

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 36 Issue 8 December 2011



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Members,

At this point, I imagine everyone is busy tuning and working on pianos, having more fun than a piano tuner should be allowed to have. I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as I won't be seeing any of you until our party in January.

I thought we had a good meeting in November. We had a lot of discussion about the webpage as well as a video by George Defebaugh on aural tuning. As you may have noticed, if you checked out our new webpage, Chris has done a wonderful job. I have no idea how he did it, but it looks great. Nice job Chris!

We had several members in a practice room at Otterbein listening and tuning a temperament after we watched the video in the technical part of our meeting. I was pleased with the willingness of our members to put themselves on the spot and to share their knowledge with others. It seems to me this is why this guild was formed in the first place. Come to a meeting and be a part of your local chapter. We will be discussing unison tuning at the February meeting and I will have special prizes for those who attend. You'll have to come to the meeting to find out what they are.

John Schmoll

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Chapter Meeting Minutes

November 15, 2011

The meeting was held at Battelle Fine Arts Center, Otterbein School of Music.

Attendance:

John Schmoll, Mark Ritchie, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, Kim Hoessly, Doug Meszaros, David Stang, Ben Wiant.

Treasurer's Report:

The Chapter has \$2,573.19 in checking.

Old Business:

The Chapter has once again decided to grant a \$100 scholarship to the Central East District of the Ohio Music Teachers Association (OMTA) for its Summer Music Program.

The Chapter also voted to change web hosting services for the Chapter website from Homestead to Weebly; and its domain name registration from Homestead/Tucows Inc. to another provider (godaddy.com as of publication). This move would potentially save the Chapter approximately \$240 per year.

New Business:

Options for future technicals were discussed briefly, including: locations for future meetings, and possibly more tuning tutorials geared towards Associates preparing for the RPT exams.

The annual post holiday dinner was scheduled for 6:30PM January 14, 2011. The original location was supposed to be at Bel-Lago in Westerville but changes were made since then due to new reservation requirements. The new location is:

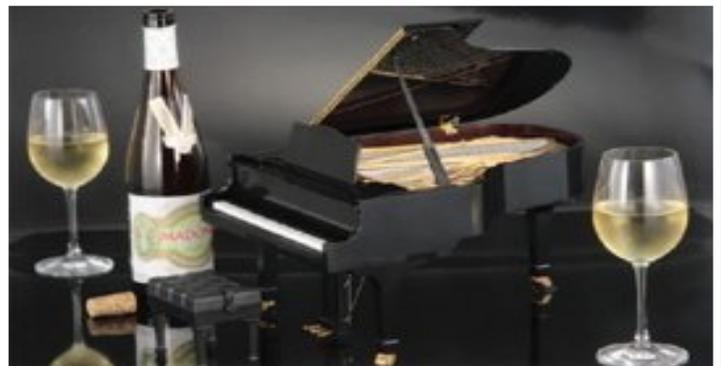
The Fisherman's Wharf
1611 Polaris Pkwy
Columbus, OH 43240

December 31 - Deadline for paying dues.
January 3 - Award Nominations due.

Butts & Flanges

Mark Ritchie related a story told to him while tuning in an elderly gentleman's home. The man's piano was to be tuned and the tuner arrived and removed items from the top of the piano including a lamp. He placed the items on an oversized chair next to the piano and went about his business. Sometime later the owner came back into the room and thought the tuner could use some more light, so he flipped the switch on the wall and exited the room. A little time passed. Well, the tuner may have gotten more "light" than needed because now the chair had caught on fire and smoke was evidently filling the room. Turns out the lamp, which was still pugged into its outlet which, in turn, was wired to the switch on the wall, had generated enough heat to ignite the upholstery on the chair. The chair was ruined and the owner did accept at least some of the responsibility for "de-upholstering" it. Moral? Make sure you place items from the top of a piano in a safe place if the owner hasn't, or can't, themselves. And if it's a lamp, make sure it's unplugged and not in a chair. Insert joke about "hot seat" here.

Pianos make great stocking stuffers!



<http://youtu.be/T-5rii9LrjA>
http://youtu.be/n1F5Gr_t9t8

WESTPAC II
WESTERN & PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Salt Lake City
February 22-25, 2012



<http://www.westpac-ptg.org>

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Technical Presentation: Setting The Temperament

This evening was geared toward instructing Associate members in some fundamental concepts of temperament tuning. We began by watching an instructional tuning video from Superior Instructional Tapes featuring George Defebaugh tuning his F-F Temperament. He also offered various explanations of beats, coincident partials and how to learn to count them.

His First recommendation was to learn to tune from an A fork, as opposed to a C. He related that most musicians want to tune to an A, and since modern pitch standards are in relation to A all new students should learn how to tune from it. He says that, in theory, one can get an accurate A from a tuning sequence starting from C, but the chances for error are greater. "Learn to tune from A! Then you'll know you have at least one note right!" he declared.

He then went through his tuning sequence, rather quickly for those unfamiliar with it. He is a 3rd's and 6th's tuner, in that he prefers to tune primarily using rapidly beating intervals (RBI's) as opposed to 4th's and 5th's, or slower beating intervals (SBI's). He makes the analogy that tuning with SBI's are like tuning in Standard American Equivalent (SAE), and tuning with RBI's are like tuning in the Metric System where accurate measurements are easier to make.

Next, he showed charts of how coincident partials beat in relation to each other and why they beat the way they do. He described the basic concepts of inharmonicity, theoretical versus actual beat rates, and why shorter scaled pianos may have slower beat rates in the lower temperament region than their larger brethren.

George also demonstrated how to learn to recognize, and get a feel for, various beat rates by using a metronome. If one sets a metronome to 120 BPM (beats per minute) and taps 4 times for every click/pulse then you have 8 BPS (beats per second). 105 BPM yields 7BPS, and 135 BPM yields 9BPS just to name a few. It may be easier to "imagine" the tapping than to do it physically. You can also sit at the piano with the metronome and get the beat rates of certain intervals to match the metronome settings.

Afterwards, we all discussed what was in the video, offering additional pointers, criticisms, and other observations. Some in the group felt that the Defebaugh Sequence may not work well for all newcomers because some people have a hard time hearing the rapid beats at first. On the other hand, some are the opposite of that and have a harder time with SBI's. Ultimately, one needs to learn to make judgements on either, and more importantly the relative differences between various intervals as they progress throughout the scale.

Finally, we found a practice room piano where some of these, and other fundamental, concepts could be further demonstrated.



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The Piano Whisperer: Local Piano Restorer Calms Cranky Keyboards



The following article is a portion of an interview of Ben Wiant by Jennifer Hambrick, host of The Amadeus Deli on WOSU Classical 101 FM. Following this excerpt is a link to the full article.

You could say Benjamin Wiant is in private practice. Many of his clients have seen better days. They have a lot of baggage to clear out from within their hard shells. They're touchy, sometimes even completely dysfunctional. And they come with strings attached. Many, many strings attached.

Wiant is the man who makes many of central Ohio's concert pianos sound like, well, concert pianos. When you hear a world-class pianist perform a concerto with the Columbus Symphony or a solo piano recital at the Southern Theatre, you're also hearing Wiant's work. Likewise, if Wiant hasn't touched up the pianos the artist is playing, you hear it immediately.

It may seem glamorous to hobnob with the thoroughbreds of the classical music world: Steinway, Baldwin and Bösendorfer concert grands and the elite artists who play them. But in his four-decade career as a high-level piano technician and rebuilder, Wiant has seen a steady stream of instruments in desperate, very unglamorous need of repair, or even complete overhaul.

And when a piano shows up on his doorstep, Wiant gets busy.

Pianos He Has Known

It's often a good samaritan who brings a downtrodden piano to Wiant's attention, someone who takes pity on a once beautiful instrument gone to seed. When that happens, Wiant says his first task is to get to know a piano's true nature. And the best way to get to know a piano is, of course, to play it.

"When you first sit down to play it – if it's playable – you let the piano speak to you, regardless of what condition it's in. And if it has certain qualities, you can say, 'I know it has this much. Let's see how much more of that we can get by putting it in good condition,'" Wiant said.

If a piano isn't in playable condition, Wiant makes basic – or sometimes not-so-basic - mechanical adjustments to the instrument's 88 hammers, countless pins and strings and any number of other parts to bring it back to life.

"You start from scratch and you make it playable," Wiant said, "and then (you play it and) you go, 'Wow!'"

Wiant has gotten to know his share of soul-sick pianos through the years. Early in his career, he met a brown rosewood 1885 Steinway concert grand that had been handed down with all of its original parts, produced during what could be called the golden age of American piano manufacturing. Years of neglect meant that when the piano finally reached Wiant, it had to be completely rebuilt. But it had good bones: its high-quality parts allowed Wiant to get the best out of the instrument.

"That piano could play down to volume levels scarcely audible. It wasn't appropriate for concertos, but it was appropriate for chamber music," Wiant said.

To read the article in its entirety go to: <http://bit.ly/oZAMay> or go to:

<http://beta.wosu.org/classical101/the-piano-whisperer-local-piano-restorer-calms-cranky-keyboards/>



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www.ptgcolumbus.org



Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

President	John Schmoll, RPT
Vice-President	Mark Ritchie, RPT
Treasurer	Ron Kenreich
Secretary	Christopher Burget

*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*

Upcoming Events

Post Holiday Dinner

Saturday, January 14, 2012,
6:30pm

The Fisherman's Wharf
1611 Polaris Pkwy
Columbus, OH 43240

RSVP Mark Ritchie at
ritchiepiano@gmail.com

Website:
<http://www.bestgreekusa.com>

Map Link:
<http://g.co/maps/fmk29>

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

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