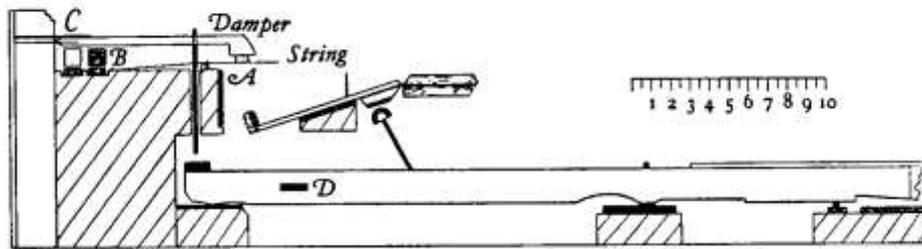


Setting up a Single Action



The single action appears to be simple, but getting the whole thing even and playing nicely is not quite as easy as it looks. I would not claim to be an expert, but these notes are based on my own experience, and will, I hope, be of some help.

The first thing to say is that every piano is different, and we need to feel and hear what is right for the one we are doing. But some guidelines are useful.

Bending the brass wires which carry the 'Old Mens' Heads' is a lot of fun, and irresistible. That's why so many pianos have had them fiddled about with. What I will now say does depend quite a bit on the geometry of the piano in question, but the basic point is that the stems are usually angled, so bending them towards you raises the height. But also, the striking faces of the hammer butts are angled, so bending the wires towards you means they need to reach higher anyway... The net effect is often not much, except of course to change the *gearing*, so that the same movement throws the hammer further. Mmm...

Let's start with the proposition that the OMHs should all be in a straight line. They seldom are, 'as found', but surely they should be. As a starting point, they should make contact with the striking-faces of the hammer butts somewhere around the middle.

Then check that the key-dip is about 7mm. A tad more in the bass, less in the treble, is good. But say ~ 7mm at middle C. If it is much less than this, the thing will be unplayable, and if much more, then there will be a lot of lost motion and sloppiness for sure. If it is not, it may be necessary to adjust the cloths, but as a starting point again:

- two thicknesses under the fronts (sometimes buff leather pads for the sharps)
- two thicknesses for the back-touch (tails) – glued or tacked at one edge only
- one thickness (possibly thinner, firmer cloth) on the balance rail.

If any of this is done with the action on the bench, out of the piano, note that warping is possible, and the touch depth may be different when the keyframe is screwed down onto the piano base. Best perhaps to do the back-touch with it out, and then screw the action firmly back into the piano. Changes in the number of layers from bass to treble are unheard-of, but it is permissible to introduce (or correct) a warp by putting card or veneer packing under the frame in one or more places. Traces of original packing are often seen.

Now push the key slowly so that the hammer rises - does it stop about 2/3 – 3/4 of the way up? If so, that's probably OK for a start anyway. Nearer is usually OK in the treble, further away might be better in the bass. If not, adjust the *height* of the OMH by screwing it in or out. Not by means of the thread in the head, which will surely wreck it, but into the key. Grip the wire firmly with pliers. Usually, an even multiple of half-turns is best, as the stem is not usually 'vertical' sideways – they are often bent. But the thread is quite fine, so a small

