



## Steinway

Writing from a photograph  
Thursday, July 15, 2010

I took this photograph knowing it was an icon. My mother's well-being. "My therapy" my mother used to say, as real pride slipped silkenly out of her lips. Pride in herself she never knew was there, never had words for, never could acknowledge no matter how many compliments or applause. She couldn't hold on to them - the compliments; couldn't let them take up internal space to create a place of calm, a resource for her deep loneliness. "I couldn't have made it without this piano. No psychiatry for me", she would say knowing her only daughter played music too but, more importantly, feasted on self-awareness, truth, words, and psychological understanding..

Until just a few months before she stopped eating, fully manifesting having had enough of this life, my mother played this Steinway almost two hours each day, the light shining on middle C, the Grand standing proudly in her large living room.

Every day through her 95th birthday.

Keys stand still as do the notes on the composer's page, until, of course, they are brought to life by eager hands or breath. And we know full well that the sounds are sounds of impermanence, incandescence touching our vibrating souls.

To hear, not only to see, my mother playing - playing with her at times, being her page-turner when I came to visit, - meant movement and life, sound and silence in relationship

as the keyboard itself in it's black and whites and sharps and flats and spaces and places and cracks in-between.

- all was movement and life.

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This piano became still.

Waiting.

Sorrowful.

Not knowing whether it would ever be played again.

And when it was all over last November,

when I had to find a new home for it,

the piano movers came to take it to its next home.

My mother's piano teacher's home.

Sonia, who came weekly for thirty years, who taught and performed at The Manhattan School of Music, who became a confidant as well as a loving critic, spurring Mom on to

more and more complex music and often playing 4-handed music with her, Sonia

bought Mom's piano.

And when the professional movers arrived with their tools and mallets, blankets and truck, and began to disassemble this intact Grand Steinway;

when the mallet hit the legs and then the pedals;

when they turned this Being over on its side to put it on the dolly,

I wept.

It had become and always was a sacred object, never to be touched or taken apart.

It was whole, even in its silence.

Two weeks ago, Sonia gave her last concert on my mother's piano. She is losing her hearing now.

The Steinway is in a new place, intact, and silent again.