

Viennese blood

Bösendorfer's 280VC concert grand preserves the traditional sound characteristics of its distinguished Viennese antecedents while providing a flexible, versatile instrument crafted with 21st-century precision. **Jessica Duchen** reports

I'm alone in the showroom of the Bösendorfer factory in Vienna Neustadt, Austria. Well, not quite alone: around me are 20 grand pianos, gleaming in the pristine studio. Among them, in pride of place, stands the company's flagship 280VC (Vienna Concert). This is the creation I'm here to test.

I soon find myself falling for the 280VC, lock, stock and flaming octaves. It's like a Musikverein on legs. It has everything we love about Bösendorfers: the rich, dusky tone, the eloquent legato, the mellow, relaxed sensation of sinking into the keys; but ask it for brilliance and it jumps to it, pronto. Try its magnificence at high volume and its sound flies free. Require hushed pianissimos and it goes soft to a magical degree, without any loss of evenness.

Launched in 2016, the 280VC was the result of five years of intensive research and development at Bösendorfer, facilitated by a variety of factors. Yamaha's takeover of the company in 2007 proved advantageous, for a start: Bösendorfer retained its design and manufacturing independence, preserving its distinctive character, while benefitting from Yamaha's financial input and knowhow in marketing, sales and other support.

