

THE DAY THE MUSIC (ALMOST) DIED

8/28/2013



Gathered with Toronto General Hospital's stolen piano is, from left to right, Radoslav Draskovic, furniture and piano restorer, RSG Restoration, Marc Decorte, concert piano technician and rebuilder, Decorte Piano, and Alex Thomson of the Steinway Piano Gallery Toronto, who also contributed to the restoration by donating parts. (Photo: UHN)

In early August, nearly every media outlet in the city came to cover the theft, search and return of UHN's baby grand piano at Toronto General Hospital. It seemed everyone knew about the story including most at UHN and those across the country who took the time to get in touch.

The question – “How do you steal a piano in broad daylight and what do you do with it once you've stolen it?” The answer – look like you belong, give plausible explanations if questioned and behave as if you have a job to do throughout the theft.

But, it turns out – it isn't easy to sell once you've stolen it.

In the beginning of the investigation, professionals said if the was piano was found, it would likely have been damaged because you need to know what you're doing when you move a piano. They also said that any reputable dealer wouldn't accept a piano off the back of a truck, so the thieves would have difficulty selling it.

Quick return

And sure enough, the piano was returned quickly. Police used UHN's videotapes and various tips they received to find the thieves. When the piano was returned, a notice went out to all of UHN. The responses to that note are an interesting window on our sense of community.

One person felt guilty because he saw the men with the piano and didn't think to challenge them. Someone else said that after reading about the theft, he saw strangers hanging around the bike

cage in the parking lot and had asked them a few questions which he wouldn't ordinarily have done – and they left. Were they here to steal bikes? Maybe.

Community comes forward

More than a few e-mails just said that they were very glad the piano was back because they liked the music. And from outside UHN, two companies which move and rent pianos called to offer UHN the loan of a piano. And two individuals called with pianos to donate. In one day, four strangers were moved to support the patients and staff of this place with the gift of music.

The sense of community was strong in the e-mails – from inside UHN and from those outside who wanted to support our patients and staff.

As the picture shows, Boston Steinway has been on-site to restore the piano and Volunteer Resources is planning the first concert for September. And, when they arrived, there were a few phone calls to Security from staff who wanted to make sure that the professionals from Boston Steinway were, indeed, who they said they were.

Those phone calls? Music to Security's ears.