


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 16, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: DONATION OF AN ANTIQUE PIANO FOR USE IN A PLANNED
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS MUSEUM

ISSUE: Disposal of an antique piano, unplayable and not necessary for City museum collections.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the City Manager to execute documents transferring ownership of the antique, unplayable piano from the City to Baldwin Piano, Inc., for use in a planned Nashville, Tennessee, musical instruments museum.

DISCUSSION: In about 1978, this instrument was given to The Lyceum by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Schotta, with the intention that it be used in the museum's lecture hall for musical programs. The piano was made just before the turn of the twentieth century by Chickering & Sons, originally one of the oldest piano manufacturers in America. In 1986, Wurlitzer Piano bought the Chickering company, and Wurlitzer was in turn purchased by Baldwin Piano, Inc., in 1988. Jonas Chickering is credited with two significant piano inventions still in use today – a strengthening iron plate for stability, and the crossover method of stringing a piano, producing a fuller range of sounds.

On this particular instrument, the sound board is cracked, among other age-related issues, and several thousands of dollars in restoration work is necessary to make it playable. The piano has no connection to local Alexandria history which would justify investment of funds to bring it to working condition. As the piano was never accessioned into City collections, it can be easily transferred to another cultural institution.

Following professional museum practice, The Lyceum staff has attempted to place the piano in another public institution where it can be enjoyed by the public, beginning with those institutions that collect old instruments. Currently engaged in collecting unusual Chickering pianos, Baldwin Piano, Inc., intends to fully restore the piano to playing condition at their facilities in Arkansas,

and then place it in a museum of vintage musical instruments to be established in Nashville, Tennessee, by Gibson Musical Instruments, owners of Baldwin Piano.

Attached is a letter signed on August 23, 2007, by the surviving former owner Mrs. Sarita Schotta, endorsing this proposal.

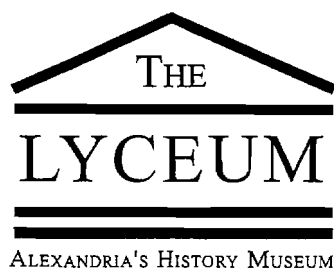
FISCAL IMPACT: None. All costs involved in moving the piano from The Lyceum to Baldwin in Arkansas will be borne by Baldwin Piano, Inc.

ATTACHMENT: Letter to Mrs. Sarita G. Schotta from Curator Kristin B. Lloyd dated August 16, 2007

STAFF:

J. Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria
Jim Mackay, Director, The Lyceum
Kristin Lloyd, Curator, The Lyceum
Bob Schurk, Facilities Coordinator, The Lyceum

Attachment



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THE LYCEUM MUSEUM SHOP

August 16, 2007

Mrs. Sarita G. Schotta
104 Prince Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mrs. Schotta,

I'm writing in regard to the Chickering & Sons piano you and your husband donated for performances at the George Washington Bicentennial Center, here at The Lyceum, around 1978. The museum staff has found what we think will now be a better home for the piano that we hope will be consistent with your wishes for this vintage instrument.

The piano has not been used here for many years, since the artists who rent The Lyceum's lecture hall for recitals and concerts need a contemporary instrument for their performances. However, Baldwin Piano would like to acquire the historic piece. In 1986, Wurlitzer Piano bought the Chickering company, and Baldwin in turn purchased Wurlitzer in 1988. Baldwin is currently engaged in collecting Chickering pianos in an effort to document the historical development of pianos. They will initially take the piano to their facilities in Arkansas where it will be studied and fully restored to playing condition. It will then be placed in a non-profit museum of vintage instruments that is being established by Gibson Musical Instruments, owners of Baldwin, in Nashville, Tennessee. Here, the piano's history will be honored and it will be enjoyed by the public.

Information we have on file indicating Mr. Schotta's mother once owned the piano, and that it was played by some well-known performers, will be forwarded with the instrument. We hope you can support the transfer of the Chickering piano from The Lyceum to Baldwin Piano for their educational purposes. The transaction will be well documented, and in that effort we would appreciate you indicating your approval by signing below, and returning this letter to the museum. A copy is enclosed for your records.



We thank you for considering this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to telephone me, or The Lyceum director Jim Mackay, at 703-838-4994.

Sincerely yours,

Kristin B. Lloyd

Kristin B. Lloyd
Curator

I endorse the proposal to transfer the Chickering & Sons piano from The Lyceum to Baldwin Piano for a museum of vintage musical instruments.

Signature

James B. Shultz
Trustee

8.23.07
Date