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THE SOUNDBOARD

Summer/Fall, 2005

Welcome!

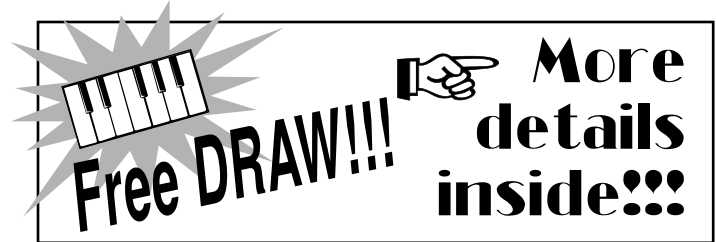
It's *Corn & Apple* time again for this issue of *The Soundboard!* Thanks to all who stopped by to visit the Pianoworx table at Morden's Corn & Apple Festival Aug. 26-28, enter the draw and take advantage of our special promotion offer.

By the time some of you receive this issue, that event will be history, but you're not being left out of the picture! We are extending that draw also to our mail-out friends, so take time to look carefully at the draw details posted in this newsletter.

This year in addition to free tunes, we are offering a chance to win a complete *Piano Life-Saver System* for an upright piano. Plus, if you book your fall tune at the same time you enter the draw, you immediately qualify for 10% off the regular first-tune-of-season rate even if yours isn't one of the winning names drawn! Has your piano already been tuned this season by Pianoworx? No problem! We'll just credit you for the next tune.

A number of people have inquired about purchasing a used piano, so basic tips about what to look for is a topic addressed in this issue.

Have a question about pianos and their operation



and maintenance, or about related products and accessories? Call, write or email and we'll do our best to find the information!

Do you know of a piano-owner or piano student who might like to receive this newsletter? Feel free to pass along your copy, or contact us for extra copies and we'll send more. Better yet, ask if you can forward their contact information and we'll send it directly to them.

Please note the web site address in the banner at the top of this page. It's just getting started, but is meant to supplement this newsletter and extend other service and information to you.

It's all about putting the fun back into piano playing by putting the fun back into the sound! Remember: the piano *produces* the tone, but it's the tuner alone who *preserves* it!

## TRADING POST

*Listing of want ads and for sale items is a free service for customers, open to pianos, piano music and related products, supplies and parts. Please note that by listing such items, Pianoworx in no way endorses or guarantees any item. Selling price is determined solely between the seller and buyer.*

### FOR SALE...

►For Sale: Older "Packard" upright piano. Asking \$500. Contact Courtney Davison, 211 Gilmour St., Morden, ph. 822-5657.

►For Sale: Full-size upright piano, manufactured by Mozart Piano Co., Toronto. Contact Sharlene Wiebe, 225 Hemlock Bay, Winkler, ph. 325-9685 or 349-3336.

►For Sale: "Henry Herbert" 49.5" upright piano for sale, manufactured by Mason & Risch. Contact Barb Dueck at Winkler Seniors Centre, ph. 325-8964.

►For Sale: Lesage apartment-sized piano. Contact Joanne & Harv Warkentin, 330 Grant St, Morden, ph. 822-5242.

►For Sale: Gerhard Heintzman apartment-sized piano, like-new condition. Contact Lydia Friesen, 891 Gilmour St, Morden, ph. 822-4542.

►For Sale: apartment-sized piano, La Ronde Lillus. ph. Debbie Hennan, Roland, ph. 343-2511.

►>>>SOLD!!>>>Lesage apartment-sized piano for sale. Leona Penner, Morris, ph. 746-6143.<<<SOLD<<<.

### WANTED...

►Wanted: second-hand upright piano, preferably larger than apartment-sized. Contact Lorinda Schramm, 53 Glenview Drive, Morden, ph. 822-3100.

►Wanted: good, second-hand piano. Contact Parviz Salimi, 9 Southdale Bay, Morden, ph. 822-5208.

## Used piano buyer's guide

An acoustic piano is a marvelous piece of engineering that accomplishes its sound with remarkable power and volume—and does it all without electricity or electronics. Does it so well, in fact, that digital pianos are critiqued on whether or not they feel and sound “just like a real piano”!

Well then, why not have a real piano if that's what the electronic versions try so hard to imitate?

One major advantage of an acoustic piano is that it doesn't become obsolete in two to five years' time. Face it—in most cases a good piano is a lifetime investment. My own piano has appreciated in value, and who could have foreseen that the replacement cost would double as it has?

Because buying a piano is something we do so seldom, the average person has little or no information on the subject. Even your local piano teacher may have just a vague idea of what goes on inside his or her instrument.

So here goes: a primer in basic piano evaluation for prospective buyers:

The main items to consider are: 1)cabinet/case; 2)soundboard; 3)strings, tuning pins, bridge; 4)action (moving parts) and keyboard; 5)pitch.

Those are the objective factors and not necessarily in order of importance. Numbers 2, 3 and 4 are the heart of your piano, and number 4 reflects those three. Ignore them and you may end up with the equivalent of buying a car without an engine and transmission. More subjective but still important are tone and

touch/playability of the keyboard. The cabinet exterior is the least important. All things being equal, the taller the piano the better the tone and stability of tuning.

**1)Cabinet:** It's nice to have an elegant case, though it really contributes little to the piano's function. But a well-kept finish and cabinet may be indicative of the care the instrument has received. Will you need to move the piano? Does it have good casters? Is the music desk intact and functional? Does the fallboard (key cover) work?

**2)The soundboard** is the equivalent of the diaphragm or speaker cone in your stereo speaker. It's the large sheet or continuous panel of wood visible behind the support posts at the back of the piano. If you can't get at the back of the piano, open the panel below the keyboard where you can see a large portion of the soundboard behind the strings. Ideally there should be no cracks in a healthy soundboard, and the ribs that give “crown” or shape to it should not be loose and separated from the soundboard (you can only see the ribs from the back). A hairline crack or two may be tolerable if the ribs are well attached, but watch out for buzzes or rattles when playing. A badly deteriorated soundboard may mean the instrument is not tunable.

**3)Strings, tuning pins and bridges:** a)**Strings:** look inside the top of the piano or better yet, remove the front panel above the keyboard if you can and the owner will let you. Is there rust on the strings? Are there broken strings? Why? If the plain wire strings

**FREE DRAW!!!**

**Enter to win!**

**Piano Tune ♦ Piano Life-Saver**

Submit name, mailing address and phone by email/post/phone to Pianoworx (see page 1).

*Special offer to mail-out contacts: 10% off 1st-tune-of-season regular rate 'til Dec. 16 if you book your fall tune at the same time you enter the draw!!!*

### Entry Rules:

- Valid for Manitoba entries within 100 mile geographic radius of Morden. Limit one entry per person, church, school or organization. Complete telephone and postal contact information required for eligibility.
- 1st prize: Piano Life-Saver System for upright piano and tune; 2nd & 3rd prize: free 1st-tune-of-season (tune only).
- Limit one prize per household/group.
- Prize delivery subject to consent of authorized representative, or parent or guardian for winners under 18 years.
- Entries accepted until Sept. 16, 2005.
- Draw takes place 11 a.m. Monday Sept. 19/05 at Morden Chamber of Commerce.
- Winner must accept prize as advertised by Dec. 16, 2005. No substitute prize or cash awarded.
- Piano technicians, piano vendors or employees, and immediate family of proprietor/household not eligible.k

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes! Contact me to book a fall tune at 10% off regular rate.  
Suggested date: \_\_\_\_\_

are shiny like a finish nail, that's a good sign. There are three strings per note in the treble, two strings per note in the high bass (sometimes three) and single strings in the low bass. Look at the bass strings (left end) which are wound strings. Broken bass strings must be custom made and are in the neighborhood of \$30 each to replace. Are they steel wound or copper wound?

New strings will be copper wound, and will sound different amid old, steel-wound strings. b) **Tuning pins:** is there rust on the tuning pins? Or, is there spray paint on the tuning pins in an attempt to hide rust (yes, there are some of those, in which case you may be advised to quietly look elsewhere or at least get an expert opinion). Is there discoloration around each tuning pin, or even a buildup like sludge? This indicates an attempt has been made to treat loose

tuning pins, and the pin block (not visible) may have issues. c) **Bridge:** This is a strip of wood about two to three inches wide/high and attached to the soundboard, that extends beneath the strings from the treble end diagonally to the bass end. The bass bridge is separate and at the bottom of the piano. The bridges connect the strings to the soundboard for transmission of sound. The strings cross the bridge through two offset rows of bridge pins. Especially at the treble end, look for cracks in the wood of the bridge extending from the bridge pins. There should be none, or very few and small cracks. Depending on the severity of these cracks, the piano may not be tunable.

4) **Action:** this includes hammers and related parts along with the keys. Consider also the pedals and how they work the dampers. Are there excessive grooves cut in the hammers? Is there off-centre wear on the hammers? Are all the hammers and shanks evenly spaced, or do they wobble from side to side? Any broken? Play each note: does each note play its own note cleanly? Are some hammers sluggish? Is any note wildly out of tune with its neighbor, or is the overall tune of the piano consistent, even if it evidently needs tuning? Take special note of the bass section where the hammers must strike strings on an angle—listen if the hammers strike two notes at once.

Small pianos are more susceptible to problems with this as the hammers wear. You may need to press/depress the damper pedal while striking each note individually in order to detect this problem. Are some keys sluggish? Or, is there excessive side-to-side movement of the keys such that they click against

each other? What about the keytops? Are they badly chipped and broken? Will that interfere with playing? If the keytops are newly replaced, is it an expert job?

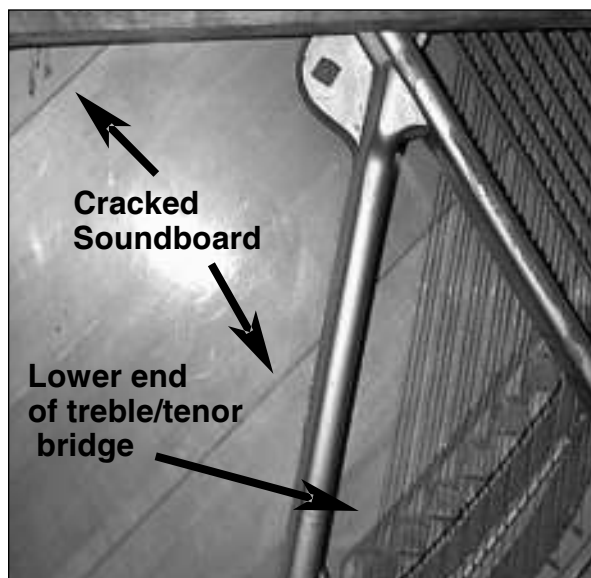
5) **Pitch:** A novice will find this hard to assess. A guitar-tuner with chromatic note option may give a rough idea in the centre section if you can mute two of the three strings per note, for which the piano must be opened. Alternatively use a tuning fork to roughly gauge the pitch of the corresponding note. If the piano has been neglected, even though in good

condition, it may require a two, three or even a four-pass tune to bring it up to pitch, at extra cost.

**Conclusion:** it's tempting to purchase a low quality instrument with the idea of waiting to see if junior "is interested and then perhaps we'll buy something better". Think twice. The flaw in that logic is that if the instrument isn't enjoyable to play, junior will lose interest.

Compounding the problem of a "beater" instrument is when the new piano owner doesn't have it regularly tuned—no less than once per season and preferably two or even three times per season. It's just part of maintenance, like changing the oil in your car. Parents and teachers wonder why the student doesn't enjoy practicing; the student doesn't have the understanding to explain how the sound is "sour" and disagreeable; the parents don't have the experience to know; and the teacher never hears the student on his own instrument, only on the teacher's piano. Meanwhile the teacher wonders what is happening to his or her student retention, and why so few students become accomplished pianists.

Invest in a good instrument, and then maintain it with regular tune and service. It will reap dividends. There's nothing that takes the fun out of piano playing like a rickety, out-of-tune instrument. Conversely, a newly-tuned piano sounds so good that a keen student will play it just for the joy of hearing the sound.



***The student doesn't have the understanding to explain how the sound is "sour" and disagreeable.***

## Piano Life-Saver Systems stabilize tune, extend longevity

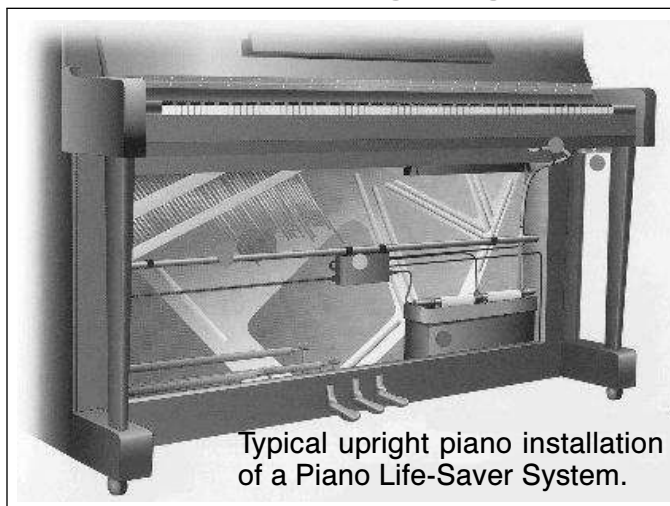
In Manitoba's humid summers and dry winters, smaller pianos especially do experience extreme swings in pitch, as much as a half tone or even more if left unserviced.

Even worse the piano parts begin to fail and soundboards crack as glue joints separate. Air conditioners and furnace humidifiers help, but are still less than satisfactory.

A *Piano Life-Saver* system moderates these extremes. For a complete description, ask for a color brochure. All systems include humidistat, dehumidifier and humidifier components. 5-Part upright (5PS) and Grand systems (G6PS) include water fill kits and LED monitor panel. 5PS and G6PS system can also be equipped with a Smart Heater Bar (SHB) to warn of wick failure and shut down the humidifier element. Prices include installation. Taxes extra.

**Used system:** One-only, second-hand 3-part system for upright piano: with original 25-watt dehumidifier, suitable for very small piano, \$195. With upgraded dehumidifier for larger piano, \$235.

**New Vertical system:**  
 3PS-V (economy system, no fill kit).....\$343.75  
 5PS-50-UT (best buy).....\$385.00



5PS-50-UT-SHB..... \$445.00

**Grand Systems:**

G6PS-50-UT..... \$468.00  
 G6PS-50-UT-SHB..... \$518.00

**Large Grand Systems:**

G7PS-50-UT (dual humidifier) ..... \$665.00  
 G7PS-50-UT-SHB..... \$780.00

### Tune Fee Schedule...

At right is the Pianoworx tune fee schedule offered for single versus multiple pianos per booking. Take advantage of the savings offered for customers who co-ordinate to have more than one piano tuned per service call to their area!

### Historic Tunings...

Are you a pianist currently studying period music? Would you like to try something "outside the box" with an alternative tuning to get a taste of the tone colors originally associated with that music? Today we almost universally tune keyboard instruments by a system called 'Equal Temperament' so that all keys are equally in-tune—or out of tune, if you prefer! The leading tune system of the 18th and 19th centuries was the 'Well-Tempered' scale, or unequal temperament, which favors some keys over others, offering key-coloring that supports the concept of 'character of the keys'.

If you're interested in experimenting with historic sounds, inquire for your next tune.

*Please note: the annual tune season commences July 1st and ends June 30th.*

Radius distance from Morden:	# pianos per call	1st tune of season	2nd tune of season	3rd tune of season	4th tune of season
0-50 miles	1	\$85	\$65	\$60	\$55
	2	\$80	\$60	\$55	\$50
	3	\$75	\$55	\$50	\$45
50-100 miles	1	\$90	\$70	\$65	\$60
	2	\$85	\$65	\$60	\$55
	3	\$80	\$60	\$55	\$50
	4	\$75	\$55	\$50	\$45

*Pianos requiring a multi-pass tuning in order to raise or lower and stabilize at standard pitch (A=440) are subject to extra charge. Repairs extra.*