

What you should know about... Hiring a Piano Technician ..in a college and university setting



A music department in a college or university, especially a relatively large or busy one, requires a piano technician with a specialized set of skills.

The ability to produce quality tunings and to perform routine repairs and maintenance is a given, and these skills are shared by a large number of piano technicians. But a music department needs more than this. It needs pianos that are not only in reasonable tune and functioning adequately. The pianos need to be made into musical instruments.

We often call that final, detailed work which transforms a piano from adequate to beautiful “concert prep.” This meticulous work includes fine regulation and voicing, but also a large number of very finicky steps involving cleaning, brushing, lubricating, aligning, leveling, shimming, twisting, filing, etc. Concert prep skills are not nearly as common as tuning and basic maintenance skills.

In addition, a music department’s piano technician should have specialized skills in organization, scheduling, and inventory assessment and management; efficient techniques for tuning and maintenance under high use conditions; experience and knowledge in the area of humidity change and how to deal with it; possibly the ability to service harpsichords and/or fortepianos; and others.

So how can a music department find the

right piano technician? It may be possible to hire someone with experience from a previous job in higher education. But in many cases, the best course of action may be to hire or contract with someone who is available and has good basic skills, and work together with that person to develop his or her skills.

A good starting point is a Registered Piano Technician (RPT) member of the Piano Technicians Guild (PTG). The RPT designation is based on skills testing in the areas of tuning, regulation and basic repairs, and is the only accreditation in the field currently available in North America. If your present technician is not already an RPT member of PTG, he or she should be encouraged to join and to take the tests.

Beyond RPT, the piano technician should be encouraged and helped to obtain additional training, by attending regional and national seminars sponsored by PTG, and by taking advantage of factory training opportunities. Steinway, Yamaha, and Kawai all offer intensive training programs in the United States, and others are available in Europe and Asia.

There are many resources available from the PTG specifically aimed at the college and university piano technician. The college

and university technicians (CAUT) committee of PTG has prepared and published a comprehensive Guidelines for Effective Institutional Piano Maintenance. There is a listserv discussion group devoted specifically to CAUT concerns,

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and its discussions are archived and available for research. Classes aimed specifically at skills needed in higher education are offered each year at the PTC Annual Institute. There is a CAUT web page, www.ptg.org/caut, devoted to resources for college and university piano technicians.

The CAUT committee is currently working toward some form of certification or credential, which would demonstrate a commitment to on-going training in areas pertinent to work in a college or university environment. As a first step in this process, a "Continuing Education Log" has been developed, allowing a technician to document classes and training sessions.

In short, the ideal piano technician for a music department is an RPT member of PTC who is actively taking advantage of training opportunities, is subscribed to the CAUT listserv, and is dedicated to transforming pianos into wonderful musical instruments.

**Look for this logo
when seeking a
qualified technician
to care for your piano.**



For more information about caring for your piano and to find a Registered Piano Technician in your area, contact:

Piano Technicians Guild

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