

Speaking volumes

Schimmel has been producing high-quality instruments since 1885 and now makes more pianos than any other manufacturer in Germany. **Claire Jackson** surveys the complete Schimmel range, from entry-level uprights to professional concert grands

Germany has a long-standing reputation for being at the cutting edge of design and manufacturing. Companies use 'Made in Germany' as a badge of honour, implying high-quality production. This acceptance has now passed into popular culture, where anything with a direct link to Deutschland is deemed properly made. (As a dachshund owner, I am often sent internet jokes commenting on the breed's 'superior German engineering', parodying car adverts.)

The association extends to musical instruments, and Germany is considered to be the birthplace of piano making. Yamaha's hand-built models are made

in Hamburg and Blüthner's instruments come from Leipzig. But there's another producer, now based in Braunschweig, which has been making pianos of the highest quality since the 19th century. Schimmel may not enjoy the same profile as its piano-making siblings – in the UK, at least – but it is the largest German producer in terms of volume, creating around 3,000 pianos a year.

In 1885, Wilhelm Schimmel opened his workshop in Leipzig under the slogan 'quality will prevail' – a sentiment that has stood the test of time. His son Wilhelm Arno Schimmel took over in 1927 and moved the business to Braunschweig. By the mid-20th century, Schimmel had become Germany's best-selling piano brand. Today, the company collaborates with Chinese maker Pearl River, the world's largest producer of pianos, as well as continuing to grow its German-based production line.

Peregrine's Pianos is the London distributor for Schimmel, with Forsyth's in Manchester also a retailer for the brand. Dawn Howells, Peregrine's proprietor, kindly allowed *IP* to test drive the complete range of Schimmel pianos, supported by Forsyth's director Simon Loat. For this survey, we sought the talents of a professional pianist, and are grateful to Alberto Reyes for taking on the challenge.

Our trial began with the youngest addition to the Schimmel family. The German maker's strategic alliance with Pearl River in 2016 allowed the company to enter the more accessible end of the market. While the higher-end models remain hand-built in Braunschweig, the Schimmel-Pearl River connection has allowed Schimmel to produce some pianos in Guangzhou, China – home to the largest piano factory in the world. With the Chinese appetite for accessible instruments showing no signs of slowing, this move has secured Schimmel's place in

Pièce de résistance:
Schimmel's K230
Konzert Series grand



SCHIMMEL PIANOS