

The Piano Owner's Heads-Up Guide to Important Piano Maintenance

Focus On: Routine Maintenance for Your Vintage Upright Piano



Information provided courtesy of:

Bill Davis, RPT

770.778.6881

bill@pianoplace.net

As an owner of a vintage, upright piano you have the privilege of playing music on an instrument that was built around the same time that the first Model T Fords were roaming the countryside!

With proper maintenance, upright pianos a century old or even older may be enjoyed daily, and have the potential to perform and sound as beautiful as the day they were built. "Planned obsolescence" was definitely not an idea that had occurred to the builders of these wonderful instruments! They were built to last!

Tuning: With any acoustic piano, following a regular tuning schedule is essential for the piano to perform up to its potential. An adequate tuning schedule for a piano being used on a regular basis is a once-a-year tuning, usually scheduled for approximately the same time of year each year. For the piano that is being played heavily, a semi-annual or quarterly tuning would be better yet.

Repairs: Your upright piano action has thousands of individual parts, and after decades of use, breakage may occur or parts may simply wear out. The good news is that most of the parts found in an upright piano action (the working mechanism) do not often break (even after a century or more of constant use!), and those parts that do happen to break or wear out may often be replaced with parts available to the professional piano technician, or repaired to like-new condition.



Hammers being filed to remove cut marks.

Regulation and voicing: For your upright piano to perform at its peak, the first step is to get it into tune, and to repair all broken or worn parts. When this has been done, the piano is ready to be "regulated" and "voiced." 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 of the piano.

Bill Davis, RPT

The Piano Place GA

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