



THINGS INSIDE PIANOS THAT SHOULDN'T BE

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The time a gold treasure hoard was mysteriously found inside an upright piano

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The time a hoard of gold coins were found in a Shropshire piano.
Picture: Peter Reavill/The Trustees of the British Museum/PA Media



Some things like a pencil are rather benign, though once I found 16 pencils and 8 pens dropped inside a piano, and other things are rather profound.

Pianos are constructed with around 12,000 parts, about half the amount of an average car. This is all well and good, but sometimes my colleagues and I find a few other things in pianos that should not be there. Some things like a pencil are rather benign, though once I found 16 pencils and 8 pens dropped inside a piano, and other things are rather profound. A few times, I have found old photos that have been missing for over a decade that invoke myriad of emotions from the clients. Other times it's just something disgusting, like an old fingernail, which makes everyone in the room want to hurl. In any case, you never know what you might find in a piano, especially the older ones.

Often I will be told if I find any money while working on the piano, to let the client know so we can split it or come to some other arrangement. I do not usually find money, but if

I do it's only a few cents in old coins. In one piano that was in a schoolhouse for many years, I found a half-penny "bank token" from the **Bank of Upper Canada** minted in 1857. Another time, a quarter was sitting between two keys causing them to stick. One client's son decided it would be fun to put quarters between all the keys; luckily they fell through without damage and were easy to remove. I think the money story that takes the cake is the article from ClassicFM where a hoard of gold coins was found inside an old upright piano. This is not financial advice, but people rarely steal pianos and they have many places good for hiding things...



My favorite story is the time I went to do an evaluation on a Yamaha upright that was maybe 15-20 years old, because the family was looking to sell it now that the kids had moved out. I opened up the bottom panel near the pedals to see what the condition was only to find a complete, though rather dusty, piano care kit with a manual, cleaning cloth, polish, and a key to the fallboard lock. Upon making this discovery, I informed the owner, who had never seen the package before and had no idea it was there. It's unfortunate that no one before me had ever removed the panel and made him aware of the kit. He was shocked but grateful that I had found the kit.

Guitar picks appear in pianos occasionally proving that the tone hole in the middle of the guitar is not the only void picks disappear into.

Once there was a buzzing on a grand piano. After much sleuthing, I noticed a AAA battery had been dropped under the strings onto the soundboard and had rolled underneath the plate. Suffice it to say, after the battery was removed, the buzzing ceased. In a church lobby piano, I found a full 4 foot long broom handle dropped behind the fallboard on top of the keys. I figured it probably helped the pianists' sweeping arpeggios, but I removed it anyway. It's not common in NJ, but I know colleagues in other states who have found guns hiding in pianos. Some people actually gut old worn out pianos and turn them into gun cases, believe it or not. Guitar picks appear in pianos occasionally proving that the tone hole in the middle of the guitar is not the only void picks disappear into.

Music school practice room pianos are the most exciting because so many wild, unhinged, young musicians interact with them. During my training at Ithaca College, I took the job of cleaning the pianos in the summer and found all sorts of things. It was mostly broken clarinet and saxophone reeds, but sometimes I would find weird little toys or maybe a USB drive. During a summer camp at Ithaca, a young boy dropped a phone in the piano. I grabbed a large cloth and dawning it as a cape. I rushed to the practice room as *Piano Repair Man* with a cape and retrieved the phone and saved the day.