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Evaluation and Appraisal

The following is an evaluation of the condition and market value for Knabe concert grand piano model D, approx. 9' long, ser. no. 150488.

The piano has a 20-note bass section with 8 singles and 12 bichords. There are no wound string in the tenor section.

Summary:

Location

According to the current owner, it appears that the piano was purchased by the original owner in Chicago, where it may have been used as a rehearsal piano for an opera company. The piano was subsequently moved to Baton Rouge (around 1960?).

Climate

The current location, where the piano has been since 1965 is centrally air conditioned. The presence of greenish patches of what appears to be mold on the underside of the key bed, trapwork, and legs indicate a high humidity environment that is consistent with the location.

Condition Summary

The piano appears to contain all original parts and has not been overhauled. The piano is dusty inside, but no insect or rodent infestation is evident. There are several green spots on the plate that may indicate cat urine. The appearance of the case and finish is below average for the piano of this age due to multiple dings, scratches and minor chips in the finish (see attached photos). The action, keyboard, and strings are average for a piano of this age. Tuning pins have good torque, indicating no cracking in the pinblock. String downbearing is consistently good, indicating no substantial loss of soundboard crowning (measurements were taken after two weeks of moderate humidity, following a high humidity summer season). Some pressure ridges and potential cracks are evident in the soundboard. Front bridge pins in treble sections have mild to moderate cracking. Bridges have bridge caps.

Detailed Condition Assessment

ACTION

HAMMER HEADS are original. Hammer felts are moderately grooved. The sound is typical of hammers of this age, exhibiting a lack of color variations at different dynamic ranges. High treble is somewhat muted. The middle section sounds harsh when played loudly.

HAMMER SHANKS are all intact, with no side-to-side play. Center pin friction is as expected.

WHIPPENS are in average condition.

BACKCHECKS are moderately worn.

ACTION REGULATION allows normal playing with let off, drop, and hammer blow distance being only somewhat off. Repetition is somewhat sluggish.

ACTION RAILS appear to be in good condition.

KEYBOARD

KEY BUSHINGS are fairly tight but noisy and lack resilience.

KEY BUTTONS are intact.

KEY PINS are fairly oxidized and cause extra side friction.

KEY-END FELTS are moderately worn with an average loss of resilience.

FELTS and PUNCHINGS appear to be in good condition, with no insect infestation.

KEYBOARD REGULATION is reasonably good

Downweight is c. 62g on C4, 60g on C#4.

Upweight is c. 28g on C4, 32g on C#4.

Friction on white keys in the middle range is 17 grams on average, 14-15 grams on black keys.

WHITE KEY TOPS are two-piece ivory. Ivory needs to be cleaned, but is fairly light in color and doesn't show much yellowing. Only one ivory top is chipped on the overhang on note G5.

BLACK KEY TOPS are made of ebony and are in good condition

KEY FRONTS are likely plastic and have an off white (ivory) color.

DAMPERS, PEDALS, TRAPWORK (LINKAGES)

DAMPER FELTS are in good condition, but are moderately noisy, typical of a well-kept piano of this age.

DAMPER GUIDE RAIL BUSHINGS are fairly tight with the expected loss of resilience.

DAMPER FRICTION is moderate.

DAMPER HEADS are in good condition. It appears that they have a dark-stain natural wood finish.

DAMPER UNDERLEVERS are in good condition, have consistent, tight pinning, and appear to be free.

DAMPER SYSTEM REGULATION is as expected for a piano of this age.

SOSTENUTO is installed and works well.

PEDALS are in good condition, requiring buffing and finishing to look like new.

PEDAL LYRE and PEDAL HOUSING appear to be solid. Mold spots are present.

TRAPWORK appears to be in good condition. There are nicks and scratches on the levers as well as on the keybed and pedal lyre.

SOUNDBOARD, BRIDGES, PINBLOCK, STRINGS

SOUNDBOARD has consistent downbearing, with a slight loss in the middle, slightly more on highest notes. Several pressure ridges are visible. What appears to be two cracks are closed now, but may expand in a drier environment.

BRIDGES appear solid and well-attached to the soundboard. Some cracking around bridge pins is evident in the caps in the two treble sections. The caps do not appear to be separated from the bridge roots.

PINBLOCK looks solid and without cracks or separation as observed from the bottom. Spot-tuning revealed satisfactory tuning pin torque throughout the range including the lowest bass notes.

STRINGS, TUNING PINS are oxidized as expected in a piano of this age. Tuning pins are unplated (blued).

PLATE, CASE, HARDWARE, FINISH

PLATE is full length without pin bushings. The highest agraffe is on note C#5. Treble sections have capo d'astro bars. The treble sections have a tunable rear duplex. No sizzles attributable to front string terminations (agraffes and capo) were detected. The condition of the gilding is average, with green spots toward the tail end of the piano possibly indicating cat urine.

HARDWARE is brass. There is a lock in the front lid. It couldn't be tested because the key was not available.

CASTERS are standard brass casters. Average condition.

LEGS and LYRE exhibit damage to the finish similar to the rest of the case and lids. Legs and lyre are affixed presumably with wedge plates and are held in place with rotating cams.

FALLBOARD finish is average, without any major gouges or other damage.

CASE has decorations that are affixed to the case with small nails, and may have been added by the owner. The case and both lids have many small indentations and scratches. There are a few deeper scratches, some of them apparently sprayed over with a black finish. There are no movers rails affixed to the straight side of the case.

MUSIC RACK is in a relatively good condition.

KEYSLIP is in an average condition without any major damage.

END BLOCKS are in an average condition.

Value Assessment

Based on the age, size, and current condition of the piano, and taking into consideration current market conditions, I estimate the value of the piano to be between \$12,000 and \$18,000.

Recommendation

To realize the piano's full potential, I recommend rebuilding the keyboard, replacing action parts and hammers, replacing or rebuilding the backaction (damper system), replacing damper felts, regilding the plate, reshaping and optionally heat-treating capo d'astro and front duplex bars, replacing strings with oversize tuning pins (provided the pinblock doesn't have any hidden cracks or separations), addressing soundboard cracks, if any, and refinishing the soundboard if shimming is needed, replacing bridge pins and filling the cracks with epoxy. I recommend refinishing the whole piano and polishing/clear coating the pedals, casters, and all visible hardware.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at mario@igrec.com or by calling 985-231-1248.

Photographs











