TUNING COURSE PROVIDES KEYS TO NEW CAREER

Keeping the more than one million pianos in Australia in-tune is a full-time job, but finding the expertise is reaching almost desperation level.

A widespread shortage of tuners for servicing both professional and household pianos has resulted in the introduction of a new course to broaden the pool of highly trained technicians.

The course – known as Licentiate in Piano Technology - is the result of a collaboration between the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the Australasian Piano Tuners and Technicians Association (APTTA) and the Australian Music Association (AMA).

The AMA, which represents piano importers, manufacturers and retailers, says upwards of 5,000 new pianos are sold in Australia each year.

Based on sales of new and second-hand pianos, and figures for people learning to play and attending grade exams, the popularity of the piano continues to steadily increase.

APTTA has some registered 250 piano technicians in Australia and New Zealand – most of whom are more than 50 years old. Sixty five per cent of technicians work full-time.

“Piano tuning and servicing are notoriously difficult to teach and there have not been any formal classes in Australia since 1993,” said the Conservatorium’s head piano technician, Geoffrey Pollard.

“This has lead to a sizeable decline in the number of available technicians, and also the level of workmanship to meet a growing demand.

“We are hoping that the new 15 month, intensive course will pave the way for a new career path in high-level tuning and acoustics, but also through imparting small business skills lead to graduates setting up their own businesses.

“The fact is that the 5,000 new pianos coming on the domestic market annually represent full-time work for five extra tuners each year, alone,” he said.

Applications for the course close on Friday 28 November with only 6 positions available.

Details and an application form are available at: www.music.usyd.edu.au/community/piano_tech.shtml

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