

The Buckeye Backcheck

March 2003

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Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

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From the Editor...



Welcome to the March 2003 issue of The Buckeye Backcheck. I hope all of you survived the treacherous weather conditions of recent weeks. This month we have no Meeting Minutes to publish, because there was no meeting last month. The sheer volume of snow that accumulated on Columbus roads in the mid of February necessitated the cancellation of the meeting on the 18th of that month. You see, even piano technicians get "snow days"!

Mark on Mutes...

We use our mutes in everyday tuning, but I don't think about them too much. There are quite a few types of mutes available, and I'm sure each person has their own favorites. I got some fairly large felt wedge mutes from the Yamaha booth at the Convention, and I tried these a couple of times, but I didn't care for them too much. I seemed to get quite a lot of "bleed through" from the muted strings. It wasn't bad, but not what I was used to hearing.

There is the Papp's Treble Mute, which is spring- loaded and made of nylon. It expands to mute the outside strings if placed in the middle of a unison- or the end strings if placed between

unisons. I never cared for this mute, due to the clicking sound made by the muted strings when they were struck. The mute also seemed to be in the way a good deal of the time. I do know several people who like it as a mute. Tom Harr once told me, having learned to use Papp's Mute, that "that was the way a piano was supposed to sound while being tuned." I have found it to be a handy tool to keep the jack out of the way in a vertical piano while replacing butt felt or tightening a flange screw. Place it behind the jack and it will hold the jack forward - towards the catcher- and out of the way. I've never tried any gang mutes, for they looked too troublesome. I found a felt temperament strip more to my liking, and it didn't take up too much space in the tool box. I haven't tried the Rubatex foam rubber type temperament strip. I used to have a maple stick mute that was leather covered, but it was used and worn when I got it, so it never got much use. I have used various mutes- always returning to the rubber wedge mutes. I guess it is what you get accus- tomed to. I like the split treble wedge mute for use on vertical pianos. I do a little modification on the steel handle to take off the sharp edges. I trim the top half of the wedge at a slight angle, which makes slipping the mute between the strings a little easier. I have also found the flat steel handle excellent for inserting the temperament strip between the unisons, instead of grab- bing for a screwdriver or such. I use a longer and wider rubber mute with no handle for the bass section. It does a better Job of muting and staying in between the strings. Mutes do wear out. Cleaning them can help, or just roughing up the surface may keep them from popping out on hard test blows. I usually shorten the wire handles a bit to keep them from being too top heavy. If the rubber is hard- or has a glazed surface- just treat your- self to a new set. You may be surprised what a difference they make.

(Thanks to Mark Ritchie)

From Graves Piano & Organ...

I just wanted to inform you that Graves, in collaboration with Steinway & Sons, is currently awarding a trip for two to New York for one area technician. It is a referral contest and all of the local techs should have received information regarding the rules of the contest from Steinway. I encourage everyone to participate! Right now, only a handful of techs have applied which means the odds of winning this trip are very, very high.

If anyone has not received information regarding the contest, contact me right away and I can send the info out to them.

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In the News...

The San Antonio Symphony is out of money and says it won't be able to pay musicians this week unless it raises \$250,000 by Friday. "The 78-member orchestra was told during an emotional 10 a.m. meeting at the Majestic Theater that without private donations, paychecks won't be issued Friday. The crisis could jeopardize future performances." - San Antonio Express-News 02/26/03

The 49-year-old Savannah Symphony, stuck with a \$1.3 million deficit, has cancelled the rest of its season. "I think the community has spoken. Savannah residents desire a symphony orchestra, I think, but there's been too much history with this organization as it stands today. The community sent us signals that (an orchestra) should start again with a new slate." - Atlanta Journal-Constitution 02/27/03

While small North American orchestras seem to be shutting down left and right for lack of funds, the Ulster Orchestra in Northern Ireland has come into something of a public windfall. The ensemble, which has been struggling financially, will receive a £1.69 million grant from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to help in its efforts to secure more reliable "core funding." The grant is a 26% increase on what the orchestra had previously received from the council. Gramophone 02/27/03

From Steinway...

LEGENDARY PIANO MAKER STEINWAY & SONS SEARCHES FOR OLDEST STEINWAY PIANO TO COMMEMORATE 150th ANNIVERSARY

Owner of Historical Piano To Be Awarded Free Restoration or Replacement

NEW YORK (January 14, 2003) Steinway & Sons, renowned for creating the world's finest pianos, kicks off a year of sesquicentennial celebrations by searching the country to locate the oldest Steinway grand piano and upright. Considered the gold standard of pianos, Steinway & Sons is true to its heritage of excellence through hand craftsmanship, producing over 563,000 Steinway pianos since its founding, in comparison to some manufacturers who mass-produce pianos each year.

"Each and every Steinway piano ever produced has its own unique identity, personality and story," said Henry Z. Steinway, great grandson of the founder. "We're conducting this search because many of our pianos have been passed from one generation to the next. We take great pleasure in tracing their rich, enduring history, from one that was hidden during the Civil War to those recently purchased by symphonies around the world." Every Steinway piano has a serial number and information is kept on record, including the day it was completed, the style, the craftsman who worked on it, as well as where and to whom it was sold. The serial number is located on the lower interior of the cast iron plate. The owner of the oldest Steinway may have their Steinway piano restored or replaced with a new Steinway piano comparable to their own. In addition, the oldest Steinway grand and upright piano will be publicly announced in June at Carnegie Hall, in New York City, during a three night series of classical, jazz and pop concerts performed by renowned Steinway artists to celebrate the anniversary. Consumers will have until

May 1, 2003, to visit their local Steinway dealer and register their piano in the "Search for the Oldest Steinway." Authorized Steinway & Sons dealer organizations can be located by calling toll-free, 1.800.345.5086. Consumers can also send a postcard with their name, address, phone number, e-mail and the piano serial number to the attention of:

"Search for the Oldest Steinway"

c/o Steinway & Sons

One Steinway Place

Long Island City, NY 11105

In addition, consumers who visit an authorized Steinway dealership between February 1st and April 15th, 2003, will have the opportunity to enter the "Musical Experience of a Lifetime" sweep- stakes to win an all expense paid trip for two to the Carnegie Hall concerts, June 5-7, 2003. No purchase necessary.

From Joel Reeves...

Thursday, February 27, 2003

I'm so sorry that it has been so long. I think that as we got on a little bit more of a normal schedule we just started putting off the update until we nearly forgot about it

We had an enjoyable trip to Duke. The doctor's name is Dr. Friedman. We didn't really receive any treatment while we were there, but we got signed for the program and got a lot of questions answered and a lot of help getting medicine. I am in my second round of chemo and it's been pretty smooth so far. The medicine I am taking is called Temodar, and I just take it for 5 days and then I wait for 23 days. After I do that four times we will look at radiation.

Sheryl is starting to teach again, as well as starting to catch up with her school work from last semester and a whole new crop for this semester.

I was intending to start teaching by now, but I'm finding that my energy level isn't real predictable during parts of the month. I may need to do a partial schedule for a while. I am doing a little bit of playing for church by prerecording some hymns on me keyboard. I can also do some simple things with my left hand. This allows Kathy to work with the Junior Choir during part of the service.

I know I always leave something out, so don't hesitate to ask questions. I sure do appreciate the prayers, cards, and e-mails that you have continued to send even though I have gotten a little lazy. I really am feeling good most of the time, although I have to shut my eyes a little more often than usual.

More from Graves Piano...

Christina Kauffman, Director of Institutional Sales for Graves Piano & Organ, reports that Franz Mohr, famed Steinway technician for Vladimir Horowitz, will be visiting Graves Piano on January 20th and 21st of 2004. He will speak during our Chapter Meeting and perhaps give a

technical during an afternoon session. Also, Steinway's well-known Rhapsody Piano will be at Graves at the end of April and the beginning of May of this year. We thank the folks at Graves Piano for organizing both of these events!

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