

## *Basic Care and Feeding of your piano*



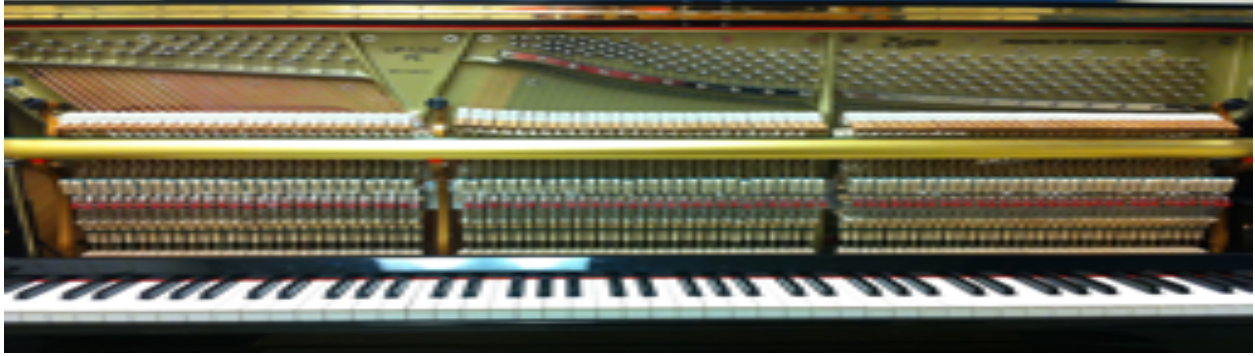
*The main reason a piano goes out of tune is because the soundboard changes shape in response to changes in temperature and humidity, whether it is played or not played.*

A piano is a machine and like all other machines it will periodically need maintenance. It is a special type of machine made of organic materials such as wood, felt and leather. Unlike most machines that are made of metal or plastic or both which are fairly rigid, pianos are far more temperamental. If it is raining, the humidity will be higher and the keys may become sluggish. If it becomes especially dry, the soundboard wood will shrink and the pitch will go flat.

Every piano owner should own a hygrometer. It is a device that measures the relative humidity (RH) in the location it is placed. Usually it is also a thermometer, but it may not be depending on the type purchased. This handy device should be kept on or near the piano at all times. Pianos like it best at about 45% RH. If it is below 20% there is a risk that the wood will crack and expensive repairs may be on the horizon. If this applies to your situation, purchase a humidifier. Anything above 60% RH and the strings will rust faster and the finish on the cast iron plate (also known as the harp) will chip and it will rust too. If this applies to your situation, purchase a dehumidifier.

The main reason a piano goes out of tune is because the soundboard changes shape in response to changes in temperature and humidity, whether it is played or not played. Pianos should be tuned twice a year, every six months. If a piano is not tuned for more than a year, there is a possibility that it will need a pitch raise, a major adjustment in string tension, before it can be tuned.

The longer it has been between tunings, the more likely it will need a pitch raise.



Over time, piano parts accumulate wear and will go out of adjustment whether it is being played or not. It will wear faster and more intensely if it is being played, but because many of the parts are organic and under tension, it will still wear if not being played. To adjust for this accumulated wear, a qualified Registered Piano Technician should be called upon to regulate the piano action, the mechanism that allows it to make sound once a key is depressed.

The same way that a piano action will accumulate wear over time, it will also accumulate dust and dirt. I have found many interesting things in pianos over the years. Aside from a lost pencil or quarter, dirt accumulation can cause problems. Dirt under the keys can cause poor response; filth under a grand piano action will make the shift pedal difficult to control; dust in the bass strings and on the soundboard will deaden the sound quality. The owner can clean the case, keys, and some dusting on the plate in a grand, but internal cleaning should be left up to a technician.

A piano is a commitment like anything else and it needs love too. Love your piano!

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## \$5 OFF YOUR NEXT TUNING

For every person you refer me to that I complete work for, I will give you a \$5 credit toward your next tuning as my thanks. This only applies to private piano owners and not to institutions (Churches, Schools, Piano dealerships, etc.).