

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 41 Issue 9 December 2016



*Happy
Holidays!*

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Chapter Meeting Minutes November 15, 2016

The meeting was held at Hughes Hall on OSU's main campus.

Attendance:

Mitch Staples, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, and Kim Hoessly.

Treasurer's Report:

\$1444.88

Old Business:

Old Bag Of Nails in Westerville has been confirmed as the location for the Post-Holiday Dinner, which will take place at 6:30pm on Saturday, January 28, 2017. They will have a bar upstairs and we can order from the menu. We could meet at 6:30pm, have drinks (1st round on the Chapter) and order food when folks have all arrived. No RSVP needed.

New Business:

Future technicals were discussed and tentatively planned for:

February - KTT Smart Move Grand Mover

March/April - Trondlin Fortepiano

March/April - Aftertouch?

May - ???

Post-Holiday Dinner



**Saturday
January 28, 2017
6:30 PM**

Old Bag Of Nails Pub

24 North State St # 26
Westerville, OH 43081
Phone: (614) 794-6900
www.oldbagofnails.com

No RSVP Needed

Map Link:
goo.gl/maps/u7qHrp2U3h62



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Piano Cleaning

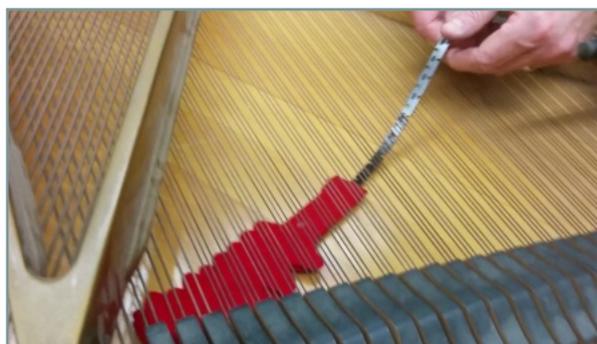
Thanks to Mitch Staples for hosting the meeting in his workshop at OSU. The technical presentation was more of a roundtable discussion where we all shared various tools and methods used for cleaning various parts of the piano. The following assortment of tips is just some of what is possible and is not, by any means, all inclusive.

First, we discussed cleaning keytops. Kim had a bottle of Goof Off in a spray bottle that she uses for cleaning marker stains and sticky residue from tape. People will often tape note letters onto the keys, and this removes the gummy residue quite well. Naphtha also works for this, too. Fingernail polish is often found on keytops as long scratch marks across the tops from glissandos. If Goof Off doesn't work, try denatured alcohol. Usually, with most grimey keys, a damp cloth will work just fine. For more stubborn stains, where the above methods won't work, light sanding with 400 grit sandpaper moving up to 1200 grit may be necessary. Finish off by buffing the keys. Mr Clean Magic Erasers also work, but can get a bit messy and runny so have a rag handy to soak excess dirty liquid. They also tend to break down pretty quickly and several may be needed for a set of keys. Test first on the side of the lowest sharp first, though, before going onto the rest. This worked really well for removing dried PVC-E glue from keytop replacement. Came right off. Again, though for most minor grime, this is a bit messy, and some of the other methods may work just fine.

Various soundboard cleaners were shared. Most often these were some form of cloth or felt "socks" affixed to some form of long, flat, and flexible shaft that could pass between strings and plate struts. When using tools like these, it helps to have a vacuum handy to suck off the dust from the cloth after each pass. There are also traditional soundboard steels that push cloth or rags across the soundboard. Swiffers are also effective. A couple of people also had felt covered metal wedges on the ends of wires, similar to what Spurlock sells, that could also be used to push dirt around. When cleaning a soundboard, a common technique is to push the dirt all the way to the bass end where there is easier access to the soundboard and then vacuuming there. An air compressor, or reversible shop vac, can blow out dirt. This is very effective when used with another vacuum hose to suck up what is blown so as to minimize dust going everywhere. Even so, warn customers that there may still be some degree of fallout after such procedures. For sticky liquid stains on the board, a soap and water dampened cloth, manipulated with one of the tools mentioned above, is a possibility. This can be tricky, though. Try to dry off the strings and the board as soon as is possible. The boards are often finished with shellac and it may not take much to break it down.

Damper heads can be lightly dusted with brushes or feather dusters. It is best to brush lengthwise in the direction of the strings, instead of side to side. Also, do not use downward pressure that can crush the damper felts. In general, just be as gentle as possible.

Strings can be cleaned and with a variety of things like Polita Polish, pumice stones, and even even spare felt hammers in a pinch. Mitch Staples prefers to use Scotch Brite pads. They seemed to be very effective at removing dirt and corrosion. You may need to vacuum the residue that collects on the soundboard, as it may be substantial. Also substantial, is the screeching racket that ensues from this endeavor, so have your earplugs ready... and, if in a client's home, you may want



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to have them lock up their pets as well, as the sound could drive them bonkers! On Bass strings, hold strings still with one hand and use a side-to-side motion because of the windings. Some technicians like to use a Dremel with a wire brush attachment on strings, as well. There are also more invasive techniques that require removing the strings and looping them on themselves and moving the loop back and forth to remove grit from in between the windings. String tension can also be lowered and the strings pounded heavily with the hammers. However, with older strings one has to deal with the string coils at the tuning pins getting weaker and breaking when brought back up to pitch. So, buyer, or tryer, beware!

Talk then turned to the outer parts and casework. This can get tricky depending on the age of the piano and the kind of finish on it.

With lacquer finishes, one is a bit more limited by fewer cleaning options. For gummy residue, try a little naphtha. In some cases, a water-dampened rag with a little soap, if needed, may be used as long as it is dried immediately afterwards. One thing to keep in mind though, when body oil and grime has built up on the piano it often has already eaten through the finish, though it won't be obvious until the grime is removed. So, make sure customers know this ahead of time, so they don't you ruined the finish. It was already gone in those places and the oil and grime just masked it. This often happens on keyslips and on the casing around the ends of the piano above the cheekblocks; places where hands are most likely to contact the piano many times over the years.

Polyester finishes don't break down as easily so a wider variety of options are available. Some manufacturers, like Mason & Hamlin, place lacquer over polyester. So, if you aren't sure about a cleaner, try it on a less visible part of the piano first, like on the inside of a leg toward the underside of the piano. Do not use waxy polishes or anything with silicone in it, and make sure any cloths used to wipe the piano are not abrasive. With more satin finishes, there sometimes is a "grain" or direction of flow in the finish, which is often seen when looking at the piano with light striking it from a particular angle. Whenever possible, wipe in the direction of this grain. Old English products are usually good as far as what is readily available to the general public. Corey instrument polishes are available from the supply houses and come in variety packs that can be used with a number of finishes. Mitch also showed us a polish supplied by Yamaha for their pianos.

There are also other varieties of oil based cleaners and painted finishes, like tigerstripping, which were not really discussed. For those that do not know, some old victorian pianos, and possibly some slightly newer instruments as well, had very striking and elaborate "wood grain" finishes that were actually meticulously hand painted. If the finish had started to break down and someone cleaned the piano, this would often come off! However, these are few and far between these days.

Lastly, the brass and metal fixtures were discussed, and the consensus here was Flitz metal polish. As Mark Ritchie has said, and whoever coined the phrase, "The piano with the shiniest pedals wins!"

Surely there are other methods and techniques than what is described here. Maybe some of you know other, and perhaps better, ways of addressing these issues. If so, mention them in the next meeting.



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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, February 21 7:00pm

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

Topic: KTT Smart Move
Grand Mover

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

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