

The Craft of Piano Tuning

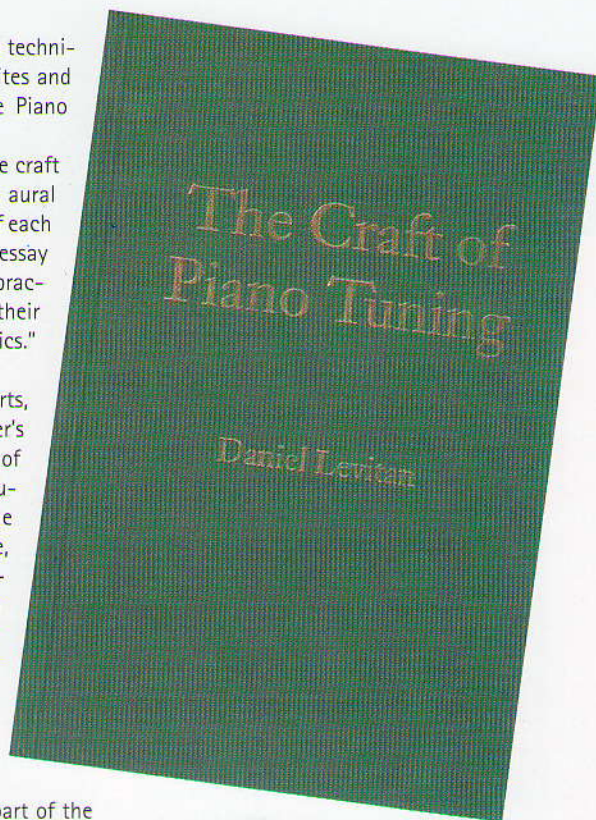
The Craft of Piano Tuning
by Daniel Levitan.
Published by The Soundboard Press,
New York
252 pages, hardback
www.soundboardpress.com

The book costs \$100 and is currently available only from the US: Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Pianotek Supply Company (www.pianoteksupply.com/products-new.aspx), although there may be European suppliers in the future. The book is beautifully produced with very good charts and drawings. The binding is stitched as in quality books of the past, no 'perfect' (glued pages) binding here.

Daniel Levitan works as a piano technician in New York City and writes and lectures on tuning topics for the Piano Technicians Guild.

"This is a complete guide to the craft of piano tuning, covering both its aural and manual aspects. At the heart of each of the book's two sections ... is an essay explaining in detail the standard practices of piano tuning in terms of their underlying acoustics and mechanics." Pianotek website

The book is divided into two parts, "The Tuner's Ear" and "The Tuner's Hand". Part One consists mainly of four lectures on basic aural piano tuning which the author gave at the 2006 AIARP Convention in Cavalese, Italy. Most tuning theory descriptions do not explain inharmonicity in piano tuning except as a sideline, however, this book covers the topic in great detail, which is a refreshing and welcome change. After describing intervals and beats; inharmonicity and how to compensate for it forms a major part of the work. The author states that a thorough un-



derstanding of inharmonicity is necessary if an accurate equal temperament is to be achieved. The remaining sections in Part One cover other theoretical and practical aspects of tuning including the use of higher partials for tuning checks, difference tones, octave and unison tuning and intentional mistuning.

Part Two is the about the mechanics of tuning and why 'setting the pin' is more difficult than the aural part of tuning. The drawings are very informative and illustrate the ways a string reacts with the various friction points in a piano, which in turn is dictated by the design and condition of the instrument itself. As tuners we are not directly tuning the speaking length. Daniel provides insight into how tuners instinctively cope with this process. He also covers muting, "feel", pitch adjustment, why pianos go out of tune and looks briefly at minimizing physical stress and hearing protection.

When asked to review this book, I wondered whether we needed another text on tuning a piano, however, I'm delighted to say that the answer is a resounding yes! Daniel writes clearly and authoritatively about complex aspects of tuning, the diagrams are excellent and the book was a pleasure to read. For someone who has spent years tuning and studying tuning, I still found it very informative and can highly recommend it.

Rick Ohlendorf

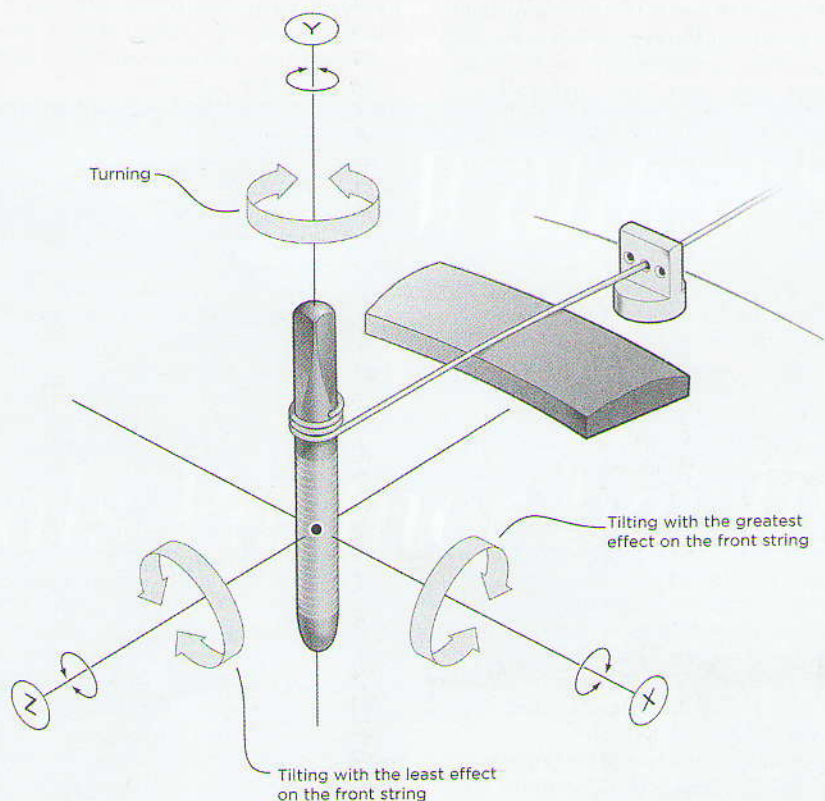


FIGURE 2. The axes of a strung tuning pin.