

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 41 Issue 4 April 2016



PRESIDENT'S CORNER



I have shared with a few of you my recent trials and tribulations with my desk top computer. It's an iMac G5 from 2005, which apparently, in the computer world, is positively ancient. It has stopped working and parts are not available. The best I can do is find a similar model and download the hard drive into the "new" device. This problem, admittedly, is due partly to the fact that I liked the operating system which supported the software I liked and Apple stopped supporting that software when it went to Intel. Good Grief!. Imagine not being able to play Chopin on your piano because it was made after 1960 or some such nonsense. Imagine not being able to find parts for a customer's piano because it was over 10 years old. Great for the piano salesman, not so much for the rest of us. I'm sure someone much more tech savvy than me would explain to me that it is much more complicated than pure marketing, but I think it's just an extension of the attitude of replace rather than repair. Also throw into the equation that I became rather attached to my computer as I used it everyday for work and various church and personal jobs. It was a part of the family. How much more personal, then, is the piano in one's home? For many it is more than just a piece of furniture, more than just a tool for making music. It is an extension of your psyche. So replacing the instrument when it becomes older or needs repair is not really an option for many folks. Anything we can do to keep the piano playing is like saving a family member's life to the customer. Of course, as with all things, the piano does eventually come to the end of the road and that, too, needs to be handled with tact (and, in the words of Roget's Thesaurus: diplomacy, sensitivity, understanding, thoughtfulness, consideration, delicacy, discretion, prudence, judiciousness, subtlety, etc). Guess I have to remember that about my computer as well.

Kim Hoessly, RPT

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Chapter Meeting Minutes

March 15, 2016

The meeting was held at Ritchie Piano Service.

Attendance:

Kim Hoessly, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, Mark and Marilyn Ritchie, Chris Altenburg, Dwight Hansen, Phil Walters, John Schmoll, and guests Phil Walpole, and Mary Henriques

Treasurer's Report:

\$1779.36

President's Report:

The PTG Executive Board approved plans for the 2017 Convention to be held in St. Louis, MO.

Committee Reports:

Testing: At it's mid-winter meeting, the PTG Board created a task group to establish an eBook of piano nomenclature as requested by the International Relations Committee and approved the purchase of 6 (six) new jigs for educational purposes. To maintain action models and jigs, the ETSC and Institute Committee will work with the Home Office to establish a yearly maintenance and replacement plan.

Old Business:

Associates Day for Technical Exam prep has been tabled for now until more feedback from Associates is received.

June 18 or 25 are possible dates for the auction of Don Carle's inventory of tools and supplies. Ben Wiant, Mark Ritchie, and John Schmoll may also place items in the auction, and the event may be advertised to other regional chapters. Location TBA.

After polling the Chapter, and some discussion, it was decided that meetings would still take place on the third Tuesday of the month, but will start a bit earlier at 7:00 pm. This still seems to be the general time that is agreeable to most in the Chapter that has the least amount of conflict with most schedules.

John Schmoll now has the contents of the Chapter Library for the time being.

Confirmation of a Delegate to Council was tabled, though David Chadwick had considered volunteering in the previous meeting.

New Business:

No new business.

Butts & Flanges

Mark Ritchie recently serviced a Young Chang grand with brackets that expanded so much that the action would not come out of the piano. In addition to that, the stretcher was warped too! Mark had to cut action rails just to get the action out. Talk about brackets and March Madness!!

John Schmoll had a customer call him up requesting service on a Weber grand. Upon arrival John found it was a Weber square grand, somewhat to his dismay. The customer even admitted that he deliberately withheld that information fearing he wouldn't come. John says that it's not too bad for a square but it's still too much for his back. So, if anyone has an interest in taking over this grand, let John know.

Upon hearing the the name Weber, Dwight Hansen had his own question about a Weber grand Duo Art player piano belonging to the Bellefontaine Historical Society. He wondered if what was possible to regulate the piano without removing most, if not all, of the hoses around the action. Also, to his dismay as well, the answer is you have to remove all of that. Sorry!

Chris Altenburg had his own player issue where the tempo keeps slowing down. Various causes were offered up regarding vacuum leaks in several places, or an issue with the governor, or a valve in the governor. No one single solution was agreed upon because it may be one of several things. Mark then loaned Chris his copy of the Reblitz book on player pianos. Good luck!

Announcement

The Don Mannino technical on "Shigeru Kawai Full Service" that was to take place on May 31, has been cancelled. No word as to if it will be rescheduled.

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

The Takeaway

by Kim Hoessly

Here are some things folks found useful from our March Meeting:

Kim: In addition to the comments I made in my request for comments (thickness of felt and cauls), I'd like to add a comment that was made in an email list amongst examiners. I haven't been in the habit of wading through all of that, but just this one quote made that 10 minutes of my time worthwhile. Most of the conversation was about issues with the action models and with the tuning exam program, but one remark was made that applied to all of us in the field. Attributed to Bill Spurlock, this gem: "...if there is something going on with all the notes-- it's probably not something you adjust 88 times, it's 1 thing, like a rail or the actual frame, something that adjusts everything across the board". A time saving piece of advice!

Chris Burget: Using sizing cauls to size the mortises after steaming really does seem to make for a more consistent fit in the long run, as each hole is uniform in size. Well worth the extra day or night of drying and setting up, as it may reduce the amount of easing later on. Also, the method of overlapping the hole with the bushing cloth just to the opposite inside edge of the mortise helps to insure not too much cloth is inserted. Marilyn also put different colored dots of nail polish, or paint, on the various sizes of bushing cauls so they wouldn't get mixed up, which would be very easy to do.

Dwight H.: It was good to revisit repairs that i don't often get to do. I especially enjoy comments from butts and flanges and support of help from everyone or where to get help.

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Ins & Outs Of Key Bushing

Thanks to Mark and Marilyn Ritchie for hosting the March meeting and providing food and refreshments, as well as offering the technical presentation on key bushing.

Two stations were set up; one for troubleshooting various key problems, and another for rebushing keys. A printed handout was also available, and some of that is represented here.

First, one must look for the signs that keys need rebushing. Many bushings may be missing or wearing through; there may be excessive side motion at the front and/or balance rail mortises; the keys may not be square and actually tilt side to side; the bushing felt may be hard or noisy; or there may be "pulley", or "pulling", keys that move forward and backward. As the keys and keyframe are the foundation of the action, any problems here may cause problems elsewhere in the action, and precise and consistent regulation may not be possible in the end. This will also lead to a loss of power, control, and evenness of touch. If you're rebuilding an action, or making changes to touchweight or action geometry, then you have to make sure your keys have the proper amounts of friction and can maintain good key level so other regulation measurements can be accurately assessed.

Once it has been decided that rebushing is needed, one must measure the keypins with a micrometer and record the measurements. Some common key pin sizes will be listed later, but measurements should always be made. Then the bushings need to be removed, and there are several ways to do so. Using a damp cloth and an iron to apply steam to the bushings is one way. This may cause the wood to swell in some cases, so just be aware of that. This may actually be a benefit if the balance rail holes are too large and keys are pulling. Also, this method may occasionally damage some sharps or key tops, leave water stains, or detach loose key buttons or ivory. Another method is to soak felt wedges in water and a few drops of wallpaper remover, then place the wedges in the mortises and let them soak. It won't induce as much moisture as the previous method but may take longer. A third method mentioned was an electric bushing remover. No other detail was given but this could involve using a key bushing attachment on a soldering iron that is placed into mortises after the bushings have been moistened. So it is like individually steaming each bushing to loosen the glue. One could also combine various elements of each approach. Make sure any globs of old glue, loose wood shavings, and gritty deposits are removed from the mortises.

After bushing removal, Marilyn highly recommends using sizing cauls to size the mortises in the keys before rebushing. This will provide consistently dimensioned mortises with clean and even surfaces which make bushing and key fitting easier in the long run. A little steam is applied to the mortises as described above, then the cauls are placed into the mortises and allowed to sit overnight. This can be done right after steam removal of bushings, or it can be a separate step if needed. Marilyn uses Spurlock cauls for this step. The added time for sitting overnight is well worth it in the end.

When selecting cloth, Marilyn advises getting high quality woven felt in a variety of thicknesses. Thin to medium sizes are used more often than thicker varieties. Cut the cloth into strips to match the width of the mortises. Try a couple of samples with different thicknesses and the desired caul size. The fit should be firm, but not too tight or loose. There are also different types and brands of cauls. There are mortise sizing, or just "sizing", cauls that shape the surface of the mortises; and there are bushing cauls that are inserted after the cloth has been applied. Cauls can also be made from various polymers, or they can be made from aluminum or brass. There are also single-shouldered and double-shouldered cauls. Each type will often have instructions for their particular use and I won't go into all that here, other than to say that the cauls for each key pin size may actually be slightly larger than the key pins to allow for felt thickness, so read any instructions that may come with sets of cauls. The Spurlock cauls have colored markings for different sizes, while the metallic ones may, or may not, have sizes etched into them. Marilyn marked the different sized aluminum cauls with various colors of nail polish, so they don't get mixed up, which is very easy to do.

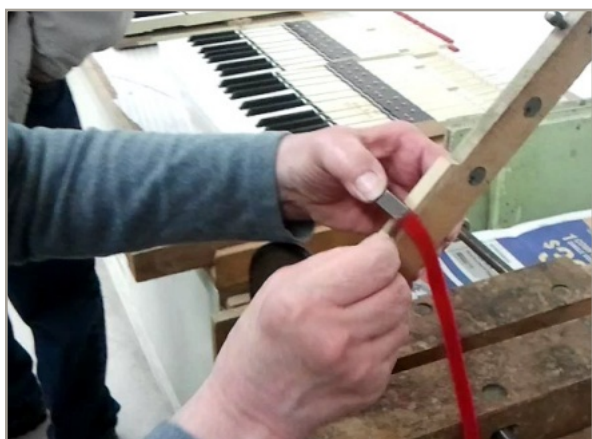
Marilyn only uses good quality hot hide glue for bushing work. She soaks the glue overnight before heating and she tries to reach a medium consistency that won't soak through the cloth, yet isn't so thick that it is stringy with poor adhesion. Test on a sample if needed.



The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

(...key bushing continued)



When bushing a key, she places it in a set of screw clamps that are in turn clamped to the workbench. The key is clamped at approximately a 45 degree angle and you have both hands free to work with. Next, it must be determined how much felt to place in the hole. If you're bushing the right side of the front mortise, take a strip in your right hand and place the very end of the strip on the inside edge of the left side of the mortise and stretch the felt back over the hole and to the right side of the key and hold it firmly in place by pinching the cloth between your right thumb and the right side of the key. Do the same on the other side of the key with a second strip. You should now be holding two strips of cloth on either side of the key. The strips will probably be sticking upward a bit. With your other hand, take a brush and apply some glue to the felt and the left and right walls of the mortise. Push the two ends into the hole and immediately insert the desired caul being careful not to pull any excess felt into the hole. Once the caul is firmly in place with your thumb holding the caul in, take a razor or knife and trim the felt right at the shoulders of the caul on both sides. The procedure Marilyn showed for the key button is basically the same as for the front mortise. Keys are then allowed to dry overnight and the cloth may need further trimming the next day. The condition of the keyframe and keypins are addressed and cleaned, polished and lubricated as needed. Some technicians also like to apply VS Profelt, which will lubricate the felt.

There are other methods of bushing both mortises that are a little more involved and may require extra equipment, and they won't be described in too much detail here. There is another method of bushing the balance mortise where it is vented at the bottom of the button. The cloth is fed through that gap and is pulled upward with a hook after glue is applied, then it is trimmed and cauled. Also, some front mortises have a relief that is routed out on either side of the hole on the bottom of the key so that more felt may be stretched across the bottom in that channel, yet still be flush with rest of the bottom surface. There are also other methods that may be quicker and use more felt by bushing whole sections at once with long strips which are then cut after cauls are inserted. There are also tools available, like the Bushmaster tool, that combine various steps into one. These other methods were very briefly mentioned without much detail, and are mentioned here, more or less, to inform those interested that there are other methods out there.

The second workstation was basically a section of keys on a keyframe that had been sabotaged and it was up to participants to figure out why various keys were loose, sticking, tilting, pulling, or malfunctioning in a variety of ways. Some had tight, or loose, balance rail holes, while others may have had front rail pins rotated and were rubbing on the bushings. Tricky, tricky!

Key Pin Sizes For Some Common Pianos

Most American pianos, 1960-83 Steinway
Pre-1960 Steinway
Some Pre-1900-1910 Steinway

Various pianos w/ German Kluge keyboards
Various pianos w/ German Renner keyboards

American Piano Co. (Chickering, Knabe, Vose, etc.)
Some Pre-1920's Knabe

Yamaha, Young Chang, Herrberger Brooks (Kimball)
Kawai

Balance Rail

Front Rail

.146"

.146"

.162"

.146"

.160"

.146"

.146"

.131"

.146"

.125" or .129"

.087"

.146"

.152"

.146"

.137"

.125"

.146"

.133"

There may be exceptions to the above. Always measure the keypins to be sure.

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Ivory Update

In January, PTG representatives attended a meeting on ivory issues during the NAMM show. James Goldberg, NAMM's Washington DC based attorney, led the discussion.

At this point, US Fish and Wildlife anticipates publishing the final special rule on African Elephants in the second quarter of 2016. That proposed rule includes a de minimis exemption of 200 grams. USFW chose that weight, "... because we understand that this is the approximate maximum weight of the ivory veneer on a piano with a full set of ivory keys and that this quantity would also cover most other musical instruments with ivory trim or appointments."

The proposed rule can be reviewed at www.regulations.gov. Goldberg said he was doubtful of the second quarter date and guess it would more likely become law in the third quarter. He also said he doubts many changes will be made to the proposed rule although there have been some discussions about musical instruments that don't fall under the exemption such as pipe organs.

At the state level, Goldberg said the music instrument industry has come out pretty well so far. Four states (New Jersey, New York, Washington and California) have legislation in place; all except New Jersey contain musical instrument exemptions. Goldberg said it appears Hawaii and Vermont will enact bills in 2016; both have musical instrument exemptions though not as "clean" as the music industry would prefer, he said. Massachusetts is currently considering ivory legislation and Ohio is also a strong possibility for legislation in 2016.

Several other states have seen legislation introduced. One of the best resources for checking activity at the state levels is to visit www.legiscan.com. Scroll down to lower left and check all states and enter the keyword ivory. Goldberg, along with the rest of NAMM's legislative team, emphasized the importance of following activity on the state level and reaching out to legislators to express the impact of the bill. Goldberg attributed much of the success in obtaining exemptions on the state level to one-on-one interaction between music industry representatives and legislators.

PTG's official statement is available at www.ptg.org and NAMM occasionally updates legislation (and their responses) www.namm.org/issues-and-advocacy/trade-regulatory-compliance/track-ivory-legislation . Outside of the music industry, elephantprotection.org also tracks legislation and provides resources



The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

www.ptgcolumbus.org

Piano Bar...? Monster Hangover!!!



Chrome Horse Saloon , Cedar Rapids , Ia.

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

President	Kim Hoessly, RPT
Vice-President	Vacant
Treasurer	Ron Kenreich
Secretary	Christopher Burget
Imm. Past Pres.	Bryan Hartzler, RPT

*Contributions and pictures for
the Buckeye Backcheck and the
web page are always welcome,
(even if they are only
peripherally related to pianos)!*
- Chris Burget

Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, April 19
7:00pm
New Time!!

Graves Piano & Organ Co.
5798 Karl Road
Columbus, OH 43229
www.gravespianos.com

Topic: Concert Prep
by Ben Wiant

Map Link:
<http://goo.gl/maps/hoXHi>

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Comments, articles, and advertising requests may be sent to the editor:

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