

# Butter Your Tunings

**Summary:** This class will cover the different levels of voicing and how to apply a service level of voicing to create a better service calls for your customers. The methods employed in this class can be handled by all levels of technicians at every service/tuning call. While employing these methods the technician will gradually enhance their voicing proficiency all while providing a better service for the customer. This class is geared toward the everyday tuner/technician- 10 extra minutes in the home could lead to a lifetime of improvement for both the customer and the tech themselves.

- I. Types of Voicing
  - a. Factory
    - i. Done in the factory as a “pre-new” piano
    - ii. This voicing will change, probably on the sales floor if the piano is prepped.
    - iii. The piano has not “settled in” – and will need to be voiced again.
    - iv. Although the basic tone and presence of the piano is there it will subtly change and it is up to the tuner to preserve it.
  - b. Rebuilding
    - i. Done with New Hammers (prevoicing or preneedling)
    - ii. Voiced throughout the process, and finalized prior to returning to customer or selling the piano.
  - c. Full Voicing
    - i. Involved method done after a full regulation and filing of hammers
      1. Starting from scratch to get the piano back into shape
  - d. Concert
    - i. Done for venues who own the piano being serviced
    - ii. Minor Adjustments most of the time, to even out the piano
  - e. Service Call
    - i. Added to the tuning (at no charge) to enhance the piano in minutes
    - ii. Yes you can needle inside the grooves
    - iii. Again, minor adjustments to even out the piano.
- II. Perception of Tone
  - a. What the Customer Wants
    - i. Listen to the customer: “That funny note” may need more than just tuning.
    - ii. Determine what the customer is speaking about, ask questions, don’t give up and don’t blow off the customer
      - a. I had a tuner that was great a talking customers out of voicing, although not terrible idea, it never solved the problem and often lead to complaints
  - b. What the Technician Hears
    - i. We all hear things differently. What can be decided by the customer as one thing may mean something else to you.

- ii. Listen to the customer and ask questions about the piano's feel, touch, and tone.
  - c. Evenness is key
    - i. Weather bright or dark, soft and mellow or glassy- an uneven piano is desired by anyone.
    - ii. Sections at a time can be improved
    - iii. Sections at a time can gradually change to fit the full voice of the piano.
  - d. Attack vs swell vs sustain
    - i. Quality of Attack: stinging vs bright and bold
    - ii. Quality of the Swell- duration and depth, (is it choked off or does it thud)
    - iii. Quality of the sustain- how long, is bright, dark, does it sizzle or is it clear
- III. The Tuner Alone Preserves the Tone
- IV. When do you start with voicing the piano?
  - a. Voice before you tune – yes, play chromatic scale up and down and mentally note, the notes, you want to change.
  - b. Voice while you tune
  - c. Voice after you tune
- V. Methods
  - a. Where to stick the needle
    - i. Single string voicing
    - ii. Sphere of influence
  - b. Always check the soft position voicing
  - c. Hardening/Softening Solutions – not part of my voicing while I tune
  - d. NY Steinway – how things are different
  - e. Almost everything else
- VI. Polar Voicing effects
- VII. Little Changes – Big Difference
  - a. Start with one or two notes- try to make the even with the rest
  - b. Check both side of the note
  - c. What the customer hears
- VIII. Grands vs Uprights
- IX. Let's Try it
- X. Acknowledgments
  - a. The class was inspired by Jim Hess's presentation at the Chapter 170 Meeting.