds where dwell the spirits elect."*

— Italian Operatic composer Giacomo Puccini





**Wm. Knabe & Co.**

ESTABLISHED 1837

1329 Gateway Drive - Gallatin, TN 37066

615-206-0077

[www.knabepianos.com](http://www.knabepianos.com)