

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Chapter Meeting Minutes March 20, 2018

The meeting was held at Maize Manor UMC.

Attendance:

Mitch Staples, Chris Altenburg, Chris Burget, Ron Kenreich, Kim Hoessly, David Stang, Dwight Hansen

Treasurer's Report:

\$1,660.57

Old Business:

The April technical will be held at Graves Piano & Organ Co., and the technical will be given by Phil Walters demonstrating a vertical action jig that can be used for spacing hammers on the bench.

The May meeting will take place at Solich Piano, but could be held on the fourth Tuesday which is May 22. This is to accommodate guest speaker Tim Barnes. Topic of discussion is not yet known.

The Chapter voted to increase the annual donation given to the OMTA Summer Scholarship Fund, up from \$150 to \$200.

New Business:

The domain name for the Chapter website is up for renewal this June. The cost for another five year renewal is between \$100-120, depending on certain fees and extended privacy settings for website manager contact information. The Chapter voted to go ahead and renew for another five year term.

There was brief discussion about a delegate for this years annual international convention. So far, no one has committed to attending. There was also brief discussion about delegate reimbursement of travel expenses. The present amount is \$500, and there was no motion to change that amount, but it was suggested to revisit that topic in the future.

There was also a suggestion to reconsider at the April meeting an increase in their local portion of the Chapter dues. No amount was suggested.

Drawing up a slate of officers in April for Chapter elections in May was also discussed.

Butts & Flanges

David Stang recently worked on a Steinway L and found that the music desk appeared to be too small in width to fit on the runners inside the case. He estimated that it was at least 1/4 inch, or so, too narrow. By all other appearances, it seemed to match the piano in style and finish, as did the runners in the case. Possible reasons that were suggested included: some error made during rebuilding on the desk itself, or the runners; glue joints failing on the casework so it was spreading apart, which was ruled out in this case; extreme climactic change, which was generally ruled out too in this case. Mitch suggested that some piano out there has a desk that is too large! Mitch suggested modifying or replacing the runners so they reached out farther to accommodate the desk. He did this once on an old L using the pieces of hardwood he received with boxes of Steinway hammers. He painted and mounted them in the piano.

Dwight Hansen relayed some experiences he had with a studio vertical with repetition issues. He ended up replacing all of the hammer butt return springs. But, later the customer thought the touch was too heavy as a result. So, Dwight returned to ease the whole set. Then, just two months later, the piano burned up in a fire. "So, I don't have to see that piano anymore!" To which Mitch quipped, "See, things do have a way of working themselves out...."

For Sale

I have a customer who is selling a Bechtel harpsichord. I don't have a picture, but it's a historical reproduction Flemish-style single-manual with one 8' and one 4' register. It's light blue. As it was built by Ben, it's a very fine instrument. According to his notes it was built in 2002. I would guess a value of \$5000, but the owner is downsizing and his main objective is to make sure it goes to a good home.

Thanks for passing the word on to anyone who may have an interest.

David Stang

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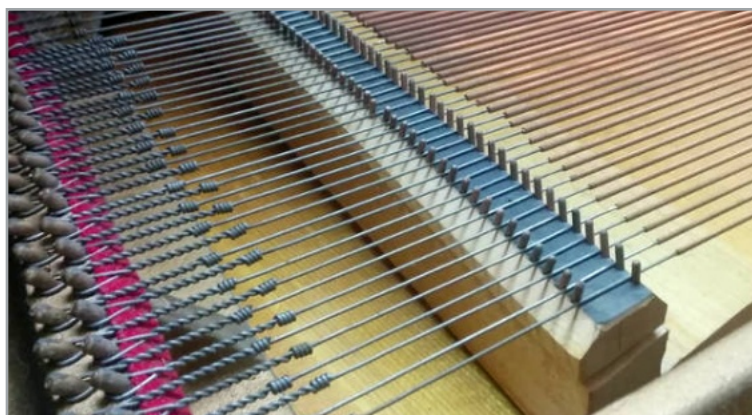
Vertical Bass Bridge Repair

The technical presentation for the March meeting covered vertical bass bridge repair. Thanks to Kim Hoessly for making arrangements with Maize Manor UMC to provide a piano for the tutorial; a Baldwin-Hamilton 45 inch studio. Upon arrival, the tone in the bass section was very tubby with little definition in the sound for the first few notes, then the tone brightened and cleared up going further down the scale. The initial diagnosis was a cap separation at the top of the bass bridge.

When embarking on a job such as this, determine if you are going to tilt the piano, or not, and whether you need to remove the bottom board for better access. We tilted the piano on a tilting dolly and decided we did not need to remove the bottom. Upon looking at the bridge, it was plainly evident that there was a separation of the cap from the bridge towards the top end. The gap was approximately 1/8 inch wide, and the cap had also shifted back slightly and was out of line with the foot of the bridge.

Several things can cause bass bridge failure, including, but not limited to, bad glue joints, and negative downbearing. Glue joints may go bad due to years of extreme climate conditions, so caps may start separating as bridges roll under tension of extreme pitch corrections, or wholesale restringing. Negative downbearing may also be a problem where the strings are literally lifting up on the bridge pins until the cap pops loose. The negative downbearing could be from improper setting of the plate height above the soundboard during original manufacture or rebuilding. It is also possible that the apron itself is flexing under the string tension which will lower the bridge slightly, affecting downbearing as well. You may even see loose bridge pins, or pins that almost stand vertically, with little to no sidebearing. If negative downbearing appears to be the culprit, it may be necessary to add hardwood veneer shims into the gap to raise the cap a little and re-establish positive bearing.

Next, determine if the strings need to be removed from the bridge, and if so, how many. We decided to remove all the strings for the sake of the technical, but also to determine the full scope of the separation. It is possible that the separation may be larger than it first appears because the string tension is all that's holding the cap on. Kim then started loosening the strings by detuning all of the lower row pins of the bichords, then all of the unichords to the bottom, then all of the top row pins of the bichords. The strings were then unhitched at the bottoms and fed one at a time and in order onto a locking ring through the hitchpin loops. The job goes much quicker with an assistant. While unhitching a string, it helps to grasp it so that the string overlaps the base of the thumb,



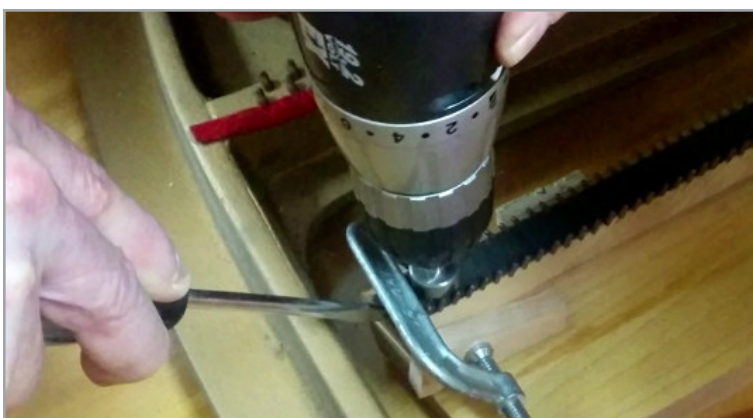
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(Vertical Bass Bridge continued...)



which is applying upward pressure, and passes under the index finger, which is applying downward pressure, all while unhitching with the other hand. Basically, try adding a little tension back into the string as needed so as to help pop the loop off of the hitchpin. Once the strings are secured onto your ring, set them aside and take another look at the bridge.



Here is where you can see the full extent of the damage, and decide if any original course of action needs to be reconsidered. Is glue and screw enough? Will clamping be needed, and from what directions? Downward clamping may require clamping a 2x, or something similar, from leg to leg spanning over the bridge, with dowels, or go bars, applying downward pressure onto the cap. Do you want to glue and screw, then, after glue dries, replace the screw with a dowell and cover in DAG for a more cosmetically polished result? Are shims needed? Also, now is a good time to remove any old glue and debris from the gap.



For this piano, we decided on glue, a permanent screw, and side clamping to realign the cap to the bridge while tapping the screw hole. Mitch would apply downward pressure onto the end of the cap while Kim would drill the hole. It is also very important to consider possible flexing of the apron while all of this work is pressing downward on it. The last thing you want is to crack the apron in some way, complicating the whole affair. So, first we took some wood wedges and shimmed them under the apron for stability. After that, we took a C-clamp and block and affixed it to the cap and bridge to line them back up. Then, Kim made an indentation on the cap so the drill bit wouldn't drift. Mitch then pressed down on the cap with a large screwdriver while Kim drilled a pilot hole through the cap and into the bridge. This downward pressure not only helps keep things in line, it also reduces the amount of sawdust that collects in the gap while drilling. The pressure forces most of it back up out of the hole while drilling. Even so, it is still wise to make sure any gaps are clear of sawdust after tapping the hole. Kim then used a countersink bit, so the flathead screw would sit flush with the cap. The 3/4 inch countersink bit was almost too large and rubbed slightly on the bridge pins, so try to use a 3/8 to 1/2 inch countersink bit. Or, use regular bits in larger sizes to make the countersink hole. Keep in mind, too, that drill bits can get very hot, so be careful when changing them! After all of that, the screw was lubricated with teflon powder so it wouldn't bind and break, then it was inserted and hand-tightened down for a dry fit before making the final repair. Again, make sure all sawdust and debris is cleaned out, because it may throw things out of line. It is also while clearing out the gap, you may discover screws, nails, or dowels that may be runing up



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(Vertical Bass Bridge continued...)

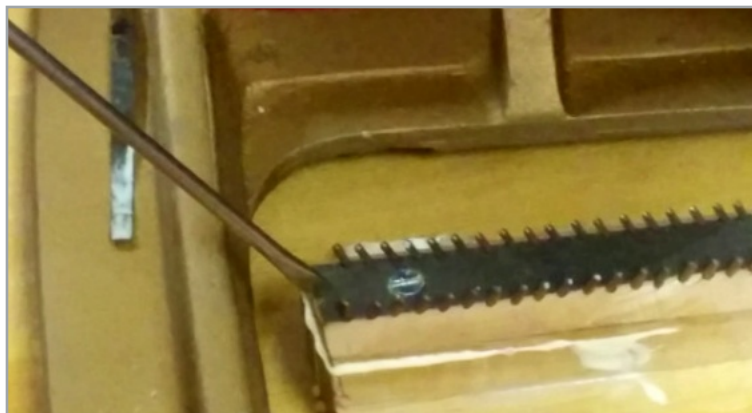
through the bridge from below the apron. These may affect how and where any shims may be added, and should be taken into account.

Kim had Titebond "Red" Original glue which she spread into the gap with both a paint scraper, and a thin flat piece of steel from the internal spring of a tape measure. Glue should be applied very liberally, as cleanup is pretty easy for this type of glue with wet and dry rags or towels. There was brief discussion about how some techs may add CA glue to the mix at this stage. After gluing, the C-clamp was reapplied, the cap was screwed back down as before with Kim and Mitch working together. Kim then affixed clamping pliers to the shaft of the screwdriver to help get that last little bit of a turn to really tighten the screw down. Here is where lubricating the screw can be helpful to prevent the head from twisting off. All excess glue was then cleaned up quickly. It may also be useful to use some wax paper in between clamping blocks and work areas/parts.

At this point, it was decided to treat the bridge pins with CA glue since there was easy access and signs of cracking here and there. We used Zap thin CA and just lightly squeezed at each pin until each hole/crack would fill up. By the time one pass was finished it was evident that the pins could take on more glue, and that the cracking was just a little more widespread than initially thought, as the glue could be seen filling many seemingly invisible cracks.

It was decided that the piano would sit overnight and be restrung and tuned the following day. It would have been possible, and okay, to at least rehitch all of the strings right there if desired, but it was decided to just leave it alone until morning.

Throughout this process, others shared a few of their own experiences with similar jobs. Each is a case by case scenario with various obstacles; some common, some unique. Mitch recalled a similar issue on a Baldwin-Hamilton with negative downbearing. On that one, he just loosened a few strings just enough to work without unhitching them. He then placed enough shims and glue into the gap until everything felt tight with positive downbearing, then screwed it down and cleaned up the glue and reset the strings. This is just to point out that in some cases, though it may be more thorough to remove all the strings, it is still possible to perform bridge repairs without removing all of them. This course of action is a little more quick and dirty, but may work where time and expense are major factors. Some old rusted out piano strings may not survive the return to pitch, so this may be considered as an option as well, albeit not always the ideal one.



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The Cincinnati, OH Chapter of PTG presents ~ Ben McKlveen Memorial Tuning Seminar ~

Saturday, April 21, 2018



**Piano Pros, 10177 International Blvd
West Chester Township, OH 45246**

The seminar will focus on beginning technicians and those who are preparing to take the tuning exam. We have divided the test areas into 3 short demonstrations followed by small group or individual tutoring sessions.

Our regional Certified Tuning Examiner **Doug Adkins** will be presenting along with **Nevin Essex** and other RPTs from the Cincinnati Chapter.

- 9:00 a.m.** - Demonstration - Setting the A, tuning unisons, tuning stability
- 9:30 a.m.** - Tutoring session
- 11:00 a.m.** - Demonstration - tuning the temperament
- 11:30 a.m.** - Tutoring session
- 12:30 p.m.** - Lunch
- 1:30 p.m.** - Demonstration - expanding the temperament
- 2:00 p.m.** - Tutoring session
- 3:00 p.m.** - Conclusion

Registration: **\$50.00** (includes lunch) Vegetarian option available.

To register, download a registration form at: <https://goo.gl/xGv4em>

or register online at:

https://squareup.com/store/Ben_McKlveen_Tuning_Seminar

Contact: Matt Shoemaker, 937-452-7325, mshoemakerl@woh.rr.com

Map Link: <https://goo.gl/maps/e5hUCuS11PP2>



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www.ptgcolumbus.org

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

- Officers -

President	Mitch Staples, RPT
Vice-President	Chris Altenburg, RPT
Treasurer	Ron Kenreich
Secretary	Chris Burget
Imm. Past Pres.	Kim Hoessly, RPT

Chapter Meeting

Tuesday, April 17
7:00pm

Graves Piano & Organ Co.

5798 Karl Road
Columbus, OH 43229

www.gravespianos.com

Topic: Vertical Action Jig
by Phil Walters

Map Link:

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

This newsletter was created using the open-source program Scribus running on the Linux Mint operating system.

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