Sympathetic Vibrations

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Kenn's helpers worked with Nathan to make perfectly good pianos to sound worse. They Nathan found that it is just as complicated to create a vivbration as it is to get rid of one. When Nathan first started today, he found a buzz in a piano that was already that way.

Dorothy knew before she even played the piano: it was the hinge. She played the piano, heard the buzz, lifted the lid and the sound disappeared. She went to the resote in Bellingham and got a tablesppon of linseed oil. With a pipet she dropped some oil on the ends of each of the hinges. Kenn suggested taking the lid off, turning it vertical and dripping the oil in from the end. Anthony tapped along the hinge with his knuckle and found several spot where the rod inside the hinge was loose and rattled.

Nathan thought of designing a flow chart for finding sounds. For example, is it inside or outside the piano? One time he thought it was the metal hangings on the wall, but it was the sostenuto rod. Hehad to remove the action and tighten the screws. If it is inside the piano, think in terms of systems, such as the pedal system, the action, the lid and lid stick, or the action. Another issue is the rails; if something is even touching the rail there can be a sound.

We checked some prepared buzzes.
One was a penny on the soundboard under the plate.
Another was a tambourine hanging on the wall behind the piano.
A third piano had a bracket that was loose and swinging.

Nathan once found that the bass damper was unhooked from the underlever, and the damper wire was resting against the sostenuto rod. It sounded as though it was coming from everywhere, but it was obvious on a certain note.

Baldwin Acrosonic had an enormous dolly installed on it, designed for a much larger piano. It turned out that the caster on one side was not touching the floor. Joe found a rattle coming from one of the casters off the ground.

Mikes's oddest sound came from a soundboard decal that had come partially unglued. It came from directly under the strings. He dripped it with superglue and pressed it down so it would hold. Since it was under the strings, he used a long needle about 4"-5" long that he screwed onto the superglue tip. He cleaned it right away with a piece of piano wire.

Dorothy had a buzz coming from dampers that had something sticky on the felt.

Del Fandrich wrote a detailed article on felt in a past issue of the Journal.

Kenn has found in Boston and Kawai pianos that the keyslip lock will rattle. Push a piece of paper from the inside down to shim it.

Joe tuned a Kawai grand. They called back a couple weeks later. The piano kept ringing even thought the dampers were fine. These people have a cat. He found that the A0 damper was twisted, so the other notes would ring from the harmonics of the lowest string.

Dorothy went to a piano that had a persistent thunk that other tuners had never solved. It was a tubby bass on the upper bass strings. She noticed the hammers were rather tarnished and a little green. She pulled out the action and saw that somebody had spilled something gooey there. She scraped it off, replaced the dampers in that section and things were fine. The spill was in random parts, but the sound came from the dampers and hammers. They used a blue scrubby.

Nathan heard a squeak from the spare damper. He removed it and when the pedal was depressed the squeak was gone. Make sure the damper lift rod is not lifting the tail of the dampers. The spring is there to overcome the force of gravity from having the rod hit the tail of the dampers. Graphite the groove with a pencil. If it's worn on the felt to the wood, add a new felt; press with a hook or screw driver.

Jim found that the metronome in the other room was buzzing. Another was the circulating fan in the ceiling. The spinning of the blades created a resonance.

On uprights there are several sounds. The dowel pins can rattle in the metal hole of the pedal levers. Dean puts a small piece of plastic tubing over the pin to silence the rattle. Another sound is a rattle or buzz from toys, wires, or objects behind the back posts and touching the sound board. Filament lamps can rattle.

Lyre braces can rattle.

Determine the type of sound: metal to metal, metal to wood, wood to wood, felt to wood, etc. Tap different locations. Run your ear front to back, top to bottom, left to right to locate the sound.

Bass string winding can come unwound. Tighten the winding with plyers, twist the string, or replace the string.

Every plate has a certain note when you hit it with your fist. Figure out what the note is.

With a small adjustable mirror on a telescoping stick and a flashlight, you can inspect the entire underside of a plate. Once Kenn found s mall piece of gravel by looking.

The Piano Hospital in Vancouver has closed its doors. The 24-26 of May they are liquidating everything. Emil Fries mortgaged his house in the 40's to open this place.