

# Piano Guidelines

In order to maintain our equipment, we've created a set of guidelines to help prevent damage to our pianos. We ask that you adhere to these guidelines and contact [mpap-pianotech-group@nyu.edu](mailto:mpap-pianotech-group@nyu.edu) for maintenance, moving, repair and additional requests.

For **urgent requests**, contact the team two weeks in advance.

1. Students and faculty members must not attempt to “fix” problems on the pianos. For any issues, please send your concerns along with the piano and room number to [mpap-pianotech-group@nyu.edu](mailto:mpap-pianotech-group@nyu.edu)
2. Keep liquids away from the instruments. Do not rest water bottles on the music desk of a grand piano or coffee cups on top of an upright. This risks highly damaging spills, and liquids on uprights can go directly through the hinge into the action.
3. Keep the instruments away from all heating and AC units. This causes damage as serious as soundboard cracks, warping, and instability.
4. Keep the instruments out of direct sunlight. This can cause damage to both the outer case and inner mechanism.
5. Do not attempt to push or move pianos that do not have proper dollies and supports. If a classroom piano must be moved on a regular basis and does not have a dolly to facilitate this, send a message to [mpap-pianotech-group@nyu.edu](mailto:mpap-pianotech-group@nyu.edu)
6. For guidance in extended techniques, please consult the Piano Extended Techniques Protocol file (attached below).

**IMPORTANT:** Please keep in mind that the deductible on our insurance policy is \$1,000. Therefore, any repairs under \$1,000 will be the responsibility of the department.

## PROTOCOL FOR EXTENDED TECHNIQUES PIANO PERFORMANCE

Extended techniques piano use requires the performer to produce sound from means other than, or in addition to, playing the keys. Techniques employed are strumming and/or striking the strings and also the case. This can be done with either hands or hand held objects. Prepared piano use generally requires adding objects to the string system and other parts of the piano. Extended techniques and prepared use often requires marking parts and strings.

We always strive to provide a composer and/or pianist with a piano of high quality. It is no less important that a composer and pianist have a suitable instrument to make music using extended techniques. It is not in the best interest of the art to provide inferior pianos. When possible, we must provide a piano in very good working order for extended techniques use.

At the same time, we all need to bear in mind that a concert piano is a shared resource. It represents an expensive investment of both money and continual maintenance on the part of the piano technician, and both its appearance and high-level function have considerable importance to the institution and to all who use it. Even a very minor mechanical defect, like a slightly displaced damper, can make the piano unusable for performance until the defect has been remedied. Methods of marking that seem innocuous, like the use of pencil, blackboard chalk, or masking tape, can leave permanent damage to the finish, or can be difficult to impossible to remove completely. There are also risks of considerably more serious damage associated with carelessly executed extended techniques. With these things in mind, the following procedures and limitations are suggested to help guide extended uses of pianos.

**Extended techniques may only be performed on a designated piano after consultation with a piano technician and must follow these guidelines:**

- **The piano technician** must approve all structural changes to any piano. This includes

removing the lid or other case parts and attaching anything to strings or soundboard to modify the sound.

- **Touching the strings**

If you are going to be touching the strings with your hands (harmonics, plucking, rubbing) you must wash your hands first. In addition we ask that you apply a reasonable amount (not too much) of talc powder to your hands to help prevent the transfer of oil from your skin to the string.

- **Marking**

Sticky notepaper, Post-It strips/flags or small dot labels are preferred material to use for marking dampers, agraffes or strings. To mark a string node, a thin (1/8") strip of the adhesive part of a sticky note or a mailing label can be worked around the string and stuck to itself. Chalk may be used on the plain wire but never on the wound bass strings. Never use masking tape or any other adhesive that may leave a residue. Other than small stickies and chalk, there should be nothing applied directly to the strings. This includes whiteout, tape, crayon, stickers, nail polish, etc. Blu-Tack or like products are the only acceptable substances for direct application to the strings. The piano technician must approve all other substances. The performer is responsible for removing any stickers immediately after any performance.

- **Dampers**

Care must always be used when touching dampers as they are easily damaged or displaced. Sticky notepaper, Post-It strips/flags or small dot labels are preferred material to use for marking dampers. Never use chalk. The performer is responsible for removing any stickers immediately after any performance.

- **Screws and bolts**

Only use new screws and bolts, or those in like new condition, in the piano. Screws and bolts showing any sign of rust or corrosion should never be inserted between the strings. Depress the damper pedal when inserting anything between the strings. Go slowly, taking great care not to let the screw come in contact with the soundboard. Only plastic screws/bolts or similar materials softer than metal may be used when inserting between wound strings.

- **Striking and plucking strings**

Strings may be struck or plucked with fingers or guitar pick. Other devices must always be a material that will not mar or scratch strings. On steel strings only materials that are softer than the steel string may be used, such as brass or aluminum. Copper wound bass strings (copper is much softer than steel) must also be struck or plucked with a material softer than the copper. Acceptable materials might include wood, plastic, rubber and felt mallets. The general rule is that the material should not be harder than the strings. Never use a steel chisel or screwdriver on piano strings. The piano technician will help any performer in selecting materials that will not damage the piano. In some cases, literature calls for the insertion of screws or mutes between piano strings. Proper protocol must be followed when inserting screws. Metal screws must never be placed between the wound bass strings.

- **Clean up**

You are expected to clean up after yourself and leave the piano in the same condition you found it. Do not leave anything in the piano. Do not, however, risk damaging the piano for the sake of clean up. If you need assistance removing something please contact the piano technician.

- **Damage avoidance using sound and prudent judgment**

Most damage to pianos can easily be avoided by using good judgment and knowledge of the piano. Please consult with the piano technician before using extended techniques. If you are composing a piece using extended techniques, consult with the piano technician to ascertain what is safe. Usually alternatives to potentially destructive methods can be found to satisfy both the performer and this policy.

