

## Who Tunes Your Piano?

Every student should have a quality, well-maintained, acoustic piano. Your piano is “teaching you” every time you play it. If it is continually out of tune, then your ear learns the wrong scale degrees.

Think of children in countries with other musical traditions, such as authentic Chinese or Arabic music. The oriental tones and scales—which sound so strange and foreign to us—sound completely normal to them. In fact, they think the Western tonalities that we use in classical music sound bizarre by comparison!

When we also consider how easily we learn to recognize different accents in languages, we should not be surprised that the ear is so adaptable and flexible. This helps us understand why a student who always plays an out-of-tune piano fails to develop an accurate sense of pitch. The student is learning the wrong scale degrees.

Not only will the child not enjoy practicing much on the out-of-tune piano...the student will also find that playing the teacher’s piano at lessons is frustrating. Everything will sound “wrong” compared to the way things sound at home. The student may become discouraged and feel a sense of failure at lessons. This is definitely not what we want our students to feel!

Once a piano is in tune, we also have to consider how it plays. If the tone, touch, and voicing are harsh, uneven, or unnatural, then playing beautifully becomes impossible. Why? Because a piano in this condition is uncontrollable. Think of driving a car that is badly out of alignment, or writing with a pen that lays the ink down unevenly or blotches.

As you can see, both tuning and technical service are important for making a piano be a really good instrument. I recommend tuning and technical service at least once a year. Technical service is needed only once a year, unless a string breaks, or some other repair is needed. Regarding tuning, though: if you want your child to progress faster and fight less about practice time, then tuning two to four times a year is a good idea.

For piano tuning and technical service, I officially recommend the services of Roger Hayden in the Scranton area, and Matt Struzinski in the Harrisburg-Hershey-Carlisle area.

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