



HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE BUCKEYE BACKCHECK

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 31 Issue 9 December 2006



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I extend a Joyous Christmas wish to all and their families. I hope to see many of you at the Christmas party January 16th to renew old acquaintances and to build new friendships. 2007 should be a prosperous year for us in the piano servicing business. 2006 has been a good year for me, especially as I enjoy meeting new clients, renewing friendships with old clients, and giving all of my customers the best service and hospitality I can. Please write and let me know what you would like to see us do at our meetings for technicals. There is always something new to learn, or new twists on old, well-understood tasks.

See you in January!

Chris

CHAPTER MEETING 11/21/06

The meeting was held at The Piano Warehouse, Dave McDonald, Proprietor. In attendance were: Dean Nedveck, Bob & Lou Grubb, Chris Altenburg, Victor Wolfe, Rick Miller, and guests Bill Golden and Evan Hood.

There will not be a December chapter meeting, as it is the Christmas season. **January's meeting will coincide with the chapter's Christmas party. It will be held on the third Tuesday of January (1/16/07) and is tentatively planned to take place at Buco di Beppo, the restaurant at which the chapter held last year's Christmas party. All are invited. Dinnertime is planned for 7:30 P.M.**

Butts and Flanges -

We discussed the use of lefthanded tuning vs. righthanded tuning, with several in attendance in agreement that a lefthanded tuning has been easier on their bodies. They have been able to avoid rotator cuff and joint problems. The use of some form of metacarpal brace was also discussed and recommended, including the use of fingerless gloves (e.g. "harley" gloves) to cushion the the hand-to-tuning hammer interface.

We also brought up the concept of hospitality when dealing with our customers in their homes. In a story I heard aired on NPR the previous day, an owner of 23

restaurants in NYC spoke about how he views the concept of hospitality, defined as giving the customer an eating experience she enjoys and remembers as pleasurable, making her want to return. For him, it is considerably different from the idea of service. While good service may be forgotten, he believes that a high level of hospitality shown the customer will be remembered and will cause the customer to want to return. We discussed how, in our case as piano technicians, we show hospitality to our customers, going above and beyond expected or even extraordinary service to make the tuning experience pleasing to our clients, even to the degree that paying the bill is not painful!

FROM STEVE TAYLOR, PTG Mid Atlantic Regional Conference Director

Greetings,

The 2007 PTG MARC is here and scheduled for **April 19 through April 22** at the Valley Forge Hilton in King of Prussia, PA and can be seen at www.ptgmarc.org. Registration Online is available for instant access to your ticket for a great weekend.

The Technical Institute will be one of the finest, featuring all-day seminars with **Franz Mohr**, Steinway & Sons former Chief Concert Technician; one of the finest technical instructors, **Rick Baldassin** is presenting an exceptional tuning class; **Anne Garee**, Director of the Piano Technology program at Florida State, headlining a comprehensive two-day tour through all aspects of Grand Action Renovation, sponsored by Pianotek Supply Company.

The Exhibit Hall will feature more than 45 booths. An addition to our Exhibit Hall this convention will be a **Book Signing** with Franz Mohr on Friday and Rick Baldassin on Saturday in support of the PTG Foundation.

The Special Events and Family & Friend Activities are complete. Check the website for more information www.ptgmarc.org/familyfriendactivities.htm.

Please join us for a full and exciting weekend of classes, special events, and food.

Steve Taylor

The Buckeye Backcheck

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From Kim Hoessly

I exchanged some emails with a fellow from Chillicothe who does electric organ repairs and would like his name passed along. Most of us piano techs don't do organs, so it's nice to have someone you can refer them to. He sent along some credentials, and I think he sounds okay. Here it is:

Hello, I am an independent organ technician and would be pleased if you could give my name out if anyone is looking for repair services. I service most brands of organs and cover a large area. I am 44 years of age. I have been doing minor repairs since I was approximately 14 but went out as a full tech for my parents business, (Childers Music Center) when I was 18. I have an associates degree from Shawnee State University in Electro-Mechanical Engineering. I am a certified technician for Fender and Crate electronics (guitar amps), I let this go but I was a certified tech for Roland digital pianos and have been to many seminars on the organs when they were offered. I have installed sound systems, trained and repaired for several years. I will travel almost anywhere if needed but travel expenses might keep some from calling. I have been managing of family business in Chillicothe since 1983 but we will be losing that location at the end of December.

I would consider myself very experienced but there are several organs out there that aren't worth servicing. I am always careful to explain this to customers. Unless they insist...I don't want them to spend good money on bad.

I don't work on bellows...brands serviced...Hammond, Baldwin, Wurlitzer, Kimball, Lowery, Gulbrandsen, Rodgers, Allen, Conn and maybe some others.

Thanks,

Dwaine Childers
Chillicothe, Oh
740-775-7964

FROM THE MUSIC TRADES ...

Brand is key for Pearl River Piano

Hong Kong Trade Development Council

PEARL River Piano spent 50 years learning how to produce instruments good enough to compete with an awe-inspiring array of better-known foreign brands. Now comes the hard part: the world's largest piano factory in southern China wants to convince demanding consumers in Europe and North America that it, too, can produce a quality musical instrument and become a globally recognized name.

"The enterprises must improve the quality of their products in order to meet the requirements of global consumers", said Xiao Zhenyu, the city's top foreign trade official. The tough conditions have forced Pearl River Piano to play catch-up ever since its establishment in 1956, and to some extent, despite an annual capacity of 120,000 pianos, it is still lagging behind.

But the quest for quality is slowly paying off, according to Dan Zhaoyi, a professor at the Shenzhen Arts School in Shenzhen. "The quality of the Pearl River pianos depend on the price, but the best of them can definitely hold their own in foreign markets", said Dan, a pianist with more than 40 years of professional experience.

In March last year, the company signed an agreement with U.S.-based Steinway and Sons to produce a line designed by the American firm.

Thanks to a savvy marketing strategy, Pearl River Piano sold nearly 9,000 pianos to U.S. customers last year, five times the number it sold when it entered in 1999. The United States is now the destination of 60 percent of its exports.

Where Pearl River Piano goes from here is uncertain, but observers warn high quality in and of itself is not enough - customer perception is just as important. For instance, it might serve Pearl River Piano well to get some renowned foreign pianist to recommend the product to boost foreign consumers' confidence in the brand.

Read the complete article at:

<http://my.tdctrade.com/airnewse/index.asp?id=24081>

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FROM THE ARTS JOURNAL ...

Acoustics, character of Music Hall make renovation no easy feat

By Janelle Gelfand, The Cincinnati Enquirer

Music Hall is headed for a makeover, and renovating a National Historic Landmark is a tricky business. But the theater and acoustical consultants, who have worked on high-profile projects such as Cleveland's 1931 Severance Hall, are confident. "There's a concern that what you do doesn't destroy in some way the historical character of a building," says Joshua Dachs, principal of Fisher Dachs Theatre Planning and Design in New York. "You're not starting with a clean sheet of paper. You have to come up with inventive solutions that work within or take advantage of the unique situation that exists. That's an interesting puzzle sometimes."

On Monday, officials announced that the first phase to study a remodeling of the 128-year-old hall was complete. In coming months, the Music Hall Working Group representing the main tenants will receive a menu of architectural solutions and their costs, and begin to hammer out a workable plan.



One of the goals for a renovation of Music Hall would be to create more intimacy between the players and the audience while preserving the 128-year-old venue's legendary sound

Maintaining Acoustics

The mission is to create more intimacy between the players and the audience while preserving Music Hall's legendary sound, says Mark Holden, chairman of Jaffe Holden Acoustics, Inc., a Connecticut-based firm that recently designed the acoustics of Dayton's widely praised Schuster Center. "Music Hall has a mellow and well-balanced sound. But the concerns relate to the fact that it's not as intimate a room for a smaller audience," Holden says. "You don't want to ruin the beautiful sound that's there. Yet you want to improve the presence, the proximity."

Holden and Dachs were part of the team that successfully remodeled the Cleveland Orchestra's home, Severance Hall, in 2000. The two-year, \$36 million makeover - which included a restaurant, gift shop, expanded backstage facilities and improved access from the garage - required the Cleveland Orchestra to decamp to an old movie theater for part of two seasons.

Even though the entire stage area was rebuilt, the team succeeded in preserving - and even enhancing - Severance Hall's acoustics.

Originally built for the choral concerts of Cincinnati May Festival in 1878, Music Hall is a multipurpose hall. A reconfiguring of Springer Auditorium could be a flexible solution that would change according to the needs of the tenants - the Cincinnati Symphony, May Festival and Cincinnati Opera. It may - or may not - mean making the hall smaller, says Steven Monder, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra president. "Our consultants have five or six concepts in mind," he says.

"There seems to be a great sense of moving forward, of 'we can do this' and this is the time," he says. "A lot of things are coming into alignment, in terms of will of the city and trying to improve the area. There seems to be a real gathering of momentum, which is very exciting and rewarding to have been entrusted with this."

Read the complete article at:
<http://news.enquirer.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061126/ENT/611260314/1025>

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Musician Plucks Sound From Lasers

By Alexander Gelfand *WIRED* Nov. 20, 2006

Miya Masaoka is a composer, koto player and inventor of the Laser Koto — a tripod-mounted laser array that she plays by passing her hands through the beams, triggering a variety of sampled and processed sounds from her G4 PowerBook. Each flick of the wrist and twitch of the finger is interpreted as a stroke on the instrument's virtual strings.

The koto, a plucked zither with moveable bridges, has been a staple of traditional Japanese music since the 8th century. Masaoka first became interested in electronically enhancing it in the early 1990s. She had long used extended playing techniques to expand the tonal palette of the instrument — stroking, rubbing and scratching its strings, rather than simply plucking and bending them — and electronics seemed like a natural extension of that process.

In the early 1980's Masaoka landed a residency in Amsterdam at STEIM (the Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music), a Dutch foundation dedicated to the development of new technologies for live electronic performance art. There, she developed what ultimately became the Koto Monster, a heavily tricked-out koto equipped with motion sensors and effects pedals that were linked to a MIDI interface. Masaoka even wore "sensor rings" whose wires ran down her arms. Masaoka was then able to play the instrument in its natural, acoustic state, use the gestural data supplied by motion sensors to generate and process sounds electronically, or do both at the same time.

The Laser Koto is equipped with four separate laser beams, which Masaoka calls "metaphorical strings"; a set of light sensors that register when the beams are broken by the movements of her hands and arms; and infrared proximity sensors that determine how close she is to the posts on which the lasers are mounted. Every gesture Masaoka makes triggers a sample or invokes an effect using the sample database.

Read the complete article and watch a video at:

<http://www.wired.com/news/culture/music/0,72141-1.html>

Absolute memory for musical pitch: Evidence from the production of learned melodies

By Daniel J. Levitin University of Oregon

Evidence for the absolute nature of long term auditory memory is provided by analyzing the production of familiar melodies. Additionally, a two component theory of absolute pitch is presented, which conceives of this rare ability as consisting of a more common ability, pitch memory, and a separate, less common ability, pitch labeling. Forty six subjects sang two different popular songs and their productions were compared to the actual pitches used in recordings of those songs. 40% of the subjects sang the correct pitch on at least one trial; 12% of the subjects hit the correct pitch on both trials, and 44% came within two semitones of the correct pitch on both trials. The results show a convergence with previous studies on the stability of auditory imagery and latent absolute pitch ability; further, the results suggest that individuals might possess representations of pitch that are more stable and accurate than previously recognized.

Perhaps everybody does have Absolute Pitch (AP) to some extent. A growing body of empirical evidence suggests that people who might not be classified as "traditional" AP possessors may nevertheless possess abilities resembling absolute pitch. For example, non AP subjects asked to identify the pitch of a tone do perform better than chance. Similar findings were reported for musically trained subjects asked to identify the musical key of a composition.

Studies suggest that AP is neither an isolated and mysterious ability, nor a sign of unusual musical endowment; it is perhaps merely a small extension to memory abilities that are widespread in the general population. In the present study subjects tried to reproduce from memory the tones of contemporary popular and rock songs that they had heard many times. I hypothesized that repeated exposure to a song creates a memory representation that preserves the actual pitches of the song, and that subjects would be able to access this representation in a production task.

Read the complete article of this fascinating study at:

<http://cogprints.org/643/00/pitch.HTM>



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www.ptgcolumbus.org

Upcoming Events

**Chapter Holiday Dinner:
Tuesday January 16, 7:30 pm**

Buco di Beppo
60 E. Wilson Bridge Rd., Worthington
(No meeting in December)



Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

April 19-22, 2007 Valley Forge, PA
www.ptgmarc.org

PTG 50th Anniversary Convention

June 20-24 2007, Kansas City

FROM MITCH STAPLES: BALDWIN FOR SALE

The Ohio Union at OSU wants to sell a Baldwin 9' #266383 (20 Years old) and a couple 45" uprights before the building is renovated. If anyone is interested contact Tiffany Willis 614-292-5200. willis.36@osu.edu

The grand is in pretty good shape aside from a missing keyslip and the normal nicks and dents you get on a piano in a ballroom. I expect that they're willing to part with them at bargain basement prices.

Mitch

Be sure to have a look at p.10 in the December Piano Technicians Journal - Editors

Disclaimer:

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