



The Spirit of the Piano Part 3: Books, Films, and Other Representations



Bob Pierce (who wrote the book for dating piano manufacture based on serial numbers) had a collection of miniature pianos, not unlike the mini *Curro Baby Grands* I have made, with one actually functioning as a cigarette lighter.

Obviously, pianos exist physically, but just how prevalent are they in the human psyche? How often are pianos, or representations thereof, seen in the more imaginative domain of media? Pianos and keyboard instruments have been around for at least 300 years and have seeped into the subconscious of humanity. Not only do we wish to observe and play pianos, but we wish to make art to represent pianos and the music being played by them. Pianos can be found on t-shirts, coffee mugs and hats, embedded in the fiction novels of experienced authors, used as unique props as demanded by the most outrageous of film directors, represented by the lobby shape of a music school or of the pool at the Piano Hotel. Bob Pierce (who wrote the book for dating piano manufacture based on serial numbers) had a collection of miniature pianos, not unlike the mini *Curro*

Baby Grands I have made, with one actually functioning as a cigarette lighter. There are piano shaped cakes, cookies and other foods. And my personal favorite, the keyboard emoji 🎹.

One of the most plentiful types of media about pianos and those who play them are books, and I do not mean books on how to play the piano, though those are also numerous. People frequently like to imagine what it would be like to be a skilled pianist performing at Carnegie Hall thus books have been written to describe the experience in both fiction and non-fiction. Biographies about pianists are sought after for historical context. One of my favorites is the *Piano Shop on the Left Bank* (newsletter #17). *The Piano Tuner* is another unique story, though a bit too unrealistic for my taste. There are books about piano construction and the craftsmen who designed them for those who wish to know more about the instrument's development. You could create quite a collection to fill many shelves.



Again, there are an abundance of “how-to” videos and instructional films, but let’s take a look at the films that speak more to the human condition. An entertaining comedy/drama set in 1990s industrial China is *The Piano in a Factory*. It follows a recently divorced man who tries to win the custody of his daughter by getting together with a group of friends and colleagues to build a piano for her to convince her that he is the better parent. My favorite, but not for the storyline, is *The Legend of 1900*. It’s about a man born and orphaned on an immigration ship who becomes a supremely skilled pianist. The piano scenes in the film are second to none and wonderfully fantastic, the wildest being when he unlocks the wheels on the ballroom grand piano during an intense maelstrom and glides around the room playing the piano all the while. There are heavy hitters like *The Pianist* which embeds us in WWII ghettos and war zones or *The Competition* which is an intense love story between two competing pianists. There are many movies that simply have a piano in the background as scenery, but regardless of anyone playing it or not, there it is, influencing us.

There are heavy hitters like *The Pianist* which embeds us in WWII ghettos and war zones or *The Competition* which is an intense love story between two competing pianists.

Many of my clients have a depiction of a piano near their piano and I find myself gazing at the picture during the tuning. The better the picture, the better the tuning. As a piano nut, I love my piano socks and shoe laces that I wear with my piano keys tie and cuff links. I made a mailbox a few years ago that looks like an upright piano and people stop on my street every now and then to snap a photo of it. I’m a big fan of piano memes and enjoy making and sharing them. I’ve spent some time exploring AI generated piano pictures, but they never get the keys quite right.

The piano: an icon.

