



Luigi Borgato tuning one of his pianos

Luigi Borgato, Italy

If it's the fabricated steel plate that sets Rubenstein's instruments apart, for Luigi Borgato it's the fourth string. The 49-year-old Italian maker builds large grands featuring four strings per treble note, instead of the usual three. The idea for the fourth string, he says, was suggested by Beethoven's request for more strings in the treble of a fortepiano built for him by Viennese builder Conrad Graf — an attempt to overcome the composer's growing deafness by getting more sound out of the instrument.

Another historical idea inspired Borgato to build a pedal piano — actually, two instruments played by one player — so that works composed for pedal piano by Schumann and Liszt, among others, might be performed and heard as their composers had intended.

Borgato's version stacks his 9' 3" concert grand atop a 13'

instrument fitted with 37 pedals similar to those found on an organ. A piano technician by training, Borgato finished his first piano in 1991, and continues to build his instruments one at a time — a process that, he says, takes 1,120 hours per piano. As one would expect for such handcrafted instruments, Borgato's pianos are expensive: the Model L 282 Grand Coda costs more than \$200,000, and the Double Borgato runs over \$320,000 (both prices before taxes).



Double Borgato

