



The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technician's Guild
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President's Message

Chapter elections are coming up at the May meeting, and I would like to encourage anyone who may be interested to come forward and volunteer to run for one of the elected offices: President, Vice-President, Secretary Treasurer, and Delegate to the Convention. Traditionally in our chapter, there isn't a whole lot of enthusiasm among the members for running for office, so it would be more accurate to say our office-holders are there because they volunteered. So thank you, fellow officers, for serving over the past two years. As you know, I'm not the type who loves to hold or run for any office, but I was happy to volunteer when I was asked. I figured it was my time to serve the chapter, and it has been a privilege.

The biggest challenge over the past couple of years was getting through the days of covid and quarantining, and I'm happy we maintained our monthly meetings with the help of Zoom. Thanks to everybody in the chapter for attending and contributing to meetings, and to our hosts and speakers. You all made it easy for me. I think we had some terrific technical talks and discussions.

Please contact me soon if you would like to serve as an officer or convention delegate, or if you have any questions. Note officers don't have to be an RPT, and the convention delegate gets a stipend from the home office.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, May 16 @ 7:00 PM

Battelle Fine Arts Center - Room 131
170 West Park Street
Westerville, OH 43081

Technical Presentation:

Andrew Kovaleski - Hands-On Demonstration of Steinway Pedal Refurbishing

Chapter Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2023 7:00 PM - Graves Piano and Organ

Attendance:

Chris Purdy, Justin Swain, Andrew Kovaleski, Sam Debatin, Morgan Sieg, Dainis Tondel, Evan Bingham, Mitch Staples, Chris Altenburg, Jack Johnston, Bryan Hartzler, Ron Kenreich, guest Jo Rollins, guest Andrea Tinajero

Treasurer's Report:

\$1286.03

Old Business:

The PTG Annual Convention will be held from July 26-29 - this year's event is in Arlington, VA. More information is available at <https://www.ptgconvention.com>.

New Business:

Andrew Kovaleski passed his written RPT exam with a 97% - congratulations! He is planning to take the technical and tuning exams this summer.

May's meeting will include elections for a new slate of officers. David Stang, president, and Chris Purdy, vice president, are up against term limits and cannot run again. Please consider running! All officers must be members in good standing, but do not have to be Registered Piano Technicians. We have to have quorum to elect officers, so please plan on attending.



Technical Presentation

Wholistic Voicing with Bryan Hartzler

At our May meeting, Bryan Hartzler gave an inspired and in-depth walkthrough of his approach to “wholistic voicing” - a process which takes into consideration the pianist’s entire experience of using the instrument. This voicing process encompasses the entire spectrum of piano maintenance, from bench security to regulation to tuning, and not just the needling at the end of the process. Here are a few of the major points from the presentation:

- Every aspect of the piano which the pianist interacts with ought to be both *definitive* and *vertical*. The pianist has three points of contact when playing the piano: their seat, their feet, and their fingers. Each of these contact points must be definitive and vertical.
- The first thing a technician ought to check is to make sure the bench is securely (definitively) assembled, with bolts and hardware screws all tightened. In older

Jansen benches which are wobbly, the adjustable mechanism can become worn and need rebuilding using the kit available from Jansen.

- Then, the technician ought to ensure that the pedals move definitively and vertically, with secure hardware throughout the trapwork mechanism and without side play in the movement of the pedals. In a Steinway grand, the most efficient way to resolve side play is by replacing worn felt bushings with new Teflon parts from Steinway (to be explored in detail during the technical presentation in the May meeting). The technician can also achieve pedal definition by ensuring that the endpoint of pedal travel is definitive on the pedal upstop point. Sustain pedal upstop ought to be set just short of where its damper lift will be equivalent to damper lift from the key.
- In achieving definition in the pianist's experience through their fingers, the technician's goal is to let the pianist express themselves through the piano without resistance. In order to achieve this, everything in the action must be exactly vertical, clear, and as frictionless as possible:
 - Keys should have minimal side play - Bryan recommends polishing key pins and capstans, and using tight key bushings set with ProFelt and lubricated with McLube
 - The key frame ought to be securely bedded to the key bed using the glide bolts. Cheek blocks should secure the ends of the action to the key bed without excess pressure, adjusting using shims under the blocks.
 - Hammers should have no side to side motion - where horizontal motion is present, hammers should be traveled using travel paper which sticks to the flange. The hammer head must be perfectly straight up and down.
 - Letoff button cloth must be free of indentation to allow for fine regulation.
 - Backchecks must be fresh and well aligned with the hammers
 - The strike point in the highest treble should be where the tone on C8 is most clear.
 - Hammers should strike all three strings at the same time - Bryan recommended using very thin strips of sandpaper to file individual grooves on the hammers so that their surface matches the contour of the strings of the unison, rather than using a string lifter to match the strings to the shape of the hammer.
 - If the back action has springs on the damper underlevers, then the tension in those springs ought to be minimal. If the underlevers have three leads in them, then the springs can even be removed.
 - The sustain pedal tray return spring ought to be as near to the sustain pedal pitman as possible to avoid warping of the tray.
 - The repetition lever springs ought to be regulated for firm hammer return without being able to feel the repetition lever in the pianist's fingers.

- For hammer voicing, the goal is to enable the piano to show the pianist where they can go and what they can do.
 - Bryan recommends using soft hammers and using lacquer or acrylic, depending on the situation, to harden hammers to the desired brightness. Lacquer stiffens the felt and takes longer to dry, where acrylic dries faster and is more useful in the final steps of voicing hammers. In the first application of lacquer, the goal is to stiffen the felt to just a bit over or under the desired brightness by applying lacquer to both sides of the shoulders, soaking into the head of the hammer from underneath, all the way to the strike point. Subsequent applications of lacquer will not soak in as easily as the first one.
 - After initial application of lacquer, the technician can use needles or acrylic to darken or brighten the tone, with the goal of every string having the exact same character of sound as the one next to it. Additionally, on each unison, each string of the unison ought to have the exact same character of sound as each other string in that unison, voicing down brighter strings by needling the accompanying groove.

Thanks very much to Bryan for presenting his approach to piano maintenance - I think I can speak for everyone in saying that it was a very thorough and inspiring presentation.

Andrew Kovaleski

- Officers -

President - David Stang
Vice President - Chris Purdy, RPT
Treasurer - Ron Kenreich
Secretary - Andrew Kovaleski
Immediate Past President - David Chadwick, RPT



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<https://www.ptgcolumbus.org>

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