

“FOR THE LOVE OF PIANO”

(Article by Victor Paddock)



The façade of this lovely house on **Ocean View Avenue** offers little hint of what lies behind. But enter the wooden gate to the side and you find yourself in a spectacular space – lush grass, shimmering trees, and bronze and ceramic sculptures by

Tanya Ragir spotted throughout the greenery. **David Andersen** describes this expansive backyard setting where he presents solo piano concerts as an “urban oasis”. Whether you call it that, a secret garden, or an intimate park, it is truly a cultural gem in our midst because, on occasional Sundays, about 100 guests gather to listen to excellent piano music in this tranquil and beautiful setting.

In 2005, David began holding outdoor piano concerts at this location, which he calls the **Atelier** (French for "artist's studio.") He attracts and presents some of the best pianists and rolls out one of his vintage grand pianos onto a patio/stage. The audience, many of whom are **Mar Vista** residents mingling with their neighbors, sit in padded folding chairs and are treated to classical, jazz, or "pan-genre" piano for a reasonable charge, which includes two sets of exceptional music as well as delicious food and drink. The atmosphere is elegant yet casual. All revenue, after expenses, goes to the artist/s.

At October's Atelier, my wife and I heard an 83-old master pianist from Europe, **Mario Feninger**, playing classical selections by Scarlatti, Chopin, Liszt, and Brahms. **Tamir Hendelman**, a young Israeli prodigy, played muscular, melodic jazz to a dazzled audience at November's concert. In David's words "the **Atelier** is becoming more and more known as a haven and an inspiration for artists and audiences."

David loves all music, but reserves his greatest appreciation for the piano. As a boy, he would nestle under the piano in his home in **Omaha, Nebraska** while his mother played. Ever since, he has been fascinated with the sound of the instrument. To witness a man enter a state of ecstasy is to see David crane his neck into the sound chamber of a lacquered, sleek vintage grand piano as it is being played. While his passion is intensely personal, it is decidedly not private. By staging these intimate Atelier concerts, he eagerly shares with others what it sounds like when a master pianist connects with a superb instrument. Although he doesn't perform himself, he delights in exposing others in this magical garden to the best sound a piano and pianist can produce.

His vision for bringing more music to more people involves expanding the "**Live at the Atelier**" brand through audio and visual recordings of extraordinary musical performances in the months and years to come.

At 57, David has been a musician his whole life. He started serious trombone study at age 10 and quickly became further accomplished at singing and playing drums. He took up the guitar at age 15 to help him write songs. As a young man, he left Omaha and lived and performed in many

parts of the country, playing pop, jazz and rock ‘n roll with various bands. At the age of 32, he caught the attention of **Clive Davis**, the legendary record producer, who signed him as a singer-songwriter.

Nebraska and **L.A.** may seem worlds apart, but, flashing pride for his mid-western roots, David is quick to point out that Omaha possessed an abundance of excellent musicians. An onset of rheumatoid arthritis affecting his hands has forced him to abandon playing guitar.

Visitors to this “urban oasis” get to see numerous examples of sculpture by **Tanya Ragir**. Her work captures the beauty of the female form in bronze, ceramic, and other media. Tanya is a prolific sculptor whose works are widely collected---her pieces are in homes, museums, and galleries; she has won numerous national awards. Her sculptures range in size from a few inches to larger than life-size public commissions. All her work reveals the sensuality and power of the figure through realistic portraiture as well as more abstract grids, totems, and wall pieces. You can visit her website----**tanyaragir.com**---or call her at 310-390-5919.

It seems that many creative individuals choose to live or work in Mar Vista – David and Tanya are certainly two of them. The pairing of these two charming people is a real synergy of art and music. They met four years ago when David was called to Tanya’s home to evaluate and repair her piano. Much more than a piano tuner, he re-calibrates, remanufactures, and restores them – whatever is necessary to bring fine pianos back to where they can again produce tonal excellence.

He began working on pianos in 1974, eventually becoming the lead piano technician for David Abell (owner of **David Abell Fine Pianos**) who, before his death, was southern California's premiere piano dealer. After a long association with Abell, David left to open his own private piano showroom. His services as a piano technician are much sought after by recording studios as well as individual piano owners. Always on the hunt for neglected quality, hand-built grand pianos, he restores and sells them. At any given time, he has several vintage grands and a few less expensive high-quality pianos to offer the discriminating buyer.

At this stage of his life, David is inspired to facilitate others in making music. In addition to the Atelier concerts, he enjoys mentoring young musicians by helping them find their audiences without the necessity of having to land the traditional record deal with a music label. He guides them in the use of the marketing possibilities of the internet and other means afforded by today's technology. He gives to musicians and music lovers alike as much as he derives from the rich artistic life he has made here. He speaks of the "essential hook-up" – that willing exchange between people that produces giving and getting in equal measure. No surprise, since his credo is a simple one: live by the Golden Rule.

Even in L.A. the weather can be unpredictable; the Atelier concerts will be on hiatus until April or May, but David is already busy lining up the best pianists available when these intimate concerts resume next year. When spring arrives, reservations can be made by calling **(310) 457-5604**. David's daughter, **Jenika**, will be happy to hold a space for you. This is truly a

wonderful way to spend a Sunday afternoon. Check out David's website at **davidandersenpianos.com**.

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