Under the Lid: The Art & Craft of the Concert Piano Technician

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- Who is a concert piano technician?
- The goals:
  1. No obstacles to musical expression
  2. A low-stress experience for the pianist
  3. A successful concert

A Proven Routine

- 1. Learn all you can about the artist and the repertoire well before the event.
- International Piano Quarterly
- Great Pianists Speak for Themselves
- Repertoire
- 2. Tune the piano and go through The Concert Checklist.
- Do this tuning and service before rehearsal if possible
- Pitch
- 3. Meet with the artist either before or after the rehearsal.

Do:
- Be brief
- Be positive
- Ask their opinion of the piano
- If you have questions about the program or the rehearsal schedule, ask
- Let them know when you’ll be back to touch up, and that they can leave a note with any special requests
Do Not:

- Shake hands unless the pianist offers first
- Give unsolicited advice
- Give solicited advice, unless it’s about the piano or the hall
- Talk about yourself
- Spend more than a minute or two unless the artist is doing the talking

4. **Listen to part of the rehearsal**

- Move around the hall, note how piano sounds different on stage than in hall.

5. **Touch up the tuning after the rehearsal**

- No voicing changes at this time unless specifically requested by the artist
- Don’t clean the keys at this time
- Don’t adjust the height of the bench

6. **Attend the Concert**

- Sit in the house, not backstage
- Make notes about the artist, the piano, the program

7. **Greet the artist following the performance**

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**The Concert Checklist**

1. Key Bushings/pins
2. Pedal noise
3. Damper pedal timing; damper-up-stop rail
4. Shift pedal
5. Keyframe bedding
6. Cheating jacks
7. Let-off & drop
8. Voicing
9. Backchecks
10. Repetition springs
11. Buzzes & rattles
12. A visual check
13. The bench

Tuning for Concerts

The Goal:
A solid, breathtakingly fine tuning

- Tuning for Concerts:
  The piano’s environment
- Stage lighting
- HVAC
- Seasonal changes
- Outdoor concerts
- Tuning for Concerts:
  Tuning technique
- Analyze the existing tuning
- Tuning hammer technique
- How hard to hit?
- Testing the string
- The forearm smash
- Electronic tuning aids
- Tuning for Concerts:
  The Piano’s Condition
• Tuning pin tightness vs string-bearing friction
• Tuning for Concerts:  
  The Piano's Condition
• Tuning pin tightness vs string-bearing friction
• Dealing with high string-bearing friction
• Dealing with low string-bearing friction
• Dealing with false beats
• Tuning for Concerts:  
  The Art of Touching Up a Tuning
• Why touch up?
• How long do you have?
• Unisons: dead-on, or on the edge?
• Tips for faster tuning
• Most efficient order
• Avoiding a flat treble
• Quick treble tip
• Know the repertoire!

A happy story!