

UCSB Music Department

Non-Traditional Piano Use Policy

Policy Regarding Extended Techniques for Piano

April 16, 2009

3rd Revision 10/18/2012

IMPORTANT NOTE: Mandatory viewing of the DVD video titled "Non-Traditional Piano Use" is required prior to application of any extended techniques. It is available at the Arts Library 2nd floor Music Service Desk and clearly details procedures outlined in this policy. Also available for checkout is the excellent book "The Well-Prepared Piano" by Richard Bunker.

1. Structural Changes:

All structural changes to any piano must be approved by and in many cases performed or supervised by the piano technician. This includes removing the lid or other case parts and attaching anything to the strings, case or soundboard to modify the sound.

2. Marking strings, bridges & dampers:

Small removable colored adhesive dots may be used on dampers, steel strings or agraffes to mark notes. Post-Its - just a very small strip from the adhesive part- may also be used. For bass strings the dots may be used or colored yarn can be tied around the wound (bass) strings. (Tie on only one string of the unison).

Never use masking tape or any other adhesive/product that may leave a residue. There should be nothing permanent or damaging applied directly to the strings or dampers. This includes chalk, whiteout, tape, stickers, crayon, dry markers, nail polish, putty, etc. No solvents may be used for any purpose on the piano. ***(Note: Masking tape and chalk use as demonstrated on the DVD is in disagreement with this policy. For our purposes no chalk or masking tape may be used for marking strings)***

Care must always be used when touching dampers as they are easily bent.

All markers must be removed immediately after rehearsals

and performances.

3. Internal preparation materials:

"Never force anything between the strings."

- Richard Bunger

In some cases, literature calls for the insertion of bolts, screws, rubber, felt, plastic and/or wood material between piano strings. Materials softer than the strings such as brass or aluminum are preferred. If steel must be used please make sure to follow correct the installation procedure. Inserting screws or bolts between the wound bass strings is not allowed, however rubber or felt preparations may be used. **When installing and removing preparations the sustain pedal must be depressed to raise the dampers off the strings to avoid damage to the damper felt.** Placements are made over the soundboard not the action. Strings must be spread slightly (as shown in DVD) while placing and removing bolts. Coarse threaded screws must be screwed up & down between strings. Do not contact soundboard with bottom of bolts/screws.

All preparations must be removed from the piano immediately after all rehearsals and performances.

4. Surface preparations:

Please contact the Piano Technician

5. String excitement

Hands must be clean and dry prior to touching the strings. Strings may be struck, plucked or scraped with fingers or other approved materials. Devices must always be of a material that will not scratch or otherwise damage strings. On steel strings only materials that are softer than the steel string such as brass, aluminum or plastic may be used. Copper wound bass strings must also be struck or plucked with a material softer than the copper. Acceptable materials include leather, felt and rubber. Please limit hand use on the bass strings, as the oils from hands are highly corrosive to the copper winding.

Steel chisels are not allowed. Contact the piano technician for alternatives.

Drumming directly on the soundboard with any mallet is not allowed.

Strings must be wiped down with a soft, clean and dry cloth immediately after rehearsals and performance.

"Piano preparation should be a non-violent activity"

- Richard Bunger

6. Extreme volume:

There is a fine line to be drawn between passionate musical expression and outright banging on a piano. Please use good judgment when playing above forte. Harsh playing is damaging and will not be tolerated.

7. Common sense:

Most damage to our pianos can easily be avoided by using good judgment. Please consult with the piano technician and piano faculty before using any extended techniques. Usually an alternative can be found to satisfy both the performer and this policy.

8. UCSB pianos available for preparation:

Authorization and review is required from the Piano Technician prior to application of any extended techniques on the pianos listed below. No other pianos may be used without consent of the Piano Technician.

The LLCH Baldwin 9' concert grand
Certain other restrictions may apply.

The GH Kawai 7'6" player grand piano
Certain other restrictions may apply.
Additional authorization from Professor Clarence Barlow is required.

9. Other practices subject to approval:

Any extended techniques not covered in this policy or DVD please contact the Piano Technician for approval prior to application.

Any unauthorized use of extended techniques may result in loss of piano privileges.