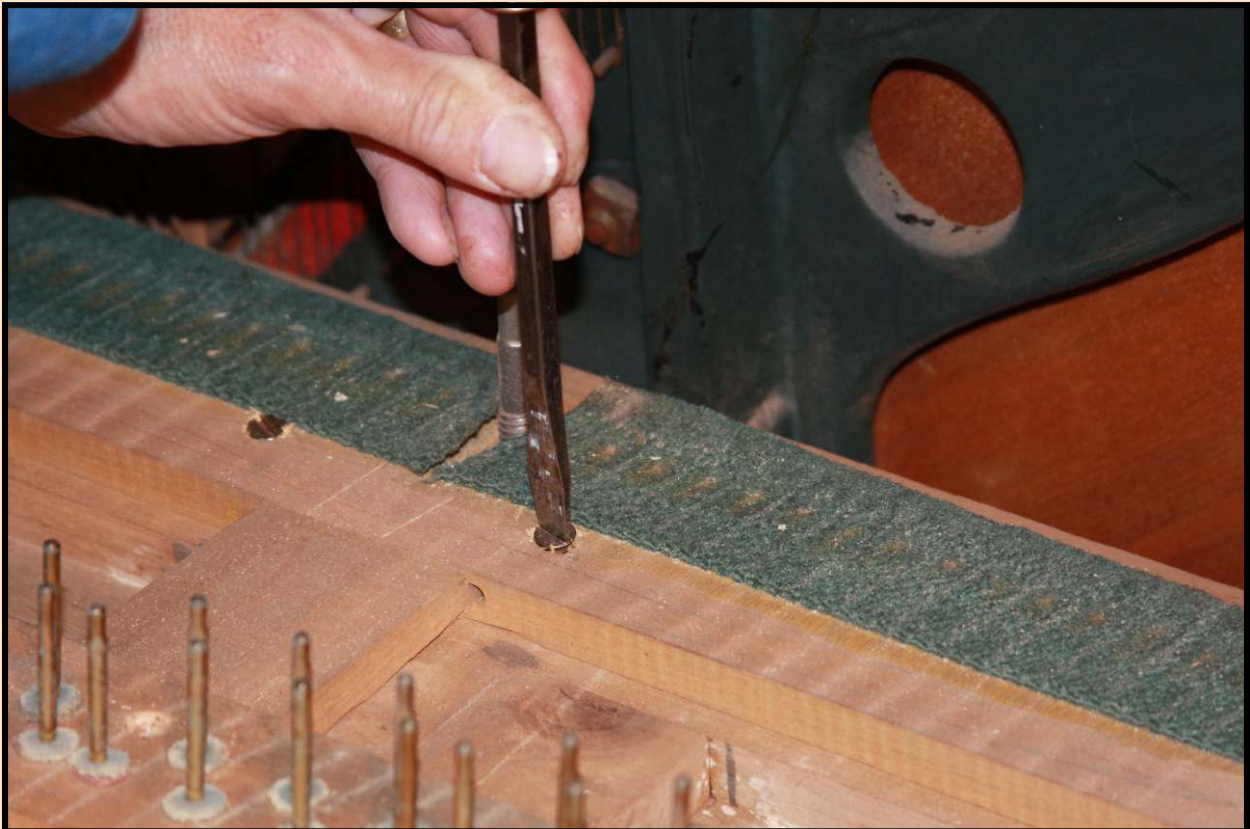


Schaff Piano Supply Company Presents:

Removing Keys and Keyframe of the Upright Piano

Basic Step-by-Step Procedures



Key Work

By Chuck Behm

Removing the Keys and Keyframe



-Rationale-

Removing the keyframe from a piano in the field for transport to the shop makes a variety of jobs both easier and professionally performed. When rebushing the keys, installing a new set of key buttons or replacing the keytops, having the keyframe on the shop bench is paramount to doing proper job. If one is either replacing front or center rail pins, or refelting the keybed, the keyframe must be removed from the piano if the work is to be done in the shop at all.

Even when the piano is already in the shop for an extensive overhaul or restoration, the removal of the keyframe is often desirable. In refinishing the piano, having the action, keys and keyframe out of the piano make it easier to go about the chores of stripping, and sanding the insides of the arms and sides of the case. Furthermore, the keyframe with keys in place may be safely stored in a protected spot while stains and finishing products are applied to the areas adjacent to the keybed.

The removal of the keys and keyframe from the piano is an relatively easy task. The step-by-step instructions follow.

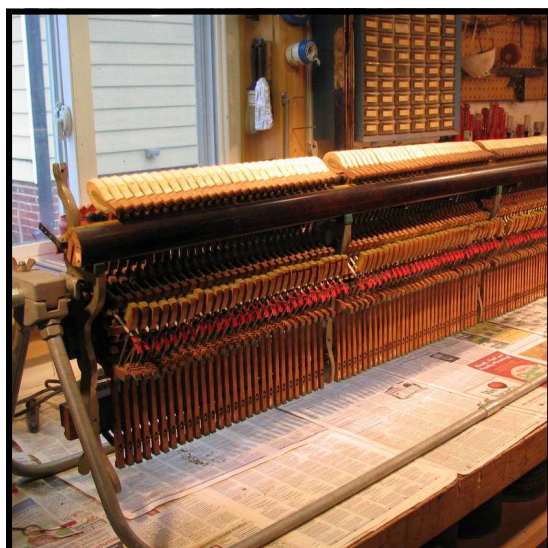
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Step 1: Remove the action from the piano. Most commonly, there will be four action bracket bolts with knobs which must be removed. If a knob is hard to turn, use a pair of pliers with the jaws in the wide position to clamp down on the knob and turn it. Swing the adjacent hammers forward for clearance if they are in the way. Before lifting the action out, check the dowel for the soft pedal, and remove the round head screw attaching it to the action if there is one. The sustain pedal dowel will usually fall off by itself.



Step 2: Place the action in a secure location out of the way for the time being. If you have built a piano parts trolley, the bolts on the back of the trolley are intended for action storage. Slide the hammer rest rail over the bolts. The heads of the bolts will keep the action from falling off.



Alternatives for action storage: Another secure location for the piano action is an [action cradle \(Cat. No. 296\)](#). An [action post extension \(Cat. No. 297\)](#) or a [Jaras upright action holder \(Cat. No. 886\)](#), are also useful for the same purpose.

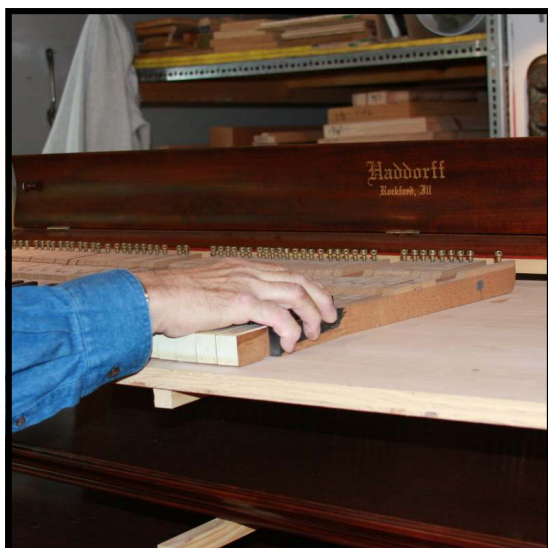
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Step 3: Before removing the keys from the keyframe, consider marking the keys for easy identification. A slanted pencil line on either side, with a criss-cross set of lines in the middle, is commonly used. Although the keys are usually imprinted with numbers, 3's and 8's stamped into the wood look very much alike, as do other sets of numbers. If the keys get out of order while off of the key frame, having a backup method of sorting them out can be a real time-saver.



Step 4: Remove the keys from the keyframe. Usually these will lift out a section at a time. Slide your left hand under several keys in between the front rail and the center rail and lift, while using your right hand to hold the set together. A gentle rocking motion up and down while lifting will usually be enough to clear the keys of the center rail pins.



Step 5: Set the keys in correct numerical order in a safe location, such as the top shelf of the piano parts trolley. If no work is to be done involving the keys or the keyframe, the keys may be returned to the keyframe as soon as it has been removed from the piano.

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Step 6: Before proceeding any further, vacuum out the keybed. Use the hose attachment on a shop vac in combination with a 2" brush to remove stubborn dust. Finish by blowing out any remaining debris with compressed air.



Step 7: Remove the screws from the front and center rails. Usually there will be four of each. On older uprights, these will almost always require a flat-bladed screwdriver. A [8" screwdriver \(Cat. No. 90\)](#) teamed up with a [combination tool handle \(Cat. No. 26\)](#) is as good choice for the job.



Step 8: Remove the backrail screws. Usually there will be eight or so of these screws. Sometimes the screws will be in plain sight, such as in the photo.

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Step 9: If no screws are visible, check under the back edge of the backrail cloth. Many times the back edge of this cloth is not glued down and by lifting it the screws will be discovered. Occasionally the screws will be under this cloth even if it is glued down.



Step 10: Label each set of screws and store in a container such as this muffin tin. If several pianos are being worked on at a time, label each muffin tin with the name of the piano as well.



Step 11: With all screws removed the keyframe should lift out of the piano. If it still seems secured, check for missed screws. If shims are present under the middle rail (usually at the location of the screws), either tape them down in place, or number (both on the shims and on the keybed itself) and store with the screws.

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Step 12: If work is to be done on the key-frame itself, place on the bench. If nothing is to be done at the time to the key-frame itself, or to the balance rail or front rail pins or to the felts, the keys may be replaced and the keyframe with keys may be stored in a safe location, such as at the bottom of the piano parts trolley.

Tools:

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

Tools:

Action cradleCat. No. 296
or
Action post extension..... Cat. No. 297
or
Jaras upright action holderCat. No. 886
8" screwdriverCat. No. 90
Combination tool handle..... Cat. No 26

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

To order, call Schaff Piano Supply at 1-800-747-4266

Notes on Procedures