

'Tubing a Late Steinway Duo-Art Grand Piano

by

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About a year ago a friend of ours asked if we might be interested in having a late Steinway Duo-Art grand piano temporarily added to our musical instrument collection. We said "Sure" and it was brought over to our home and set up. The piano turned out to be a Steinway XR (6'2") with an electric roll drive, sold in 1933. We found out that the piano had some work done to the player mechanism probably 20 years previously, but there were some inconsistencies with its operation in the spool box area.

After consulting with some Duo-Art experts, I found out that the Control Box in "our" piano was one of four possible devices, although there were no known tubing diagrams for any of the late model control boxes. It was suggested that I contact Bill Koenigsberg, for he had the same sized instrument from the same time period. I contacted Bill and spoke to him about "our" instrument and we discovered that both of our instruments were made in the Steinway factory at approximately the same time (by comparing the work numbers stamped onto the various parts of the instruments as they were made and assembled: J2054 and J2056). Bill suggested that I take notes on where the tubes from our piano's control boxes went and then send the notes to him. (When Bill retubed his piano all the tubes were original and intact and it was an easier project to just replace the tubing. He thought that someone somewhere had a tubing diagram that could be consulted, if necessary.)

Bill discovered that by physically tracing the tubing, there were some surprises that he had forgotten. But all is now well. Both Steinway Duo-Arts are operating in the manner that they were intended to operate and no blood was shed in the process.

Attached is a tubing guide that Bill thought someone had made many years ago. Little did he know that he would play an important part in the process of making it.

ABOUT THE DIAGRAMS

The diagrams were made using MS Word, which seemed sufficient for this project. The small "o" indicates a tracker bar sized nipple coming out of the small or the main valve block.

The larger "○" indicates a nipple larger than a tracker bar sized nipple.

When the main valve block is unscrewed from the metal back plate of the assembly, one is confronted with 17 tubes all connected to a wooden box that is approximately 5" x 2" x 3". The box can be tilted forward a certain amount for limited access but no clear comfortable view is available. That is why I chose the "X-Ray view from the front of the Control Box" format. Using this method, one can identify where all the nipples are located, albeit they are behind the box.

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