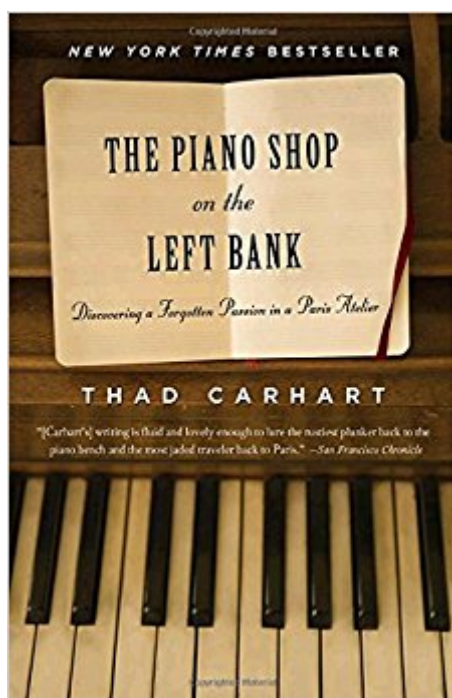


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The Piano Shop On The Left Bank: Discovering A Forgotten Passion In A Paris Atelier



Synopsis

Walking his two young children to school every morning, Thad Carhart passes an unassuming little storefront in his Paris neighborhood. Intrigued by its simple sign—DesForges Pianos—he enters, only to have his way barred by the shop’s imperious owner. Unable to stifle his curiosity, he finally lands the proper introduction, and a world previously hidden is brought into view. Luc, the atelier’s master, proves an indispensable guide to the history and art of the piano. Intertwined with the story of a musical friendship are reflections on how pianos work, their glorious history, and stories of the people who care for them, from amateur pianists to the craftsmen who make the mechanism sing. The Piano Shop on the Left Bank is at once a beguiling portrait of a Paris not found on any map and a tender account of the awakening of a lost childhood passion.

Praise for *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*: “[Carhart’s] writing is fluid and lovely enough to lure the rustiest plunker back to the piano bench and the most jaded traveler back to Paris.” —*San Francisco Chronicle* “Captivating . . . [Carhart] joins the tiny company of foreigners who have written of the French as verbs. . . . What he tries to capture is not the sight of them, but what they see.” —*The New York Times* “Thoroughly engaging . . . In part it is a book about that most unpredictable and pleasurable of human experiences, serendipity. . . . The book is also about something more difficult to pin down, friendship and community.” —*The Washington Post* “Carhart writes with a sensuousness enhanced by patience and grounded by the humble acquisition of new insight into music, his childhood, and his relationship to the city of Paris.” —*The New Yorker*

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Customer Reviews

In this engaging memoir, an American writer living in Paris recounts his experiences in a piano shop tucked into an out-of-the way street on the rive gauche. Because the elderly proprietor refuses to admit strangers to the atelier where he repairs, rebuilds and sells used pianos to select customers, Carhart does not at first get in. But with an introduction from another client and the help of the owner's younger assistant and heir apparent, Luc, Carhart is finally welcomed into a magical space crowded with pianos of all makes and vintages. Soon he becomes one of the favored insiders who stop by nearly every day to gossip and talk about pianos with Luc. Luc's love of pianos is so infectious that Carhart's own childhood passion for the instrument is rekindled. He starts to take lessons again and buys a piano for his small apartment, a purchase that takes some time, for Luc, who regards a piano as a member of a family, prides himself on finding instruments compatible with his customers. Caught up in Luc's zeal, Carhart immerses himself in the history and mechanics of the piano, and he includes chapters on the craft of piano making, the instrument's development over the centuries and the fine points of tuning. In his renewed fascination, he reflects on piano teachers, those of his childhood as well as several renowned teachers of today. Carhart conveys his affection for Luc, the atelier and the piano with such enthusiasm that readers might be inspired to return to their own childhood instrument. At the very least, they will enjoy this warmhearted, intelligent insight into a private Paris. (Apr. 20) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Carhart's life as an American expatriate in Paris provides the setting for this witty and fascinating account of finding a piano to purchase and relearning how to play. His familiarity with French customs aids in his dealings with and subsequent acceptance as a friend by Luc, the proprietor of Desforges Pianos. A piano restoration workshop by day, it turns into an exclusive local hangout Friday nights. Gracefully shifting from the present day to his youth, Carhart, a freelance writer, provides both technical explanations about the workings of the piano and a history of the instrument. This background information helps place his studies and the remarks of various piano teachers, technicians, and aficionados in context. Similar to Noah Adams's fine *Piano Lessons* (LJ 3/15/96) with a continental flavor, Carhart's book will be of special interest to patrons with an affection for pianos or experience traveling in France. Warmly recommended for all libraries. Barry Zaslow,

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This book may be less meaningful to you if you are not a piano player. But Thad Carhart includes so much atmosphere and quirky French character in his memoir "The Piano Shop" that if you like memoirs, especially about life in France, you will be as charmed as I was whether you know one note from another or not. Andre Watts, the great American pianist, once remarked that he is unable to walk in a room with a piano without going up to it and touching it. This urge is not unusual with piano lovers--most of us are pulled into any piano shop, compelled by the same love of the instrument, each one of which is as individual as a person. And this individuality is despite the fact that pianos, as Carhart points out, were one of the first mass-produced items in modern industrial society. Carhart, too, is irresistibly drawn into a mostly-shuttered piano shop in his quartier of Paris. It seems unlikely the shop is merely a piano repair studio--do they, perhaps, sell secondhand instruments? Carhart, who loves to play as an amateur, decides to find an instrument. The crusty owner will hardly divulge information. Slowly, Carhart penetrates the mysterious, very private and French world of the piano shop, and it becomes a part of his life. The shop owner Luc, his drunken tuner Jos, and all the other characters are well drawn and interesting, even tragic sometimes. The book ends up being about a lot more than pianos. This is a real treat of a book to curl up with in an armchair, perhaps with a glass of wine or a cup of tea and find yourself lost in a twisty Parisian alley, peering into dusty windows and wondering how what goes on behind the shutters of a dark Paris atelier. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

I had heard great things about this little book from friends for quite some time. Frankly, I was disappointed. The story line is very thin. However, the saving grace is that it provides a really good history of the piano and piano-building. Anyone interested in such a history will probably like this book more than I did.

I no longer play the piano. Childhood lessons of rote scales and boring piano primer songs were abandoned at an early age. This book makes me wish that I kept with it and makes me feel guilty about the Wurlitzer upright collecting dust in the family home. I have traded it in for my own obsession, however, and this book gives a great portrait of rediscovering the appreciation for older instruments and machines. I may not be a musician(but that is of little matter. This book isn't about just the piano, but rather for loving things and creativity for your own sake. a really nice read and I

would recommend it for those whose creativity and passion need a gentle prodding.

I've been studying piano for 7 years now and am a bit unique because, unlike most piano students (or pianists for that matter), I've taken a very avid interest in how pianos are built and the different makes. I found this book thru a recommendation from a fellow pianist and first read it on Kindle, loved it, certainly satisfied my yen for knowing more about how pianos are built and the differences between the different makes, not to mention a good deal of history on music and tips on learning and practice. I loved it so much I had to have it in hard copy. So I got this and I'm very happy with it. I've found myself particularly in awe of the new Fazioli piano the last few years and was so happy that the author included an entire chapter on this amazing instrument. He even traveled to Sacile Italy and visited the factory under the guidance of Fazioli founder. That chapter alone is worth the whole book.

Very informative book that shows Mr Carhart's passion for the piano. Well written , some chapters technical, some about people. I will never look at a piano the same. Learned a lot.

The title of this book intrigued me and I originally purchased it as a gift for a piano playing friend, but ended up reading it myself before passing it on to my friend along with another "non-read" book. The story is that of an American living in Paris who wanders into a dusty piano repair shop and becomes involved with the stories of the people and pianos who frequent the store. While I enjoyed the book I found some the information on the history and mechanics of pianos a little too much for me; therefore the three star rating. I would have preferred more "left bank" and less "piano," but for a piano enthusiast the rating would be higher.

Thoroughly enjoyed it. As an adult going back to taking piano lessons, decades after the last lesson at the end of high school, I could empathize, plus the author's attitude was most encouraging. It was also a wonderful look at how the French, especially the Parisians, approach life and friendships so differently than I, an American, do.

sentimental look into traditional Parisien culture, from an admiring Francophile perspective.

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