

The Buckeye Backcheck

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Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano
Technicians Guild



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From the Editor

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In the October issue of the PTJ, the Editorial Perspective, by Jeannie Grassi, “Everything Old is New Again” struck a chord with me. As a student member of the PTG, I often said that my mentor had probably forgotten more than I knew at the time. Old information is replaced with new or improved ideas, and some just seems to get lost in the catacombs of our memory. This month Tom Harr brings up some past information on the Wurlitzer actions that were produced in Greenwood, Mississippi.

There are always manufacturing problems, not just with pianos by any means. I feel confident that no one tries to make mistakes, but changes in procedures or raw materials often lead to difficulties. Many problems are caught quickly enough that not too many products reach the market place; some however take longer to become evident. This might be a good topic for future articles or just a meeting topic, recurring problems on specific instruments or actions. How many have you encountered?

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Meeting Minutes (excerpts)

Chapter News & Notes:

The Chapter has received two requests about membership in the PTG from local residents Ms. Jennifer Crabb and Mr. Michael Hill. I emailed information to both about Columbus Chapter meetings and they have both received information from the home office.

Plans to offer the technical exam in the spring are well under way. Kim Hoessly has contacted all eligible Associates. RPT’s willing to help administer the exams are being sought. Mitch

Staples, Chris Altenburg, and Mark Ritchie have offered assistance so far, we need two or three more.

Chapter Approval on Reclassification Forms Is No Longer Necessary. By a vote of Council at the 2005 PTG Annual Convention, the requirement for a chapter officer's signature on a successful RPT candidate's Reclassification Form has been eliminated. That means that when you pass all your exams and have all the appropriate examiners affix all the appropriate signatures to all the Exam spaces on the form (Written, Tuning and Technical) you don't have to go looking for a chapter officer to sign the form - just mail it directly to the Home Office. To help you remember, just put a big fat "X" through that bottom box on the form (the one titled "Chapter Approval") and pretend that it isn't there... Keep the yellow copy for yourself - it's your backup in case the original gets lost. The Home Office will notify you and your Chapter President when your reclassification is processed.

- Israel Stein ETSC

PTG Foundation Associate Scholarship applications are available. This provides funds for Convention registration and examination fee for either the technical or tuning exam. Additional information or form at www.ptg.org/ptgf

Next Chapter Meeting February 21, 2006. The next meeting will be held at Kim Hoessly 3411 Clearview Ave. Columbus, Oh 43221 At 7:30 PM . Kim is going to do a review-- "My Steinway Upright Rebuild, I KNOW IT'S AMAZING, I finally got it all together." Kim has done a complete replacement of the double flange action in her piano. Come and learn about the pitfalls, trials and tribulations of finishing this project. Should be fun, bring your questions.

Associate Seminar scheduled for March 10 & 11 Has been cancelled, but a one day RPT exam preparation session is planned for Rochester this summer. The Master Voicing Class March 17-19 is full.

California State Conference Feb. 9-12 - Check www.doublefeature.la-ptg.org

Butt's and Flanges:

Fun and Games on the Web - The PTG website has added new items to the [Just For Fun](#) area that are reproducible for educational purposes. Share the site with a music teacher or print out some of the materials and hand them out to your young customers.

Can you name the piano this nose bolt came from? (and it's not "Already Been Chewed"!)



Tech Tip

.Cutting a material freehand can be done squarely without using a miter-box or other aid by simply lining up the reflection on the saw blade with the edge (see fig. 1). If your angle is off the reflection will be out-of-line (see fig. 2). This lets out hacksaw blades, but X-acto razor saws and the like work. This is especially helpful cutting tubing and dowels to avoid making a spiral cut, the ends of which fail to meet. A good reason to keep your saw blades clean.

(Credit: Gary Shipe reporting on a tip from an Aeolian-Skinner organ finisher completing an installation at OSU.)

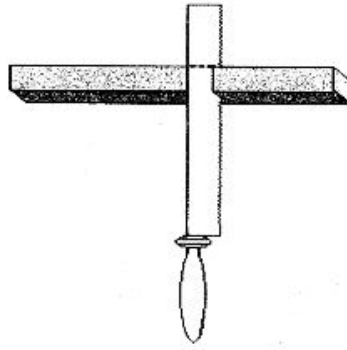


Fig. 1

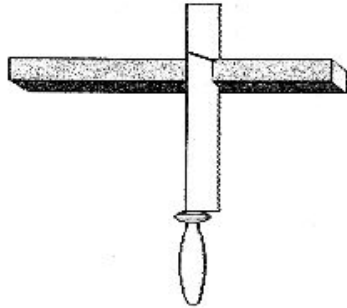


Fig. 2

From Thomas Harr - **WURLITZER** Vertical Action Problems

In an article back in February I made passing reference to “frozen bushings” in WurliTzer actions made circa 1970. Herewith is the follow-on.

Subsequent to having been stung once too often by unilateral price increases from their outside action supplier, Wood & Brooks, WurliTzer management determined not to be held hostage to such uncontrolled costs and proceeded to build their own state-of-the-art factory at Greenwood, Mississippi. Among other advanced wood-machining procedures was the use of numerically-controlled gang-bandsaws producing identical keyboards with interchangeable keys. Previously keyboards were marked out by a die and the individual keys cut out one-at-a-time by hand leading to a visible lack of uniformity. As a part of the automation it was decided to insert the action center-pins by machine. This required that the pins be pre-cut to length and tumbled to round the ends to eliminate requiring orientation in a preferred direction and avoid the consequence of tearing up the bushing by wrong-end insertion. This procedure may have contributed to the subsequent problem since it did result in some pins being measurably out-of-round on the ends. At any event, that or the bushing process led to action centers which did not literally “freeze”, but over time became sluggish enough to cause real trouble.

My very first tech class as a neophyte tuner was the then traditional October Cleveland

Seminar at the Port O' Call in Brookpark across the interstate from the giant Ford engine-block foundry. Leading lights present from WurliTzer were Bud Corey, Bob White(?), Lew Herwig, and possibly Jerry O'Connell. The topic was ostensibly vertical regulation and included such items as grinding down a Nicholson #2 round bastard for balance-rail hole easing (my first self-made piano tool). What I suspect was the main point, since it was a truly hot topic at the time, was dealing with tight action centers, easily. Their initial solution was the use of light mineral oil cut about 10 to 1 with paint thinner to "ease", basically lubricate, the offending centers. This was subsequently changed to a solution of dimethyl-siloxane diluted 8 to 1 with VM&P naphtha. (In case you want to know, siloxane is silicone polymer which comes as a clear, viscous, extremely slippery inert liquid. In more highly polymerized forms it is familiar as silicone rubber or RTV silicone caulk. VM&P naphtha, nearly always mispronounced, stands for varnish, marine, and paint or some such and is a high-grade, mostly odorless solvent.) This was to be liberally applied using a hypodermic type squeeze bottle. To avoid combustion problems removing the action and applying the solution outdoors was strongly suggested. Since I don't smoke on the job and few of my customers light their pianos with candles or coal-oil I never did so. As the only identifiable Columbus person present I was the eventual recipient of a couple of half-pints of free siloxane to be diluted with my own gallon of naphtha and distributed amongst fellow chapter members which in those days were so few it worked out to about a quart of solution apiece.

Time passes, WurliTzer (last heard of in the contract production of circuit boards) no longer produces pianos, actions or hands out siloxane. Tight actions still turn up in pianos whether made by WurliTzer or some other manufacturer using their actions. What to do? You can identify the action as made by WurliTzer at Greenwood by checking the top edge of the main action rail just beyond where the damper flanges for an ink stamp such as A-10 for a spinet action A-20 for a console, or A-30 or A-300 for a studio. In some several thousands of such I have never seen this problem in a studio action and only occasionally in spinets. It is relatively common in consoles of a certain age and shows up most commonly in the butt flanges, wink the hammer-rail or pump the soft pedal to find these up, or in the jacks, depress the soft pedal and trip the jack tenders with a screwdriver tip to find these. Note in Fig. 1 that the jack is "inside-out" with the frazine or birdseye being an integral part of the wippen and the bushings in the fork on the jack itself. The difference in the relative masses of the components may account for the problem mostly showing up in console actions. In any event some change was made in production and corrected the situation. Since siloxane is not readily available what I use is pure silicone in a spray can. Kellogg's Professional Products of Sandusky sells this under the KEL brand name in a convenient 4 oz. size with an applicator tube to direct the spray right at the bushings. The conventional alcohol-water bushing treatment seems totally ineffective, possibly because of lanolin remaining in the bushing cloth. Other lubricants may have undesirable effects; WD-40 in particular leaves a residue which turns gummy and makes things worse, the tech rep for one Asian piano maker once had to recant his previous recommendation of this. After spraying a little exercising of the action parts will free them up. Once in the field on a warranty service call I found myself without any silicone juice and had to ream and re-pin about 25 butt flanges and jacks. The customer commended me for my patience, but I don't suggest this as regular practice.

There are three situations silicone will not correct: bent center pins, pins that were inserted between the wood and the bushing cloth, and a butt-spring rail that is set too low. These require other suitable repairs.

(An opinion from the editor)

I have seen quite a few problems associated with the use, or careless use, of silicone as a lubricant in piano actions. I know that silicone has been, and still is, recommended for this use by any number of respected technicians. My limited research has shown that silicone has a certain volatility level, maybe only when mixed with other substances. There is a possibility of evaporation into the air and then coalescing in places you might not want it, like pin blocks or key sticks etc. Cautious use, in very specific areas would be my recommendation.

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