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Princeton, NJ was founded in the late 1600's, before the Revolutionary War. It is a historic town and home to the famous Princeton University. It is a major cultural hub of central New Jersey with residents who love and support the arts. People come from all over to see the magnificent architecture and take part in the robust music scene. It is also home to the Morven Museum & Garden, which served as the governor's mansion from 1954-1981, the setting for this month's newsletter. This year, June 9-25, 2023, part of the Princeton Festival was celebrated at the museum with a week of musical events that I was asked by the Princeton Symphony Orchestra to tune and maintain the piano on stage. Aside from the blistering heat and torrential downpour, it was an enjoyable experience.

The piano arrived in the morning on June 19th. The stage was erected under a sturdy tent next to the museum building and I arrived in the afternoon to find the piano positioned centrally. It was a beautiful Yamaha C7 concert grand. I tuned the piano, occasionally checking to discover that it was close to 90°F outside that day. The main attraction for that evening was Will Liverman and Kevin Miller, a vocal/piano duet. After tuning the piano, I decided to stay to watch the rehearsal. Both performers were masters of their instrument and I enjoyed the casual show with frequent stops where the performers would discuss musical phrasing, breathing, etc. When they had finished and worked out any kinks in their program, I returned to the stage to go over the piano again to make sure it sounded its best. As I entered the spotlight, Kevin, the pianist, asked if the tuner would be returning, not realizing I was sitting among the empty chairs watching the entire time. One of the stage crew pointed toward me and Kevin seemed surprised for whatever reason. They asked him if he had any notes for me, but he declined and the performers exited. I got straight to work. I'm sure they had a wonderful performance.



The next performance two days later was sort of a klezmer/funk ensemble directed by David Krakauer and Kathleen Tagg. I tuned the piano early that morning and was returning later in the evening to go over it again for the performance. I have had great respect for David Krakauer's clarinet ability and klezmeresque style for many years since I first listened to him and even took a clarinet lesson with him once during my college years. Instead of the rehearsal, I decided to stay for the actual concert this time. Before the show started, I was surprised to find a few other klezmer fanatics I had met at KlezKanada back in 2017-2018. It was really a trip down memory lane for me as I do not do much klezmer clarinet playing anymore. I especially enjoyed the ensemble's rendition of the traditional song *Der Gasn Nigun*. I have my own version of this you can listen to here <https://theklezmergoys.bandcamp.com/track/der-gasn-nigun>. I also once made a tribute to a David Krakauer original tune with my college klezmer band that you can listen to here <https://youtube.com/watch?v=dSqxDfIIsr0&feature=share>. It was an enjoyable night to say the least.

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The final few days of tuning were for the orchestra and their tribute to Harvey Milk, the first openly homosexual politician. I was amazed at how well the piano was holding up between the heat and humidity. After my tuning on Friday, there was a heavy rain storm trapping me briefly in the tent to wait it out. I remember that I stood near the tent entrance with my tools listening to the loud pounding of rain on the roof before I could make my way back to my car. With the thick humidity from the rain, I did notice the felt on the hammers was starting to swell and the sound was no longer as clean and crisp as when the piano had arrived; it had started to become more of a thud and was not as easy to hear. It was not a glaring issue and the piano still had a good sound overall. And as there were no complaints, I figured the musicians must find it acceptable for their performances.

Major events like this festival are always exciting and a great chance to meet musicians from far away places or local ones who live just down the road. If you can find time in your schedule next summer, I recommend taking a look at what the Princeton Festival may have going on.