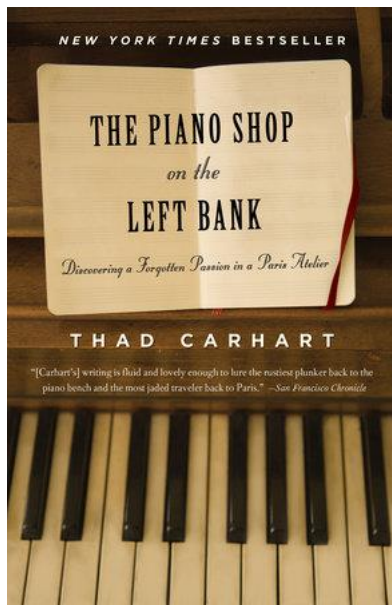




We Read - *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*

Written by [Thad Carhart](#) (2001, Random House, 268 pages)

Reviewed by GPFS Member Sue Bonfeld



An adult returning to music after many years and a peek behind the door (quite literally) of a true Paris workshop – this appealing combination forms the basis of Thad Carhart’s *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*. Mr. Carhart takes the reader along on his journey back to music and his transformation from an American expat (albeit one who has lived in France for a long time and is fluent in the language) to a true member of his Paris neighborhood.

The welling up of a desire to play music seriously again is certainly a feeling to which many adult students can relate. I found the author’s description of his journey entertaining and exciting: the search for the perfect instrument (with the help of the owner of the piano shop in the title, of course) and the burn of knowing when you have found it; what attributes truly matter in deciding upon a teacher as an adult returning student; how to practice and perhaps more importantly, how to make time for practice in the midst of work and family life; becoming part of a music community. The author’s well-written and insightful discussions of how pianos work and are cared for; their history and most especially, the craftspeople who devote their lives to keeping their magic alive make this book part musical history and part travelogue. And for those who simply want to live vicariously, his slow acceptance into his “quartier’s” inner life is a delightful window into Paris.

After finishing this book, I found myself fighting the urge to run out and buy a piano and confess to looking around online to see what was available! Don't worry – I'm back to being content with my electric keyboard and, of course, my flute, and happily opted for a wonderful used book about the history of Steinways! And I will never again avoid playing a repeat in a piece of music (inside joke - you'll need to read the book)!

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