

Prepared Piano Policies and Guidelines

Reviewed and compared to industry standards: 2/2026

All groups and individuals that practice, teach, and perform on UNI School of Music pianos are expected to respect our facilities and instruments. These instruments are essential to our daily operations and must be treated as such. Any questions are always welcomed and encouraged to be brought to the piano technician. The role of the piano technician is to help performers get the most out of the pianos and also to act as the conservator for the pianos. Communication between technician and performer is crucial in planning and executing the performance of prepared piano works.

1. All structural changes to any piano must be approved by and in most cases performed by the Piano Technician:

This includes removing the lid or other case parts and attaching anything to strings, dampers, or plate to mark strings or modify the sound.

2. Marking strings:

Small stickers may be used on dampers or agraffes to mark notes. Please purchase small stickers that are easy to remove such as small colored dots. Care must always be used when touching dampers as they are easily damaged. Never use masking tape or any other adhesive that may leave a residue. The performer is responsible for removing any stickers immediately after any performance. There should be nothing applied directly to the strings. This includes white out, tape, stickers, nail polish, etc. In some cases, chalk may be used to mark steel strings but **never** the copper wound bass strings.

3. Striking and plucking strings:

Strings may be struck or plucked with fingers or guitar pick. Other devices must always be a material that will not mar or damage the strings. On steel strings only materials that are softer than the steel may be used, such as brass or aluminum. Copper wound bass strings must also be struck or plucked with a material softer than the copper. Acceptable materials include wood, plastic, rubber, etc. Never use a steel chisel on piano strings. I will be happy to help any performer select materials that will not damage the piano.

In some cases, literature calls for the insertion of screws or mutes between piano strings. Again, a material softer than the string must be used such as brass or aluminum.

4. Alternative Tunings/Altering Harmonics:

The tuning system of our pianos is a set and not quickly altered system. The pianos in our performance halls are tuned to equal temperament. Some literature calls for altering tunings/notes to create desired harmonics. This is not allowed and will only be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the piano technician has the ability to tune pianos in historical temperaments which is completely possible with consultation.

5. Extreme volume:

There is a line to be drawn between passionate musical expression and excessive pounding on a piano. Please use good judgment when playing above a forte. Harsh playing is damaging and will not be tolerated.

6. Common sense:

Most damage to our pianos can easily be avoided by using good judgment. Please consult with the piano technician or piano faculty before using unconventional techniques. Usually an alternative can be found to satisfy both the performer and this policy. **Also, recognize that just because a score calls for a certain technique does not guarantee that it is acceptable.**