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Photo opportunity available Monday July 12
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FROM SHOP TO BARN - A CITY SLICKER COMES TO THE COUNTRY

If a Rolls Royce were slowly cruising down the street, you might turn your head for a little rubber necking as the sleek, presumably shiny status symbol passed you by. A comparable chance for gawking could happen when a very special Hamburg rolls into Jeffersonville on July 12. If only it were a car.

That's the day that ProPiano of Manhattan ever so carefully packs up and hauls what shop manager Daigo Sai says is "what we like to think of as the Rolls Royce of pianos" to town for Weekend of Chamber Music's (WCM's) 17th summer music festival.

Not surprising that he's referring to a Steinway piano, but this is not just *any* Steinway - "it's a Hamburg" - a nickname that causes piano-people to go all a-twitter. The piano was made in Hamburg, Germany, one of only three Steinway factories in the world (the others are in New York and Boston), and its particular 'sound' has become the stuff of legends.

Mr. Sai says "European pianists love it the best because they are more accustomed to it. It has a brighter, sharper sound in many cases." Technicians, he explained, can make a difference in the sound, too, with what they do in "voicing" and tuning the instrument.

Pianists anywhere seem to get really excited about the prospect of performing on such an instrument. WCM's Festival pianist Tannis Gibson, who arrives in the area next week to perform, is no exception.

"What a treat to think of playing on a Hamburg Steinway," she wrote in a recent email. "The Hamburgs are known for their beautiful "cantabile" (singing) tone quality. Perhaps it's more bell-like in sound – and alongside this I find the instrument is capable of creating great warmth...The full size concert Ds that I played throughout China were simply amazing, capable of that warmth and singing, but also very powerful and seemingly limitless in their possibilities."

Even flutists get excited. "It's such a wonderful piano," said Judith Pearce, WCM's artistic director and flutist. "We finally have an instrument that is appropriate for the pianist that's going to play it!"

Determined to improve on the substandard, inadequate pianos the festival has had over the last few years and hoping to find a 'champagne' piano on a 'beer' budget, Ms. Pearce and harpsichordist Kenneth Hamrick went searching at ProPiano. There they agreed the 6-foot 11-inch Hamburg's sound was far richer than others they'd heard, and when two generous donors stepped up to provide the extra funds needed, the deal was sealed.

While performing all those Hamburgs touring China, Ms. Gibson said she "felt as though I were behind the wheel of a fast foreign car with a powerful engine, and all I had to do was steer rather effortlessly to get it to do what I wanted."

So on Monday the legs will come off; the lid will be removed; WCM's Hamburg will be wrapped in specialty protective moving covers, and three big guys will haul the 740-pound instrument into a truck, out of the city, and into the barn at the Eddie Adams Farm.

"I'm looking forward to meeting the piano that's waiting for me at the Eddie Adams Farm," said Ms. Gibson. When she performs July 17 and 24, the audience will hear a piano that is said to be the standard by which all other pianos are judged.

Festival tickets and information are available at WCMconcerts.org. The Festival Hotline is 845-887-5803.

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The Hamburg at its showroom home in NYC.