



Darrell and Elizabeth Scott commissioned the construction of this spacious room for their world-class piano.

—PHOTO BY JONATHAN PECE, ROCKET HORSE PHOTOGRAPHY

A home for a piano

Couple builds music room to showcase instrument, talent

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When Spokane attorney Darrell Scott was a child, he would fall asleep at night to the sound of his mother playing piano music. When he became a parent, he also played the piano to lull his children into slumber.

"At 5 years old, it's the most beautiful thing in the world," he says. "It's so orderly, peaceful."

A little more than a year ago, Scott bought a world-class grand piano on which to play; however, he had no space in his home for the 9-foot-long instrument.

Now a grandfather, Scott wanted to build a room where his piano would be the star and where he could play all of his instruments, including the guitar and bagpipes, as well as invite friends and family to enjoy music and show off their talents.

"I like music, and I play by ear, and I just love music, and I'm old enough I want

to play more music," he says. "I want a room to invite people in who like music."

Adds his wife, Elizabeth, "At some point in your life, you get to this stage where if you've wanted something badly always, and something's really important to you, you forgo some other things and say, 'This is what I really want,' and do it."

The Scotts commissioned Spokane-based Hanson Carlen Construction Inc. to design and build the music room as an addition to their house, located in rural Colbert, north of Spokane.



When considering the design of the new room, the couple and architect Ryan Ruffcorn agreed that the room needed to serve the piano, a Yamaha-cf3s concert grand that previously had been used only when world-class musicians came to Spokane on tour.

“The concert grand piano had to be the focus, so the room really wanted to reinforce the quality and craftsmanship of the instrument,” Ruffcorn says. “As I started to design this, the proportions—width by length by height—of the room was the driver for the volume of the space.”

The 900-square-foot rectangular room juts out from the southern end of the house and features 15-foot-high ceilings with about 25 windows that let in vast amounts of natural light.

The room has humidity and temperature control and an air-filtration system to minimize dust. To enhance the acoustics, the room has a 1-inch-thick walnut floor rather than carpet, and the ceiling is curved where the walls meet.



Above, Hansen Carlen Construction Inc., of Spokane, designed the addition to the home to match the rest of the house. Left, the music room features wide steps that serve as risers.

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Darrell Scott plays his cherished instrument.

“We covered the upside of the walls so you don’t get that sound trapped and bouncing in the wrong direction,” Ruffcorn says. “When you’re standing in the center of that room you feel the sound coming from all directions.”

When designing a music room, people often don’t consider how sound travels, he says. For example, unless the wall-ceiling intersections are crafted properly, sound can bounce in a number of undesirable directions.

Since the home’s original front door was located on the opposite end of the house and wasn’t easily accessed by guests, the couple opted to create a formal front door on the western side of the music room.

The door features several panes of glass with colorful shapes resembling the grass that grows in the surrounding countryside.

Visitors entering the room have a clear view of its open space, and the row of windows on the opposite wall have a view

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—Darrell Scott,
homeowner

of undulating hills of farmland and Mount Spokane in the distance.

The formal nature of the room gives way to informality with the use of country-style windows with a grill pattern and French doors leading to a wraparound porch outside.

Since the Scotts like to entertain guests, Ruffcorn designed the room with wide open spaces that would allow people to circulate easily.

On its southern end, the room is anchored by a large gas fireplace with white marble tiles and a handcrafted mantle with elegant scrollwork.

“A true masonry firebox gave a sense of permanence to the space, really anchored that end,” Ruffcorn says. “Your



eye wants to focus in on the beautiful piano. The fireplace really strengthens that end of the house.”

A light-colored comfortable couch and chairs create an inviting place to sit and listen to music.

On the opposite end of the room, a set of deep stairs serves as risers for grandchildren (or others) who might want to give an impromptu choral concert. The stairway consists of three 24-foot-long risers, then another four steps above them lead to a small anteroom between the music room and living room.

Ruffcorn says he added oval windows and other features to make the anteroom a more intimate space to transition from the music room to the main part of the house.

The music room’s lighting scheme, designed by Spokane’s Escent Lighting Gallery, seems to have a life of its own. Six large hanging chandeliers, sconces, and other fixtures provide adequate light for playing and keep the formal feeling of the room. The lights also accentuate certain parts of the piano when it’s open.

“When the house is perched on the hill at dusk, and you look at it, and all the windows and the way it’s lighted, it glows,” Ruffcorn says.

In the new room, the Scotts envision small gatherings where lovely music wafts from their world-class piano while listeners mill about, grandchildren sing on the risers, and others sip wine outside on the porch.

“It’s a fantasy,” Elizabeth says.

Counters Darrell, “No, it’s a real thing.” □



Above left, a large fireplace anchors the room. Above, Elizabeth Scott sits and listens as her husband plays.

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