The Buckeye Backcheck

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Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

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August Meeting and Annual Picnic

The weather seemed menacing in the morning, and the rains began to fall at noon. Alternate plans were being laid, for shelter from the storm. Behold, by 4:00 pm the rain had stopped and sun began to shine. A nice little breeze from the north dropped the humidity and launched the annual Columbus Chapter PTG picnic. There was a great turnout with plenty of food, libation, and conversation for all.
Piano music from Doug and a little guitar strumming from Tom added to the festivities. Marilyn gave the tour of her gardens, although they are somewhat stressed from the previous dry weather. We partied on until the sun finally gave up its last glow. We hope everyone had fun. Look for the pictorial diary below.





Chapter News & Notes

Tech Tips

Chris Altenburg was uncertain about tuning a late 1800's Steinway grand and wrote to Steinway requesting information, he asked me to share the reply from David Kirkland of Steinway & Sons

Dear Chris,
Steinway & Sons makes no requirement for the tuning of antique pianos to a given pitch. If possible and conditions allow, then it might be tuned to (Stuttgart pitch) A440, unless the customer wants it tuned to another specified pitch such as (French pitch) A435 or (opera pitch) A442. Of course, if a piano hasn't been tuned in a very long timethen string breakages may occur if tension is added. Given its age, if this piano is not in good enough condition to receive a tuning, then it may be a candidate for restoration or rebuilding before a tuning should be attempted. The pitch to which the piano should be tuned is dependent upon its condition and the customer's requirement.
As a side note, Steinway pitches in the 1870s varied from A454 to A458.

-David Kirkland, Technical Services Administrator, Steinway & Sons

For Sale

Vince Ricca has a few items for sale. I sent an email out regarding these items but will post them here again.

1920 Marshall& Wendell Upright with early "A" Ampico player 80% rebuilt, with new strings, refinished, player unit bench tested. $5000.00

1919 Chickering & Sons Upright early "A" Ampico
Complete original condition w/ bench Piano has new strings, hammers, damper&action felts. $2500.00

Vacuum Pump on a Dolly with ½ hp motor has reservoir and vacuum take off ports. Pulls up to 200 inches of water column, for bench testing players. $100.00

Early "A" Ampico Player Mechanism in good restorable condition. $150.00

Call @ 614-488-4208 or cricca@wideopenwest.com

Acrosonic Observations *- 4th in a series of articles from Thomas Harr*

THE REMARKABLE TWO-PIECE ACROSONIC

One characteristic of certain Acrosonics has nothing to do with the action per se except that it does happen to be a spinet. Fortunately the designers never seem to have tried this on anything larger. This would be an early 1950's case style in heavy faux-Sheraton mahogany, resembling a side table or small bureau as much as anything. The case arms extend straight back on top of the vertical lower sides. Unfortunately the glue securing the arms to the rest of the case and back was not up to the job. The thing separates at the join and tries to fold itself up with the back tipping forward and the back and arms tipping backwards. Any attempts to move it are very distressing. And of course regulation and action function go by the board.

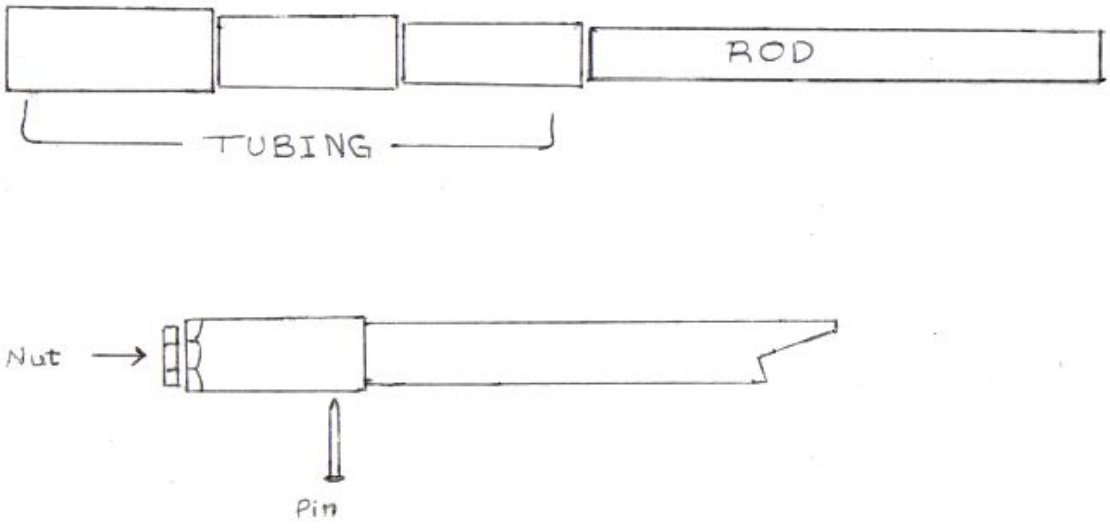
The only field repair I've found practical is to secure the back edges of the arms to the back with ell- and tee-shaped patch plates and screws. It may be possible to install a couple of angle irons under the keybed. These do not show from the front and keep the piano from more or less collapsing. Running screws through the sides would be unacceptably disfiguring. Regluing would involve disassembly to clean out the joint surfaces, clearly a shop job.

Acrosonic lost-motion adjusting tool

Bill of materials:
3 pieces of telescoping brass tubing:
11/32" o.d. x 5/16" i.d. x 7/8"
5/16" o.d. x 9/32" i.d. x 3/4"

9/32" o.d. x 1/4"i.d. x 3/4"
1 piece brass (or bronze) rod 1/4" x 2 1/2"
1 steel nut 5/16"
Lengths are approximate, this is merely a convenient size.

Cut the tubing to length, dress the ends, chamfer or deburr the i.d.s. Clean the tubing inside and out and the rod very thoroughly because you are going to sweat them together. You could tin them beforehand but it would have to be very thin or they won't fit together. With a bit of flux applied this is easier than soldering plumbing but you will need an iron of sufficient wattage to heat this much metal. A small torch will work also. Your cordless p.c. pencil will not cut it. Finally, if you are put off by soldering altogether you can drill the assembly cross-wise and use a brass escutcheon pin to secure it. Slide the tubes together flush on one end (the outer tube should have 1/8" headspace on the other end). Put the rod in the flush end about 3/8" and see that there is about 1/2" clearance in the bore. Solder, pin, or epoxy together (cyanoacrilate is doubtful here, but I have somewhat limited faith in the stuff). Grind or file a notch on the free end of the rod to accommodate a combo handle or affix one of your choosing. And now to make it work! Place the open end of the tube on the face of the nut on one jaw of a bench vise and the end of the rod on the face of the other jaw and gently squeeze the nut right into the 1/8" headspace deforming the end of the tube into a . . . Hexagon! Remove from the vise, square up the faces, so to speak, with suitably light tinners hammer, insert whatever fits into the hole in the nut (I hope you kept a screw that size on hand) and withdraw it. What makes brass ideal for this is that it is easy to work with and form, but sufficiently strong and rigid for the purpose. A picture or two will probably be more eloquent than all this description.



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