

WITH RACHMANINOFF, the composer and pianist, who played last night at City Hall, there came to Portland Eldon Joubert, whose name did not appear on the program but who played an important part in the concert just the same. He is the man who tunes the Steinway instrument for the great master a few hours before every concert and sees to it that it is in perfect concert pitch.

Great pianists are mighty fussy about the instrument they play and will take no chances with local piano-tuners' ears. There are good tuners and bad tuners. Joubert is an expert, and he looks over the piano just before the hands of the artist run across its ivory keys. If one note were even the slightest shade under or over what it ought to be men like Rachmaninoff, Paderewski and Hofmann would detect it in an instant, and you can imagine what a shock it would be to their highly-trained and sensitive ears. Oh yes, rather than risk this shock to their temperamental natures, all of these men pay good salaries to expert tuners and carry them along with them on tour.

Joubert has held down this ticklish job for all three of the great pianists named. When I asked him if they were all alike so far as temperament was concerned he said:

"I should say not. Paderewski was the hardest of the three men to suit. He is a very nervous man and at times irritable. He seldom smiled and I never knew just how he felt towards me. He had many fine qualities, but was not the sort of man that you could enjoy traveling with, being gloomy and morose most of the time. Hofmann is a fine fellow and in some ways like a big boy. He is the least temperamental of the three, but at times could show some temper and make things hot generally, if everything were not just right. Rachmaninoff is hardly what one would call temperamental but is a highly-strung, sensitive soul, all music and one of the most unusual of men in every way.

"It has been a great privilege to be associated with these three great pianists, despite their idiosyncracies. All of them are great workers, and the average piano student does not put in half so much time at the piano as they do. They keep everlastingly at it. And that's one of the reasons they are so great."