

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 34 Issue 9 December 2009



From the President

Can it be December already? They say that as you get older, time goes by more quickly because a year becomes a smaller percentage of your total lifespan. Practically speaking for us, that just means we have to become more and more efficient with our time. That's one reason to go to as many conventions, seminars and yes, even chapter meetings so you can pick up tips and tools to help you do just that. Sometimes, it only takes one little tip from a presentation to change the way you do a certain procedure in such a profound way that you save time and make more money. And time is money in our business, have no doubts about that! We get paid for what we know and the more you know, the better for your customers (of course the more we know, the more we realize that we don't know anything, so we have to get out there and try to learn more)

We have several informative technicals lined up over the next few months. In March, Bob Grubb will be doing a class on Damp-Chasers. You may think you know all there is to know, but, do you? Maybe there will be one thing that will make it worthwhile. In April, Ben will share his experiences with the monster in the closet, the Square Grand. Think that's something of no use to you? Maybe, maybe not. Can you afford not to know? I'm planning a class in Feb on Hammer filing, which sounds pretty simple, but I've picked up some great tools from Mother Goose and others over the years and these things have radically cut my filing time and helped me do the job better as well. The more you know...

As for the increasing speed of time. Well, since I know God put me here for a reason and won't take me until I finish that work, because I'm so far behind now, I know I WILL NEVER DIE. So, I got that going for me.

- Kim

Post Holiday Dinner

at

Bel Lago Bistro

170 N. Sunbury Road
Westerville, OH

(just south of the corner of Sunbury & County Line Rd.)

Saturday, January 23 @6:30pm

We will be in the Banquet Room Under the reservation for Columbus PTG

Please RSVP by Friday January 15

614-855-7704 or ritchiepiano@aol.com

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Meeting Minutes November 17, 2009

The meeting was held at Columbus Piano Leasing.

Attendance: Kim Hoessly, Chris Altenburg, David Stang, Chris Burget, Rick Miller, Mike O'Neill, Bob Grubb, Victor Wolfe, Mark Ritchie.

Treasurer's Report

We presently have \$377.52 in checking and \$2171.18 in CDs.

Committee Reports

Testing Committee

A sign-up sheet was passed around for those interested in getting together to prepare for the RPT exams.

Old Business

A time and place was determined for the post-holiday dinner: Saturday January 23, 6:30pm at Bel Lago (2 words) Bistro in Westerville (formerly the Hoover Grille). Mark Ritchie is acquainted with the management and will reserve a room for us.

New Business

A "Chapter Project" was discussed, where those interested would bring a piano back to life as a group endeavor, especially for the benefit of associates (but open to all). The time period for this may be over the summer. Kim recently saw what she described as a "disaster" of a spinet, which could make a good project. Interested members should contact Kim.

Kim brought up the possibility of sponsoring or co-sponsoring a pianoforte event in Columbus sometime in the future. Otterbein may be interested in being the co-sponsor. This event could be one or all of the following: a concert, lecture, and a master class. There was a positive response from the group.

Dave Ramey, who is nationally known as a builder of mechanical musical instruments recently moved to Marysville. A trip to his workshop was suggested as a chapter field trip idea by Mark.

Announcements

Handbells Columbus is performing Sunday, Nov. 22 at Broad St. Presbyterian Church. (Kim Hoessly is a member)

The ProMusica Chamber Orchestra is performing 3 concerts during the weekend of Dec. 11 at the Southern Theater and the Pontifical College Josephinum. (The Ben Bechtel harpsichord will be used).

Upcoming Meetings

Feb. 16, 2010 - Hammer Filing and Shaping

March 16, 2010 - Bob Grubb on Dampp-Chasers, place TBA

April 20, 2010 – Ben Wiant on square grands at Otterbein College

Butts and Flanges

Rick Miller brought up a customer's grand piano which has suffered many broken strings in the upper treble. He noted that she is an extremely aggressive player, but has another piano which she is presumably just as aggressive with, which does not have a breakage problem. The group suggested a number of theories: the capo bar may not be smooth, the hammers may be too flat and/or too hard, or the string tension may be too high. High string tension can result from a mis-placed plate, where the string speaking length would be longer than what the design calls for. A long speaking length means the strings need to be overly tense to be at the proper pitch. A solution may be to try a thinner string, which would give the correct pitch at a lower tension.

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Technical Program

Thanks to Columbus Piano Leasing for hosting the meeting and Richard Miller for leading a program in string replacement and repair. It was a group effort, where many of us participated in the exercise of replacing a string in a grand piano (actually, not too grand, but that's another subject.) A number of suggestions came up about some of those tricky aspects of strings. Chris Altenburg brought a stringer helper tool which is simply a hollow metal rod for leading a wire through to reach the hitchpin through the overstrung wires. This type of tool is indispensable, especially when attempting to replace a string in certain areas of spinet pianos. David Stang brought his "Sciortino" coil maker, which can help to quickly and accurately pre-wind a coil onto a tuning pin.

Don't forget to put the wire through the Agraffe! Don't forget to put the wire through the Agraffe!



The Sciortino coil maker.

ON THE INTERNET

Geoff Smith, a British performer and composer, believes he has come up with the first multicultural acoustic piano - what he has trademarked as a "fluid" piano - which allows players to alter the tuning of notes either before or during a performance. Instead of a pianist having a fixed sound, 88 notes from 88 keys, Smith's piano has sliders allowing them access to the different scales that you get in, for example, Indian and Iranian music. For good measure, Smith has included a horizontal harp.

The Guardian was last weekend given the first access to an instrument that is already generating considerable excitement, and it can be seen and heard on our website. It will be formally unveiled at the University of Surrey on Saturday and receive a London premiere at the Purcell Room in March.

The fluid piano has generated much interest since it was first mentioned in the *Guardian* six years ago when it was Smith with little more than a one-key mechanism and an ambition. Now he has the actual instrument he has been getting performers on board.

Smith's instrument has been made by the Somerset-based Christopher Barlow.

Read the full article and see the demonstration video at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/nov/23/composer-fluid-piano-geoff-smith>

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Thoughts on the Yamaha Avant-Grand Piano

by Mark Ritchie

It seemed a bit incongruous for me to find the back page of the *Piano Technician's Journal* introducing the "hybrid" Yamaha Avant-grand. I always believed The PTJ was a publication directed towards Piano Technicians. Personally have nothing against digital instruments, and I guess they have their place in this "everything must be digital age". I do understand space and weight considerations, and the portability of keyboards. Many makers proudly report that you can save some bucks because they never need tuning. I have not heard the Avant-Grand live, or had the opportunity to play one so it may be the best thing since sliced bread, but it isn't a piano.

My old TV with it's new digital converter really doesn't seem to work all that well, even in good weather. If the weather is a little bad the satellite dish doesn't do much better. I hope there is not a serious weather alert when it's raining or snowing - I can't get reception on either. Like most electronic devices they will be outdated, broken, irreparable in a very few years. I just recently heard news about the LCD televisions that fail after a year or so and the cost is more to replace the screen than it was to buy the set. The cell phone is another example. I was told they don't replace batteries on phones but I could get a new one for free, of course with a new contract. I don't think I need to mention computers.

Now I don't want to start sounding like Andy Rooney but, we all service pianos fifty to a hundred years old and you know they still give pretty good service. Many with a little investment may give another fifty to a hundred years of pleasure. I saw the price for the Avant-Grand at around \$20,000,00. I think you might find a pretty nice piano at that same price point.



This is not a piano.



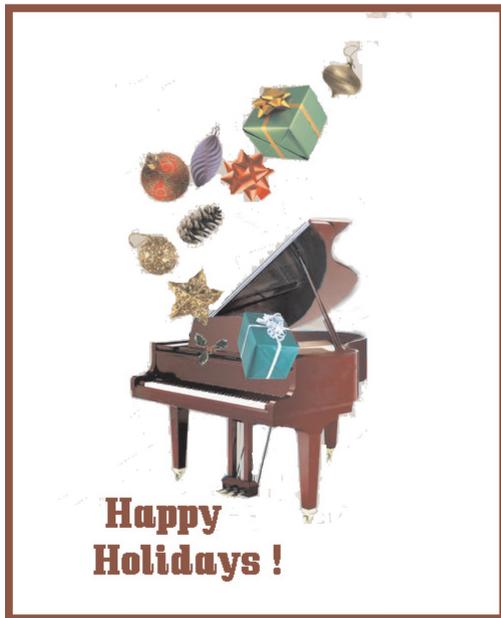
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www.ptgcolumbus.org

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

President Kim Hoessly, RPT
Vice-President Chris Altenburg, RPT
Treasurer Ron Kenreich
Secretary David Stang



Upcoming Events

No meeting in December.

Saturday January 23, 6:30pm

Post-Holiday dinner for Chapter
Members and friends
BelLago Bistro, Westerville
Please R.S.V.P. to Mark Ritchie

February 16, 2010

Hammer Filing and Shaping

March 16, 2010

Everything you've always wanted to
know about Damp-Chaser systems

April 20, 2010

Ben Wiant on Square Grands

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

Disclaimer:

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

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