

HOW TO TUNE WITH A PIANO AT AN ALL-STATE AUDITION

Woodwinds and brass instruments do the opposite of string instruments (includes the piano) in various temperature differences:

Heat – Piano/strings goes flat

Cold – Piano/strings goes sharp

Note: If pianos have been tuned incorrectly, it will usually be flat (strings stretch with use), therefore, a poorly tuned piano on a hot day will be substantially flatter than a piano tuned at A=440.

It is *not* correct for the piano to play first. Here is the only instance where a good ear works *against* the musician. Musicians will be lip the note in the direction of the piano note, not giving the student an accurate assessment of the degree of their tuning problem.

Therefore, the correct order of tuning with a piano is:

1. Student is warmed up for at least 5 minutes
2. Student plays BEFORE the piano
3. Piano plays tuning note
4. Student adjusts accordingly (if sharp=pull out, if flat=push in)

Repeat the same process until correct. The final test would be to have right pedal depressed on the piano (without playing the piano) and have the instrumentalist hold their note for only a few seconds. If tuned correctly, the tuning note would cause the piano strings of the tuning note (and overtones) to vibrate making the note ring almost as if it were played by the pianist.

In reality, a student will typically stand in the waiting area for several minutes prior to entering the performance room. It is at this critical time for the musician to continue blowing air through their instrument to keep it warm, otherwise, the instrument will flatten and the result will be that the student will play flat for their tuning and push in, making them play sharp for the majority of the performance. All musicians must be aware of the temperature differences between the warm-up location, hallway, and performance location and adjust accordingly. Talking a walk through all areas, if possible, prior to the performance would be recommended to note these differences.

Note: high humidity expands the crown of the piano and pushes the bridge even more against the strings, therefore, it stretches the strings and causes the pitch to rise.

A musician should *always* tune with their performance piano using the correct order for tuning. Because of constant heat and humidity changes, tuning with only a chromatic tuner (and not the piano) will cause the instrumentalist to lip all notes in the direction of the piano, needlessly tiring the embouchure and causing their tone to sound either too pinched or too open.