



The Buckeye Backcheck

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*Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano
Technicians Guild*



In this issue:

[*From the Editor...*](#)

[*Meeting Minutes*](#)

[*From the Trades...*](#)

[*From Other Newsletters...*](#)

[*Tech Tips...*](#)

[*In Conclusion...*](#)

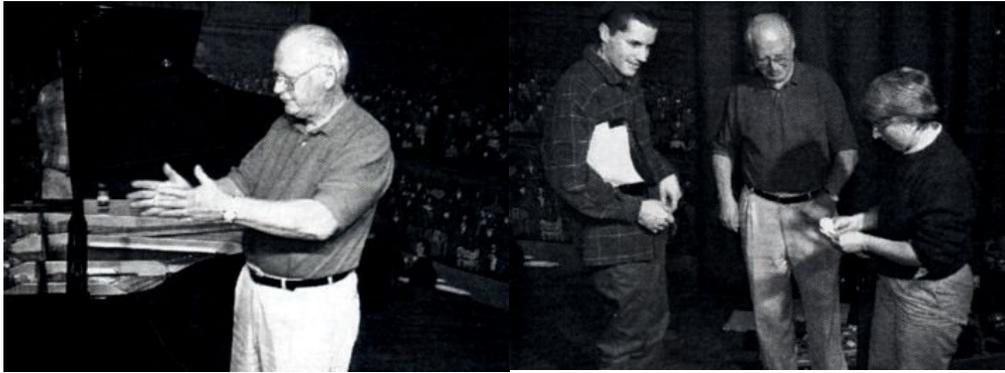
From the Editor...



I would like to offer my sincere thanks to LaRoy Edwards and Craig Fehrenbacher of Yamaha for doing a marvelous piano voicing and regulation technical at The Piano Gallery in November. While LaRoy spoke to those in attendance, Craig did the actual work on the Yamaha grand piano. Some time was spent with Craig demonstrating his skills in shaping hammers; it is very clear that he is a real professional at doing this kind of work. (It was pointed out by LaRoy that Craig has recently worked on Eiton John's piano.) LaRoy Edwards, one of the renowned experts in the field of piano technology, offered his valuable insights throughout the evening. He even passed out an excellent manual on regulation to each of us who was fortunate enough to attend.

At the end of the technical, LaRoy gave out two "prizes" to those who were lucky enough to have their names drawn out of a hat. Christina Kauffman and Mike Varone were the winners, with Christina garnering 1st place, receiving a gift of a Yamaha multi-needle hammer voicing tool.

The excellent turnout of Chapter members was due in no small part to the excellent reputation of LaRoy Edwards- Our sincere thanks go to him and to Craig Fehrenbacher!



LaRoy Edwards, Piano Division consultant for Yamaha, visits the chapter.

Meeting Minutes (excerpts)

President's Report

Ron May's membership was transferred to his new Chapter in Florida. It was further stated that Mitch Staples will be the Chair of the Testing Committee.

Old Business: We are awaiting notice that Mike Varrone, Sam Stahl and Dale Logan have become Members of the Chapter. A committee will be formed to set up the Cliff Maurer Scholarship; this will be done at a later date. The Amendments to the Chapter By-Laws was approved and accepted.

New Business: Our January technical will be presented by Kim Hoessly at the January 21, 2003 Chapter Meeting at The Piano Warehouse. She has entitled it, "Building a Business and Keeping It." Among future technicals, we can expect a February technical from Ben Wiant and Ben McKlveen- content to be determined. Our March technical will be led by Bob Bussell, our Regional VP; again, content to be determined. The Holiday Party will be held 5:00 pm January 21st, 2003, at the home of Ben Wiant and Jon Chandler. See following missive from Jon.

Hello:

Any printed information regarding events at Wesley Chapel should include the following: At the home of Ben Wiant & Jon Chandler (Wesley Chapel) 3299 Dublin Road Hilliard, Ohio Reservations should be made by telephoning 614S50-9757 Cameras are not permitted within Wesley Chapel Wesley Chapel is 8/10 mile south ofpishinger Road, on the west bank of the Scioto River I plan on serving a spiral-cut, glazed ham (NOT HoneyBaked brand). Kroger stores will spiral-cut one of their smoked hams for me, and I will use my favorite mustard-honey-spiced glazing for the final cooking. They are quite delicious, not as dry as Honey-Baked brand, and about 1/3 the cost of a Honey-Baked-brand ham. Of course, we will have the usual selections of beverages (liquor, beer, wine[s], and sodas), but I will need to coordinate the side

dishes with those members (and guests) who are attending.

From the Trades...

Study helps explain why human brain is turned on by music

Robert Lee Hotz, *Los Angeles Times*

NEW YORK - From Mozart to Miles Davis, the harmonies of music rewire the brain, creating patterns of neural activity at the confluence of emotion and memory that strengthen with each new melody, new research shows.

By monitoring the brains of people listening to classical scales and key progressions, scientists at Dartmouth College glimpsed the biology of the hit-making machinery of popular song. The research shows how the musical mind hears the flat notes in Hatt and Scruggs, the sharps of the Harmonicats and all five octaves in pop diva Mariah Carey's repertoire.

The flash-dance of these brain circuits, which process the harmonic relationship of musical notes, is shaped by a human craving for melody that drives people to spend more every year on music than on prescription drugs.

"Music is not necessary for human survival, yet something inside us craves it," said Dartmouth music psychologist Petr Janata, who led the international research team. "Our minds have internalized the music."

The new study, published yesterday in *Science*, shows for the first time that the abstract knowledge about the harmonic relationships in music inscribes itself in the brain, guiding expectations of how musical notes should relate to one another as they are played. Through constant exposure, synapses are trained to respond like tuning forks to the tones characteristic of Western music, several experts said. The pattern in the music literally becomes a pattern in the brain.

"It shows this link between music theory and perception and brain function," said Frances H. Rauscher, an expert in music cognition at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. "No one had looked before."

The Dartmouth group scanned eight people with a functional magnetic resonance imager as they listened to an eight-minute melody specially composed to move continuously through all 24 major and minor musical keys.

Although music activated many parts of the brain, the researchers discovered that everyone had just one area in common that tracked and processed melodies. That brain region, located near the center of the forehead, is called the rostromedial prefrontal cortex. It links to short-term memory, long-term memory and emotions, and differs from areas involved in more basic sound processing.

"In the same way that tracing the path of a car allows one to infer the underlying map of a city's

streets, the path traced by the keys along the cortex allowed me researchers to see the underlying structure,” said David Huron, head of the cognitive and systematic musicology laboratory at Ohio State University.

“It is beautiful,” Huron said. Music may be as much in the genes as in the soul. Perfect pitch, for example, appears to be inherited, only to be lost if not reinforced by practice. By 4 months of age, babies already prefer musical sounds to more dissonant ones.

Gordon Shaw and Mark Bodner, brain experts at the Music Intelligence Neural Development Institute in Irvine, Calif., emphasized, however, that there is nothing special about Western music, at least as far as brain anatomy and neural networks are concerned- These distinctive musical circuits in the cortex could be just as easily tuned by exposure to the music of the aboriginaldidgeridoo, Tuvan throat-singing or Japanese court gagaku.

From *The Nado Times* (AP), 11/17/02

The Dallas-based Cremona Society is suing a New York violin dealer after he lost a rare 288-year-old Stradivarius violin made in what is known as the “Golden Period” of Stradivarius. The Society had consigned the instrument to dealer Christophe Landon in February, and in April Landon reported it missing. “I do not remember putting it back into the vault,” Landon said last week. He said he has tried hypnosis to jog his memory for possible clues.

From *The New York Times*, 11/27/02

Pianist Alicia de Larrocha, plays her final public concert at Carnegie Hall, and retires. “As departures go, Ms de Larrocha’s appearance was unusually low-key. Not much had been made of it publicly, although her retirement at 79 was not entirely unexpected. Like any musician who has enjoyed a long career, Ms. de Larrocha has seen performance style, and the tastes that drive it, move through cycles of change and reconsideration. In the Spanish works in her repertory she has remained peerless, but in Mozart, the expansion of the early-music world and the expectations it has created have been challenges for her.”

From Other Newsletters...

Andrew Margrave of The Nova Soundboard. newsletter of the North Virginia Chapter, has some sobering news, which he reported in their October 2002 issue. Ernie Juhn, RPT, Long Island/Nassau Chapter, has been having ruinous health problems recently, including loss of a leg. Webb Phillips, RPT, Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Chapter, has established a fund on Ernie’s behalf. Send contributions to: Webb Phillips, RPT, 3096 Bristol Road, Wamngton, PA 18976.

Next is an article from Doug Mahard, editor of The Keybed, newsletter of the Connecticut Chapter.

The Stringer II

I recently replaced a couple of kinked wires on a customer's D.H. Baldwin grand. These were the first and fourth plain wire strings in the tenor section passing under the bass strings. This tool made the job very simple, and at \$49-95 plus shipping, it basically paid for itself in the first installation. I ordered mine from Pianotek. The Stringer n consists of three brass tubes 16" long, a removable string separator cap, a bridge wire positioner (for combination handle), and easy-to-follow instructions. All parts fit into a clear tube with caps for convenient storage.

The three rods screw together depending on the length your particular job requires. The string separator cap allows you to form a loop of any size wire for unisons; or, remove it for single loop strings. The bridge wire positioner made placing the string through the bridge pins a snap.

On my job, I ended up using two lengths not screwed together because the size of the piano and the plate struts wouldn't allow a double length to pass under the bass strings. The second unsecured length just helped to keep the wire from getting unruly. Passing the tube under the bass strings and hooking the loop on the hitch pin was effortless. The separator cap does just that- keeps the string separated as you slide the tube off the string.

Using this tool for the first time, I was amazed at how the two strings went in so quickly. I can see how it would make certain upright installations just as easy. I highly recommend this tool.

Next is an offering from *The Wippenpost*, newsletter of the Chicago Chapter. It was written by Steve Pearson.

October's meeting found us once again in the capable hands of Ron Koval. He offered a side by side, outof-the box comparison of SAT fl, Tunelab, RCT and Verituner. Unlike the "old days" when the piano was tuned to the strobe, all these devices measure, to one degree or another, what the piano is telling it. The subject pianos were all similar vintage Hamilton uprights...so we can't be accused of being elitist, now, can we? Anyway, the pianos wee tuned ahead of time using the aforementioned ETDs, with no tweaking or cooking. One was tuned wiui a Peterson, so we could all hear what a strict harmonic tuning sounded like. (i.e., no stretch at allùpretty dull.)

Carefully explaining how each device worked, and me inherent limitations/characteristics of each system, Ron graphed all of,the devices', tunings. All rely on sampling a set of notes to establish an average curve in computing inharmonicity, except the VERITUNER, which listens to all revenant partials on every note as it is tuned. This is more like what the ear does; thus the Verituner claims to give a more natural tuning. Visually, (on graphs) the differences were apparent, but the real test was whether we could actually HEAR the difference. We broke into groups and played the pianos in various rooms, each identified only by a number chosen at random. This was a blind test. Then they all were brought into the presentation room where we could hear them side by side. There was no disagreement...we all liked #4. The tuning sounded

natural; the thirds progressed evenly, and had a definite aural sound to it. Many, perhaps all, were surprised at how noticeable the differences were. So much for the theory that an ETD is an ETD. So which was it? Remember now, this was a blind test! We had chosen the VERITUNER! Wowie- Congrats to Ron for a wellplanned and erudite presentation. Thanks, too, to Curie High School For the Arts. Lucky Curie High School. Stay tuned for next months' exciting episode on turning this wacko profession into a profitable business. But more on that later.

Tech Tip...

This latest entry comes from Mark and Marilyn Ritchie of our Columbus Chapter.

We have purchased the mortise sizing cauls from Spurlock Specialty Tools. These are used to size the mortise in the key after removing the old felt and before installing the new key bushings with the key bushing cauls. I questioned how much difference this would make in the final job. Well, it really has improved how consistent the bushings turn out. I have found the need for much less key easing- always a time consuming job to do well. The cauls are only available for .146 key pins and -162 (pre 1960 Steinway). We will be offering this added service to our wholesale customers. You may purchase the cauls at www.spurlocktools.com and find additional information.

In Conclusion...

From *The Devil's Dictionary* by Ambrose Bierce:

Piano. n. A parlor utensil for subduing the impenitent visitor. It is operated by depressing the keys of the machine and the spirits of the audience.

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