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IT'S PERSONAL DESIGN

WHO: Ann-Marie Anton received a bachelor's degree in marketing from Michigan State University in the late 1980s. While in new-home construction for more than 15

years, Anton discovered her passion in home design. Her Grosse Pointe Farms-based It's Personal Design, LLC. was born in 2006 and has completed projects throughout metro Detroit, Florida, and California. In 2014, the designer was honored with a first place Detroit Home Design Award for Traditional Master Bedroom. In addition, she won a Michigan Design Center overall "people's favorite" for a table setting vignette.

INFO: 586-764-1780, itspersonalonline.net

IN TUNE: "We wanted the space to have a playful spirit about it," designer Ann-Marie Anton recalls of the room shown above and below. "Picking up the black tones from the piano, we had custom cabinetry, crown moulding, and three kite-shaped mirrors all done in black for added drama. The playful black-and-white fabric on the chairs was the inspiration for the rest of the room design. We used a more traditional carpeting, with blue and green in it, to create flow with the rest of the home."

DESIGNER'S TIPS: "If a piano is in a room with all hard surfaces, it can sound too strong and loud. Use rugs, upholstered furniture, and window treatments to soften the sound. Also, do not put your piano in an environment that has extremes in temperature or humidity; that will affect the tone and finish of the piano over time." As for lighting, "Consider task lighting. Although we used a chandelier over the piano, there's a piano light that normally sits on the piano for daily use. The homeowner did not want glare from an overhead light."



BRINGING HOME BABY (GRAND)

At the keyboard with Jim Evola of Evola Music

Jim Evola, the third-generation family owner of Evola Music, founded by his grandfather in 1931, runs piano stores in Bloomfield Hills, Canton, Shelby Township, and Traverse City. Here, he shares some piano insights and shopping tips for finding just the right piano.



FAVORITE PIANO INSTALLATION:

The Estonia grand piano at Somerset Collection in Troy. "This is the only 9-foot concert grand piano I am aware of in satin walnut. To build a piano of this size in walnut is unheard-of." The hardware was brushed satin chrome by an automobile restorer in Waterford to match the chrome chairs in the lobby. Evola installed a system in the piano so it could play CDs.

GRAND PRIZED: It's no surprise that Evola, of Bloomfield Township, has owned a few pianos in his time. He's currently in the process of upgrading to a Shigeru Kawai grand.

GRANDDADDY OF THEM ALL: Although a new grand is certainly special, the most special of them all, according to Evola, is the Bosendorfer, which is handmade in Vienna, Austria.

GRAND SHOPPING LOWDOWN: The highest percentage of grand piano buyers are families who are learning to play, Evola says. "Many people begin their musical journey practicing on a keyboard and quickly learn they need to graduate to a traditional piano if they want to succeed." As for key considerations, Evola says a good piano can last through a few generations. "I recommend potential piano owners view their purchase as an 'educational heirloom.'" Also, he says to select an instrument that sounds and looks good to you. And, of course, be sure the brand — and retailer — has a long-term reputation for quality and serviceability.