



[FICTION]

That Iron String

Jack Kohl

The Pauktaug Press, PB, 262pp, \$36.99

ISBN 9780692344453

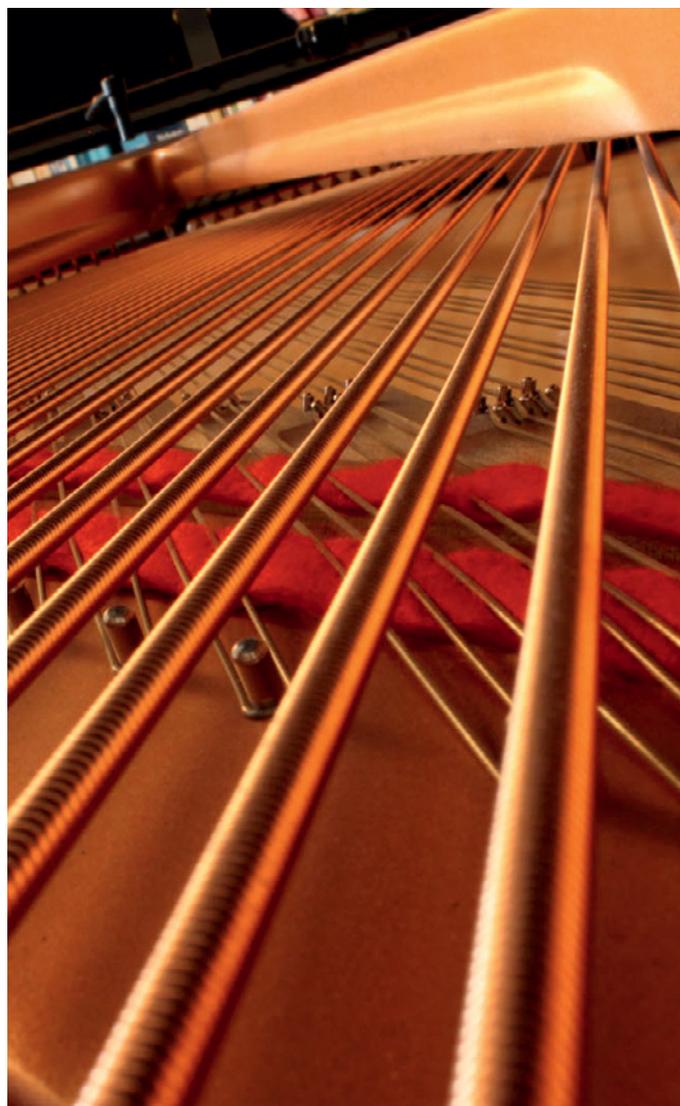
Pianists separated at birth offer ammo for a musical mystery

The piano – both the object and its sound – is central to Jack Kohl’s *That Iron String*. A refined and deliciously-entangled thriller, the novel addresses the risk, jubilation and uncertainty of becoming a concert pianist, a decision that author Jack Kohl – himself a professional pianist – presumably understands.

On a cold night, two boats are found tied to a pier between the coasts of Connecticut and Long Island. Aboard one of the stranded boats – engine still purring – are found three dead bodies and two infant boys. These two cousins, Portsmouth

and Boston, are raised in Pauktaug by relatives, the Gourds, who run a family funeral parlor business. Both boys grow up with the piano, though one turns out to be vastly more gifted than the other. The boys part ways to pursue careers as concert pianists. The day comes when, at the Gourd’s suburban home, a disassembled grand piano arrives by delivery truck. Following years of separation, the cousins return to the scene of their childhood to prepare for a piano contest.

Kohl has commented on his jumping-off point for the plot: “What if I had a pianist who knows there is nothing he can do to be playing better than he is and is still very idealistic... He wants to persist... but his career begins to wane in competitions... and he doesn’t understand why; who or what is to blame? He starts to develop this anger... where is this anger to go?” Kohl explores complex layers of rivalry, family loyalty and the struggle between man and art. The dilemma of what to do with a talent that is simultaneously the best you have to offer – and also not quite enough – is presented by Kohl with understanding and honesty. **Gordon Hamilton**



FOUR NEW BOOKS WORTH READING THIS MONTH...

[NON-FICTION]

Schubert’s Late Music

Dr Lorraine Byrne Bodley, Julian Horton

Cambridge University Press, HB, 448pp, \$282.99

ISBN 9781107111295



Offering fresh approaches to instrumental and vocal works and their reception, this book argues that Schubert’s music from 1822-8 is central to a paradigm shift in the history of music.

[NON-FICTION]

Classic FM Handy Guides

John Suchet, Daniel Ross et al

Elliott & Thompson Limited, HB, 112pp, \$26.99

ISBN 9781783962037



The UK Classic FM’s Handy Guides are a fun and informative set of introductions to stand out subjects within classical music. New releases include: Bach, Beethoven, Elgar, Mozart, Tchaikovsky and more.

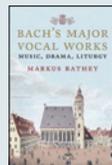
[NON-FICTION]

Bach’s Major Vocal Works

Markus Rathey

Yale University Press, HB, 248pp, \$65.00

ISBN 9780300217209



Written by a renowned Bach scholar, this concise and accessible book provides an introduction to the music and cultural contexts of the composer’s most beloved masterpieces.

[NON-FICTION]

Harmony in Beethoven

David Damschroder

Cambridge University Press, HB, 304pp, \$244.99

ISBN 9781107134584



David Damschroder’s ongoing reformulation of harmonic theory continues with a dynamic exploration of how Beethoven molded and arranged chords to convey bold conceptions.