



Amy and Jim Teirnan - Making Local Music Sweeter

Doghouse Pianos Owners Amy and Jim Teirnan Bring Their Expertise to the Area

By [Juli Mancini](#) | [Email the author](#) | July 9, 2011

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In this day and age, a house-visiting professional is not so common, but for those specializing in piano tuning and maintenance, life on the road is the only way.

Amy and Jim Teirnan of Doghouse Pianos are two such traveling piano enthusiasts. With a piano tuning business in Pawcatuck and piano refinishing at their Flanders Road shop in Groton, the Teirnans have the opportunity to keep the piano, sometimes the heart of the family, up and running.

Amy, a Wisconsin native and piano player since age 9, majored in biology and earned a minor in music. Jim, also a piano player, received a bachelor's degree with a music concentration in West Hartford.

“When I finished school, I was in the career office looking through a binder of miscellaneous music careers and saw a brochure for piano tuning. I have always enjoyed figuring out how things work,” Jim Teirnan says.

The Teirnans met fortuitously while attending North Bennet Street School in Boston, and together finished an 18-month curriculum in advanced piano technology.

“I didn’t know if it was what I wanted to do, but when I took one step into the door of that school, it was what I had been looking for,” Amy Teirnan says.

With a need for registered piano technicians in the area, the couple graduated, relocated to Pawcatuck in 2001 and opened Doghouse Pianos, followed by their shop in 2006.

Now, 10 years later, the Teirnans have a local following including Foxwoods, where they regularly service the 1936 Steinway D, a \$100,000 piano.

“Contemporary lines are beautiful, but history and character in a piano (are) really appealing; you can’t help but see the soul that’s living in there and help it come to life,” says Amy Teirnan.

One highlight of their business was working on a very rare screw stringer piano, a limited production turn-of-the-century design, which belonged to a client's grandfather. The piano had been sitting in a cottage, unplayed for years.

Employing their expertise and research, the Teirnans restored the piano and the client later learned to play piano on this restored instrument.

Amy Teirnan tells another story about sentimental value and the rewarding nature of their work.

"We had a woman in town who had a piano made by her great-grandfather," she says. "He came over to work with Steinway, and ended up starting his own piano company. She had one of his original pianos."

The Teirnans were able to get the piano working, and it then became a fourth-generation family heirloom.

The Teirnans work well together and relish the days end, sharing common interests over a meal. When not at work, Amy immerses herself in the culture at Gabriel's Martial Arts while Jim, an avid runner, also enjoys playing guitar.

They feel a great sense of reward in their vocation.

"We step into people's homes and we get a glimpse of different families - they all have that common bond of the piano," Amy Teirnan says. "Many of these people have become friends of ours and the next thing you know, you are tuning a piano at their church."