

Schaff Piano Supply Company Presents:

Removing Bass Strings for Duplication

Basic Step-by-Step Procedures

Belly Work



By Chuck Behm

Removing Bass Strings



-Rationale-

Replacing the bass strings in an older upright is oftentimes a very worthwhile undertaking in that a dramatic improvement in the tone of the piano in the bass is often realized. Older uprights many times have a particularly ‘tubby’ tone in the bass. A new custom-made set of copper wound strings helps to add a renewed vibrancy and deeper richness to the bass of an older piano.

New bass strings may be installed as a separate job, or may be included as part of a larger project involving the restringing and repinning of an entire piano. It’s a job which can be done in the customer’s home in two visits, or in the shop in the course of a restoration project.

Careful removal of the old set of bass strings to be bundled, boxed and sent to Schaff Piano Supply Company for duplication, is the first step in the successful completion of this job. Following are the step-by-step procedures to correctly and efficiently remove the old bass strings from a piano.



Step 1: For any restringing or repinning job involving a vertical piano, putting the piano on its back will make it easier to work on. A [shop repair truck \(Cat. No. 1901\)](#) makes tipping the piano onto its back an easy process. (For safety sake, always complete this procedure with two people.)



Step 2: If the bass string replacement is a part of an over-all restringing project, let down the tension on the entire piano first. Using a tuning hammer such as the [nylon extension lever \(Cat. No. 16\)](#), turn each pin counter-clockwise approximately three quarters of a turn, using a pattern to gradually bring down the tension from one side of the plate to the other. If the bass strings alone are being replaced, however, do not back off the tension of the entire piano.



Step 3: Once the tension on the piano as a whole has been let down, move from one side of the bass to the other, backing the tension off each string another one half turn or so. (A full turn if you are restringing the bass alone.) Lift each string up and off the upper bridge with your left hand as you pivot the tuning hammer with your right.



Step 4: With the entire set of strings slack across the lower bass bridge, remove the first string on the right from the bridge pins and hitch pin. Grasp the string above the bridge pins and pull upwards sharply to release. Thread the loop of the freed bass string on a copper wire. (The ground wire from a short length of Romex works perfectly for this job.)



Step 5: Removing one string at a time, thread the loop of each string onto the copper ground wire. (The ground wire itself should have a loop at the end to prevent the bass strings from slipping off.) If any strings are missing from the set, mark the position of the missing strings with a felt center or front rail punching. Be very careful to keep the strings in order as you go. To avoid confusion, never remove more than one string at a time from the hitch pins.



Step 6: Once the entire set of bass strings has been removed from the hitch pins and the loop of each string has been threaded onto the ground wire, put the end of the copper wire through its own loop and pull the set into a tight circle. Twist the end of the copper wire into a knot so that the set of strings is secure.



Step 7: Return to the top end of the piano and cut all the bass strings as close to the tuning pin coils as convenient. A variety of tools at differing prices are available for this job, including:

- Diagonal music wire nippers (Cat. No. 238)
- Music wire cutters (Cat. No. 227)
- Music wire cutters (Cat. No. 228 [6" long] or 229 [7" long])
- Starrett Wire Cutters (Cat. No. 225A [5 1/2 " long] or 225B [7" long])

(Starrett Cutters are shown in picture.)



Step 8: Taking the set of strings from the piano in a bundle, hold them as shown to make a large loop suitable for putting in a box to mail. With your hands on either end of the set of strings, begin by bending the strings inwards.



Step 9: Cross one end of the bundle of strings over the other end. With your right hand firmly holding the strings where they intersect, put your left hand through the center of the loop, and grasp the end of the bundle which is secured by the copper wire.



Step 10: Brace the bundle against your knee as shown, and pull the loose end of the bundle through the center of the loop. Pull it far enough through that it stays in place when you let go of the strings.



Step 11: Further secure the bundle with several lengths of duct tape. Fill out an identification card with your name and address, and the pertinent information about the piano being worked on. Attach this to the copper wire.



Step 12: Box up the strings and identification label, and deliver to your post department to have them shipped on their way to Schaff Piano in Lake Zurich, Illinois. At Schaff's Stringing Department, Jose Gonzalez, Steve Schuh, Tom Smith and Jerry Hedges will bring their combined 115 years of experience to the job. Soon a set of new strings will be delivered on your doorstep, ready to be installed in your customer's piano.

Tools:

For your convenience, the tools necessary to complete this procedure are listed with corresponding catalogue numbers.

Shop repair truckCat. No. 1901

Nylon extension lever..... Cat. No. 16

Starrett wire cutters (recommended).....Cat. No. 225A or 225B

Alternatives to the above:

Music wire cutters..... (Cat. No. 227)

Music wire cutters(Cat. No. 228 or 229)

Diagonal music wire nippers(Cat. No. 238)

Important note: Ordering information is given
for the use of Schaff account holders only.

Notes on Procedures