

Kirkman grand piano #8712

Built 1852, London England

Frame: wood undercarriage, steel composite plate
Action: English grand action
Hammers of leather and felt layers
Overdampers
Pedals; damper lift
Una Corda
Range: CCC – g4 (80 notes)
Stringing: double throughout
Bass 19 notes - copper wound on iron wire
Treble - iron wire (now Pure-Sound wire)
Case: Mahogany and mahogany veneer
Rosewood trim
Restored and refinished



Abraham Kirckmann emigrated from Germany to London England in the 18th century, and like many of his compatriots founded his business of harpsichord building, eventually turning to pianos as their popularity rose. His workshop and showroom was located at 3 Soho Square.

As did others from away, he anglicised the name to Kirkman. His son Joseph joined the firm and assumed ownership at about 1800. Thomas Jefferson purchased a Kirkman harpsichord for his wife Martha on one of his trips to London. Kirkman instruments were well received in Europe, and entitled to proclaim that the firm was “Makers to Her Majesty”, a statement proudly visible on the fallboard of this example.



Following a 1853 fire of their main factory in Dufour's Place, the company was unable to continue full production and thus the business declined slowly, the remnants being offered to Collard.

This example, a 6' grand, shows some remarkable advances plus some hold-overs from harpsichord building days. It includes a composite plate constructed of a 3/16" steel hitchpin plate together with steel tubes from the rear to the pinblock. Every note has two strings, allowing the Una Corda pedal to deliver a true una corda. The keyslip is hinged as is often the case in harpsichords. As one finds in many 19th century pianos, a great emphasis is placed on cabinet styling, including elegant legs and lyre. Now completely rebuilt and refinished, it is a rare example of the work of this builder.



