



*Frame by frame: Maene's Straight Strung Concert Grand (above) alongside the cross-strung Steinway Model D (above right)*

is straight-strung, he became interested in creating his own specially modified piano – a dream come true for Maene, who had already envisaged such an instrument.

Liszt's Bechstein was not restored by Pianos Maene, though they have a similar instrument in their collection. The sound is both powerful and rich. What particularly excited Barenboim in Siena was the transparency of the bass, which allows the player to delineate the music's harmonic structure very clearly and for the listener to hear every note within each chord. It allows longer pedalling without the sound becoming muddy.

If a leading artist like Barenboim can find these qualities so exciting, why haven't any modern manufacturers continued to employ straight-stringing? According

to Wolf Leye from the Antwerp showroom of Pianos Maene, the answer to this question is complicated, but can be ascribed primarily to the demand for more powerful instruments to fill bigger concert halls during the last decades of the 19th century. However, says Leye, 'there are more ways than one to approach this challenge. Steinway was very successful with the cross-strung instrument, but we contend that you can be equally successful with a different sound and different construction method. Essentially, everyone stopped using straight-stringing because they started copying one another. For example, Pleyel shifted to the production of cross-strung instruments following the Paris International Exposition in 1867 [where Steinway's cross-strung piano