The Owner's Guide to Piano Repair

Focus On: Routine Maintenance for Your Console Piano

Information provided courtesy of:
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As an owner of a console piano you have the privilege of playing an instrument that is capable of providing very good performance and sound while occupying no more of your valuable floor space than a spinet piano. With proper maintenance, a good quality console piano will be a delight to play, providing a responsive touch and a commendable tone.

A freshly tuned console piano provides an enjoyable playing experience for beginners and accomplished pianists alike!

The following information is intended to enable you to better understand the proper maintenance required to keep your console piano in its best form.

Tuning: With any acoustic piano, following a regular tuning schedule is essential for the piano to perform up to its potential. All pianos go out of tune over time because of a variety of factors such as seasonal swings in humidity levels. An important key to your piano sounding its best is to keep it in proper tune by having it professionally serviced on a regular basis. An adequate tuning schedule for a good quality console piano being used on a regular basis is either a once-a-year tuning or twice-a-year tuning, depending on how often the piano is being played.

For a piano currently not being played but which is being maintained for future use, an annual or bi-annual tuning will usually suffice. Letting a piano go for longer than two years without tuning, however, is not recommended.

Repairs and regulation: For your console piano to perform at its peak, the first step is to perform any needed repairs to the action, then get it on a regular tuning schedule. When this has been done, the tone and touch of the piano should be evaluated to ascertain if there is a need for regulation and / or voicing, particularly if a number of years have gone by since those needs have been met. Regulation refers to the procedure of adjusting all the moving parts of the piano action so that the mechanism is performing in peak form with no wasted motion. Voicing refers to evening out and improving the tonal quality of the piano by making careful adjustments to the hammers.

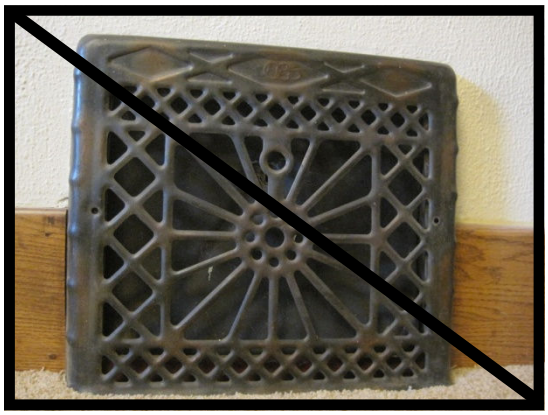
A console piano has the advantage of a action (the mechanism shown at right) which is **direct blow** (the keys extend underneath the action to push up directly on the notes being played), instead of the indirect blow style action which is found in spinets. When in good repair and regulation, the console action is capable of performing at a very acceptable level.

Pianos go "out of regulation" over time because of the fact that for every important adjustment which is made there is a corresponding felt cushion which buffers the contact points between the parts of the action. These felt cushions become compacted with age and use, and the various regulating adjustments made in the factory need to be redone in order to compensate.

"Voicing" is the process of evening out the tone of the piano from top to bottom so that each note blends in with the rest. Notes which seem out of place in the scale (too brassy in sound, for example) need to be adjusted.

In the photo to the left, a hammer is "needled" to soften the tone somewhat. <u>This is very precise work which takes an experienced hand</u>.

Environment: While tuning, repairs, regulation and voicing are the job of the technician, seeing to it that your console piano is placed in an appropriate spot within your home is up to you. What is needed, as much as possible, is a location where temperature and humidity are kept at moderate levels year-round. Drafty locations, or areas where wide swings in either temperature or humidity occur (for example, unheated porches, moldy basements, etc.) are unsuitable for any piano. In particular, avoid placing your piano in front of either of the following:

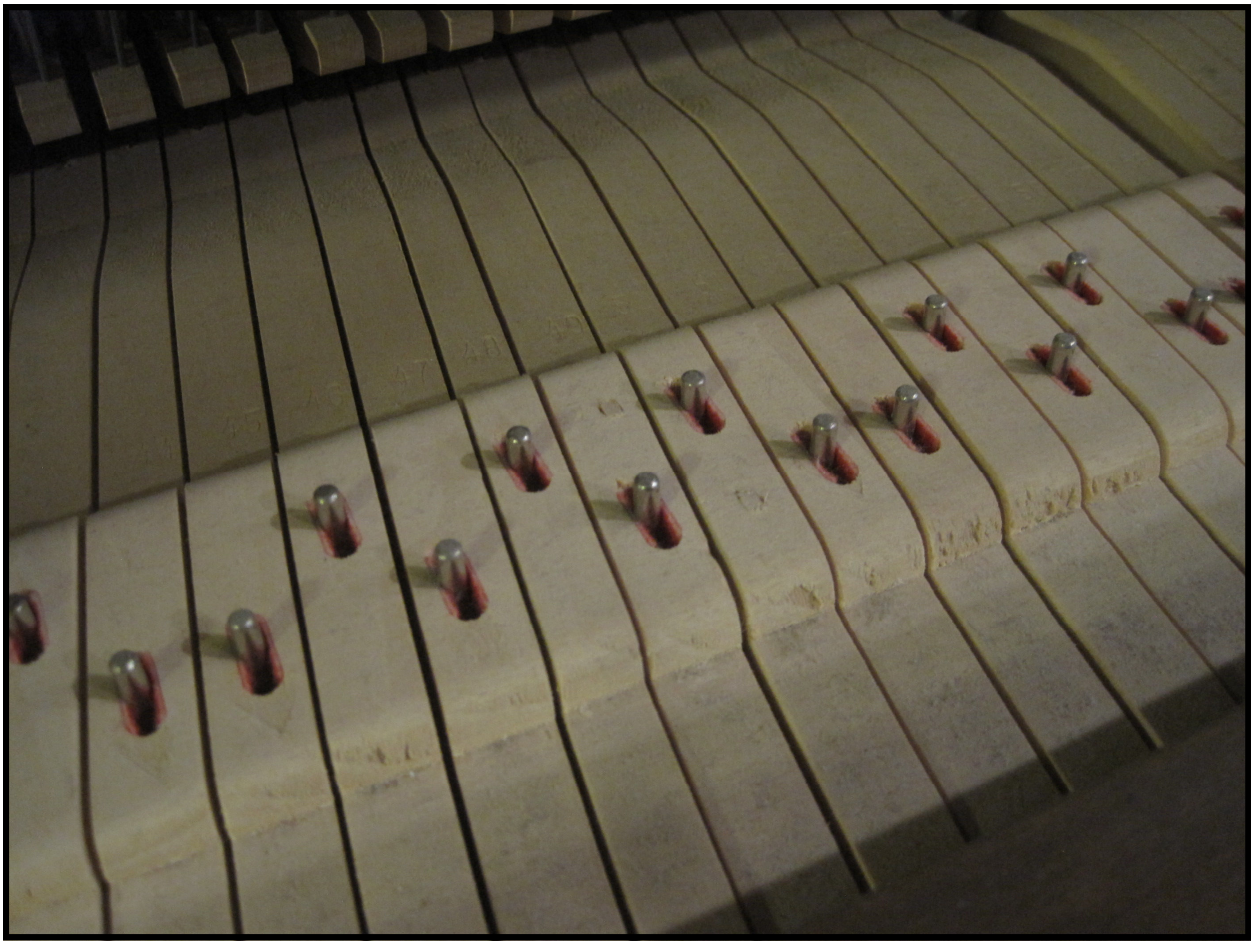


1. Hot air registers—dry, heated air blowing directly on the back of a piano is particularly bad for the soundboard.

2. Drafty windows.

Note: Effective humidity control equipment, either for the home in general or the piano in particular, will aid in keeping your piano in top form.

In conclusion: To keep your console piano performing at its best so that everyone who sits down will enjoy their musical experience, it makes sense to come up with a plan for maintaining the piano which fits both your budget and expectations. If you would like, I would be happy to schedule a time that we could sit down together and come up with a plan for a regular maintenance schedule for tuning and regulation.



A console piano gives the advantage of full-length keys.

"In business to bring your piano to its full potential."

Please advise me when you wish to have this repair professionally done.

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