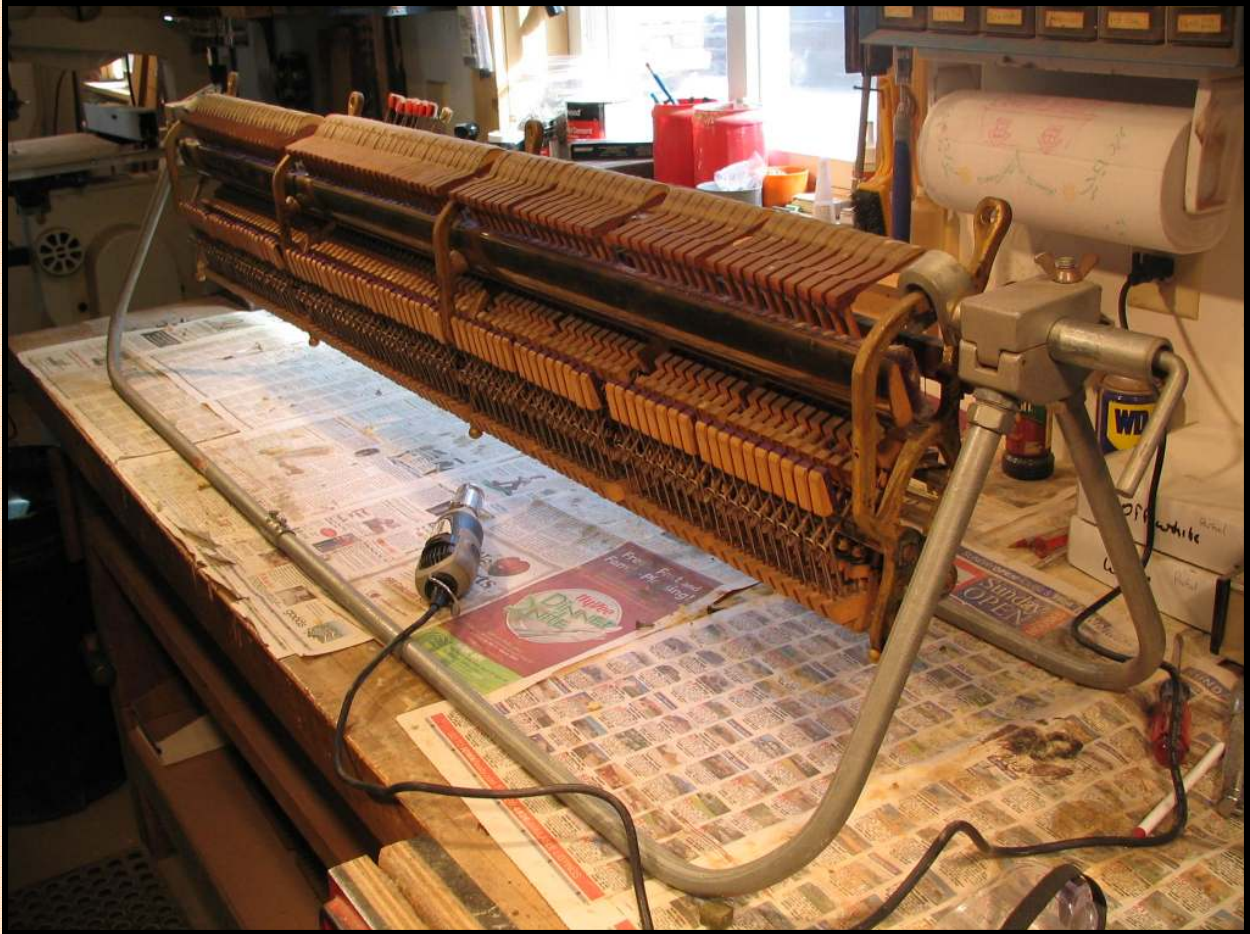


Schaff Piano Supply Company Presents:

Using the Action Cradle

Basic Tips



By Chuck Behm

The Action Cradle



-Rationale-

As far as shop equipment and tools go, the action cradle is a gem of a device that greatly simplifies working on, storing and transporting vertical actions. When **working on an action**, either in the shop or in the customer's home, the action cradle provides protection against damage and useful versatility. In the shop, where space is always at a premium, the action cradle simplifies the temporary **safe storage of a customer's piano action** by providing options not otherwise available. When **loading and unloading an action** to transport to or from the shop, the action cradle simplifies loading and makes it much less likely that damage to delicate action parts will occur. Every technician who does repair work on vertical actions would benefit from investing in at least one of these useful devices.

-Basic Procedures-

Working on actions:

Whether in the shop, or at the customer's house, the action cradle provides a stable mode of working on an upright action, without having to fear an accidental tipping over and subsequent damage to easily broken parts. An added advantage is that the action may be easily rotated to give the technician easy access to the action from any angle desired.



Photo 1: An action with repair work completed.

The secret to the action cradle's stability is its wide base (Photo 1). An upright action will normally stand by itself on the bench or on the shop floor. The problem is that the width of the base of the brackets that make contact with the bench top or floor is so narrow that the action will tip and fall over given the slightest bump. Action post extensions are useful in preventing this from happening, but limit where the action may be placed. On the other hand, when the action is locked in place in the action cradle, using screw clamps to firmly grasp the action brackets (Photo 2, next page), it may be picked up and moved about the shop at will, without the worry of it being bumped and knocked over.



Photo 2: The action is easily locked in place

At times it is convenient to work on an upright action with it positioned in an unusual angle, such as when replacing a set of worn sticker cloths (Photo 3). Rotating an upright action using the action cradle is extremely easy. By loosening the wing nuts holding the hinged brackets in place just slightly, the action can be pivoted until the desired angle is reached. Tightening the wing nuts again locks it in place, and work can proceed.



Photo 3: Upside down is no problem



Photo 4: Set up for work in the customer's home

In the customer's home, the action cradle gives the technician the ability to set up a workspace with nothing more than a card table (Photo 4). For on-the-spot repair jobs that require removal of the piano, such as when replacement of broken brass flanges is necessary, it's great. One can pull up a folding chair, and work in comfort. (The alternative method of turning the action around and balancing it on the endblocks is hazardous, in that a bump of the action at the wrong moment can send it crashing forward onto the piano bench with disastrous results. I know this from personal experience.)

Storing of actions:

In most piano shops, no matter the size, free space is a precious commodity. Most shop owners will admit to having T.M.S. (too much stuff), and therefore value any device which allows practical use of available space.

When a piano is torn down for repair, what to do with the parts that are not being worked on is always a problem to be solved. The action cradle makes it possible to safely store upright actions in locations that would otherwise be hazardous. An action clamped in a cradle may be temporarily stored on top of another upright piano (Photo 5, next page). Use a piano cover, or blankets, to protect the top of the piano from scratching.



Photo 5: An action safely out of the way

In my basement office, I have a spot overhead for action storage (Photo 6), where four simple hooks have been driven into the floor joists above for hanging a cradle with attached action. With the action clamped in a horizontal position, there is adequate head room to be able to walk under the action.

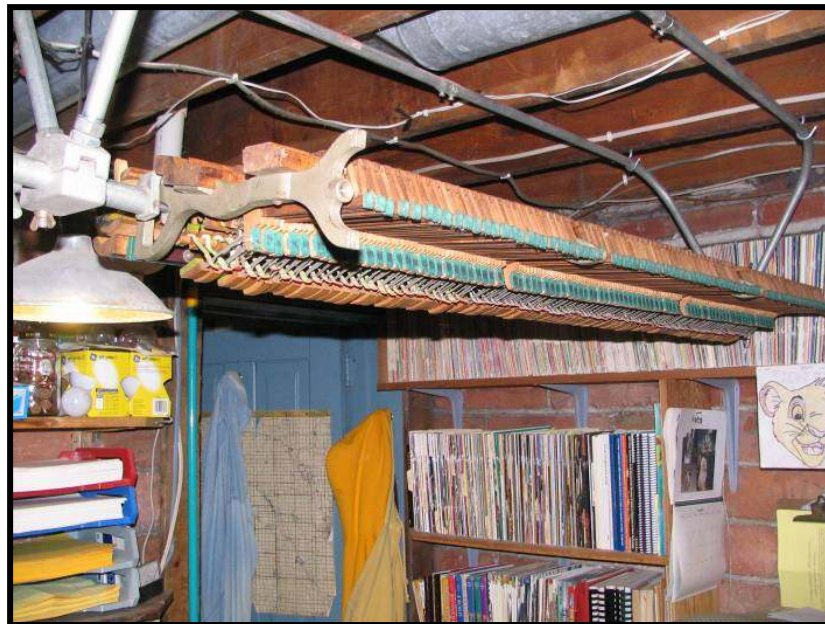


Photo 6: Hung up.



Photo 7: Additional storage provided

With a little creativity, an action cradle may be employed for other storage purposes. A spare cradle, for example, works as the ideal spot for storage of rolls of pneumatic cloth on PVC pipe (Photo 7).

Transporting actions:



Photo 8: Ready to roll.

The hazard in transporting an upright piano action in a vehicle to or from the shop lies in the brittleness of the parts and in the way said parts protrude and are easily broken. If the bottom of a sticker, for example, catches on a seat as the action is being loaded or unloaded from a car, something will most likely break – either the sticker tongue will snap off the sticker flange, or the sticker will break away from the whippen, or both. Either way, when you hear a crunch and a part is hanging loose that shouldn't be, it's a sinking feeling. You've now made more work for yourself than what you already had.

Using a cradle simplifies the process of getting the action in and out of your vehicle (Photo 8, previous page). Although it doesn't work in every car, especially smaller sedans, it will easily fit in the back of any station wagon, hatchback, or minivan. Just open the back tailgate, and slide the action in and you're good to go.

With so many tools to purchase, one always wonders, "Is this worth the chips?" I can safely say that for my money, the action cradle is well worth the investment.

Tool Ordering Information:

For your convenience, this tool is available from Schaff Piano Supply by referring to the following catalogue number.

Action Cradle..... Cat. No. 296

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 Tool