

### **Piano Moving Courtesy, Damage Control, and Etiquette**

Should your piano be damaged in transit, there are several things that you should know. First of all, it is in the best interest of the mover that you not have pictures of your piano before it is moved. We suggest that you take pictures of your piano with a flash before you ship from the front, sides, top, etc... with some close-ups, and be sure to cover everything. If there is a nick on it, be sure you can see it in the pictures. Pictures that do not show clearly each section may not be available for insurance claims. It is up to you to provide proof that the piano was damaged, not up to them to prove that they didn't do it. Some homes have kids who throw toys at their pianos, and many are already scratched up pretty good. Don't expect someone to discern which ones were there before, and which ones are there now.

Don't take advantage of a scratch to fix the other ones, but feel free to call on the mover to help you find a good finish guy. A local Steinway store may bill you \$4,000 for a fix, then pay his "Steinway Certified" repair guy \$250 to fix it. Most movers have direct access to good repair guys without the overhead. Use this to your advantage if you would like to get it refinished, touched up, or repaired, just ask for a referral. They are usually more than happy to help, especially if they may have put a new dent on your piano.

Know that the weight of a piano in itself can cause dents on its finish. About two out of every three local moves receive some sort of a ding or dent on the piano due to poor handling, padding, or mishaps due to weight shifts. Most good long-haul movers will have 200-300 pads to protect the pianos on say a 24 foot box truck, and do everything that can possibly be done to protect the piano. Crating a piano is not necessary except when a forklift will be handling it. If you plan to ship it overseas or air-freight, or it will be stored with a forklift using storage company, you will want it crated, but it's usually an unnecessary extra \$1,000 you'll pay.

You can usually tell a piano that has been moved a few times because there are more dings and dents on them. As long as the little ones are on the back or in unnoticeable places, it's best just to live with them. Most insurances have a \$500.00 to \$2,000 deductible for damages. On wood finishes, little nicks that pierce the finish can be covered easily with a stain stick, or black pianos with a black marker to make the blemishes "disappear." Deeper dents can be fixed with a "putty stick" or other crayon type fill sticks, then sanded with 600 grit sand paper, and finally gone over with an appropriate colored stain stick. Use this to fix years of abrasions by the kids on a piano, and make it look almost new again.

In order to file a claim, be prepared to come up with the deductible in advance. Chances are, you could pay a \$1,000 deductible for a fix that only cost the mover \$200.00, with a retail bill of \$1200.00. The best thing to do for small repairs is to ask for a good referral, and pay for small dings and damages, or even broken legs on the bench. It should be cheaper than the deductible for most fixes. Most coverages will cover the fair cost of a repair, and not actual costs. It may mean that the piano must be picked up and taken to a shop where it may receive more damage in transit, so don't risk it unless it's a big damage.

Use the insurance for what it was intended. If the truck crashes, the piano falls off the ramp, the piano goes down the stairs, or any number of Laurel and Hardy fiascos happen to your piano, that's when it's time to file a claim. Know that even then, most movers are tied to music companies, and you can probably ask for another piano, and they'll have quick access to one to deliver to you that will likely be much better than the one you had.

Tips: If your mover is good, courteous, and offers you a pleasant experience, please tip the drivers. They have been on the road for possibly weeks, probably going 15 hours per day on the road, probably sleeping in one or two hotels per week, showering at truck stops, are tired and weary and put on a pretty face to be presentable. Tips should range from \$20 each to \$100 each, and or include some cookies, fresh food, some bottled water, etc. Know that in today's markets with today's fuel prices and a rental truck, it would cost probably \$5000 plus to move it yourself, plus a good amount of time away from home and work. Paying for a piano move is a great value for the work that is done. Help keep the hard working guys in business so we can stay home and enjoy our pianos.