

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild
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CHAPTER MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ENJOY POST-HOLIDAY GATHERING



Thank you to Mark and Marilyn Ritchie for planning our January Dinner.

photos by Kim Hoessly

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A few weeks ago while listening to NPR between appointments, I caught part of an interview with the surgeon/writer Atul Gawande. His new book, *The Checklist Manifesto*, has jumped into the top 10 of books I want to read this coming year.

Here is a brief synopsis from the Barnes & Noble website:

We live in a world of great and increasing complexity, where even the most expert professionals struggle to master the tasks they face. Longer training, ever more advanced technologies—neither seems to prevent grievous errors. But in a hopeful turn, acclaimed surgeon and writer Atul Gawande finds a remedy in the humblest and simplest of techniques: the checklist. First introduced decades ago by the U.S. Air Force, checklists have enabled pilots to fly aircraft of mind-boggling sophistication. Now innovative checklists are being adopted in hospitals around the world, helping doctors and nurses respond to everything from flu epidemics to avalanches. Even in the immensely complex world of surgery, a simple ninety-second variant has cut the rate of fatalities by more than a third... An intellectual adventure in which lives are lost and saved and one simple idea makes a tremendous difference, *The Checklist Manifesto* is essential reading for anyone working to get things right.

Most of us spend most our earning time tuning pianos and we probably have that “checklist” down pretty well in our heads. But how often have you gone to do something less common in your routine, a big regulation job or some sort of odd repair, and left out something that later cost you time, if not money, to correct? Here’s a tale of how making the simple checklist can increase not just our productivity, but also our accuracy. I know I couldn’t keep track of all my office work without a running checklist of what I needed to do and who I needed to contact (as soon as I finish this article I can do my favorite checklist task, crossing something off!)

I may have more to add once I’ve read the book, but think about the checklist and how it might help you be a better technician and a better small business owner.

- Kim

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Tech Tip

Last November, we took a little trip through Amish Country on our way to see family in the Akron area.

We stopped at Lehman's Hardware store in Kidron, which I highly recommend. Lehman's started out as your typical small town hardware store, but these days, it seems to be a major tourist attraction. There is very little you won't find there, including lots of hard to find and odd kitchen, gardening and shop tools. They cater to the Amish community as well, so lots of manual and non electric tools and appliances. Plenty of high and low tech items, you could easily spend a couple of hours going through the different departments. I found a great LED light with a flexible neck and a clip/magnet for attaching to things. The product is from Nebo Tools (nebotools.com) and was about \$20. It fits easily in my case and I can either clip it on a case or action part or snap the magnet onto the plate. I saw several other tools on their website that I liked, but they do only do bulk orders. If anyone else likes something they see, maybe we could do a bulk purchase for the chapter (I really liked the pen-LED-laser pointer combo). Check them out!

- Kim



Back To Basics

by Tom Tuner

A cautionary tale about why you should always keep fundamental principles in mind. This instrument was a late 1960's Yamaha M3 console. The complaint was that one note, C#-17, would not play correctly and would scarcely sound. Preliminary examination showed that the tip of the jack was trapped under the notch in the hammer butt and could not return to rest so the hammer was being jammed into the string. A further look showed that the hammer and flange were so loose that they were flopping around like a crippled minnow. A run down the keyboard revealed a number of butt flanges so loose that they were producing knocks and clicks, probably due to the low humidity about 30% at the time and probably even lower during the preceding two weeks. Switching to a Phillips screwdriver blade and

attempting to tighten the flange screw produced no results*. So, remove the flange and hammer assembly, find that the center pin is starting to work out on one side. Correct that and tighten the butt plate screw. reinstall the hammer and find no improvement. Note that there is no "wavy" washer or any other sort under the flange screw to keep things tight*. Notice many scratches on the aluminum action rail caused by the point of the screw due to some klutz attempting to reinstall it*. Note that the flange screw will not go in straight and is evidently cross-threaded and cannot be turned down home and seating. Fiddle around trying to correct this without success. Give up and install improvised card-stock shims under the flange and screw head to keep the flange square and tight. This solves the problem.

Return to tightening the other 87 hammer flange screws (if any are loose, they are all loose!).

Enlightenment immediately dawns. NOW I know exactly what was wrong with C#-17 in the first place.

I failed to heed one of my cardinal principles: Never take anything for granted. Consequently I wasted time trying to solve a problem that was not what I supposed it to be.

Noting the '*ed statements, figure out what was the real problem. I assumed that just because the screw was there it was supposed to be. I should have smelled a rat right away. My assumption led me astray. A 1960's Yamerhammer with Phillips head screws and no washers? Not too likely. Scratches on the action rail from the point of the flange screw?

Aluminum action rail screws are slightly tapered but are blunt. They don't have points because they don't need them. The screw holes go all the way through the rail for one thing. When I found that all the other flange screws were straight slotted and zinc chromated rather than plated it was perfectly obvious that some miscreant had substituted an inappropriate replacement that was too large to fit. No wonder it was cross-threaded and cockeyed. At which point I felt like a complete idiot for having overlooked the obvious. At least I felt a little better about my improvised repair (no, among the 100's of replacement parts I carry around aluminum rail flange screws are not included, they may be added.)

As to why anyone would have made such an unsuitable substitution in the first place: Beats me!

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FROM THE ARTS JOURNAL

Earl Wild, Pianist, Dies at 94

By Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*
January 23, 2010

Earl Wild, an American pianist and composer who was renowned for his performances of the virtuoso showpieces of the grand Romantic tradition but whose enormous repertory included everything from Baroque works and Mozart concertos to contemporary scores, died Saturday at his home in Palm Springs, Calif. He was 94.

Although he reveled in bravura works — splashy Liszt operatic transcriptions, for example, and concertos by Rachmaninoff — his performances consistently combined a deeply considered interpretive approach and an ironclad technique. Even into his 90s, his performances projected both power and musicality.

In a 1981 profile of Mr. Wild in *The New York Times*, the critic Harold C. Schonberg wrote that Mr. Wild had been “in the forefront of the Romantic revival,”

“By any standards,” Mr. Schonberg wrote, “Mr. Wild has one of the great piano techniques of the 20th century, and with it a rich, sonorous tone.”

Mr. Wild taught at the Eastman School of Music, Penn State University, Ohio State University, Carnegie Mellon, the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School.

Read the entire article at

www.nytimes.com/2010/01/24/arts/music/24wild.html?ref=music

Giant Steps: The Survival of a Great Jazz Pianist

By David Hajdu, *The New York Times Magazine*
January 28, 2010

Fred Hersch has been a fiercely independent but unassuming presence on the New York jazz scene since he moved to the city at age 21 in 1977. He has made more than 45 albums as a solo performer, composer, bandleader or duo partner since 1991, when he released his first record of original material, a collection of unclassifiable songs composed for jazz rhythm section, tenor saxophone and cello, aptly titled, “Forward Motion.” His body of work is clearly recognizable as a manifesto of contemporary jazz. As Ben Ratliff described him in a *New York Times* review of a Village Vanguard performance in 1997, Hersch is “a master who plays it his way.”

While the sensibility he pioneered has flourished, Hersch himself has been heard from only sporadically over the past two years. The reason is that he has, on and off during this period, been gravely ill, sick from AIDS and a

severe bout of pneumonia. Early in 2008, the H.I.V. virus migrated to his brain, and Hersch developed AIDS-related dementia. He lived for a time in mental and physical seclusion, hallucinating under the delusion that he had the power to control time and space and that everyone around him was plotting his demise. In fact, he came so close to dying that his paranoia seemed practically justified. At his sickest, late that year, Hersch fell into a coma and remained unconscious for a full two months. As a result of his prolonged unconsciousness and inactivity, he lost nearly all motor function in his hands and could not hold a pencil, let alone play the piano.

Today, at age 54, after many months of rehabilitation and therapy, grueling effort, effective medical care, an almost irrationally defiant refusal to accept his problems as anything less than temporary distractions from his music and a considerable amount of good luck, Hersch has achieved full recovery.

Read the entire article at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31Hersch-t.html?ref=music>

Classical artists chart big with little sales

By Anne Midgette *Washington Post*
January 30, 2010

Hillary Hahn's new album debuted that week at No. 1 on the Billboard classical charts. No. 1 on the charts: It doesn't get any better than that. Or does it?

The dirty secret of the Billboard classical charts is that album sales figures are so low, the charts are almost meaningless. Sales of 200 or 300 units are enough to land an album in the top 10.

SoundScan, the company that provides sales data to Billboard, says it cannot officially release exact sales figures to journalists. Instead, all numbers are rounded to the nearest 1,000, so sales of 501 copies are reported as 1,000, and anything less than 500 is “under 1,000.” On last week's traditional classical chart, only the top two recordings managed to sell “1,000” copies. Every other recording sold “under 1,000.” The official total sales of the top 25 titles amounted to 5,000 copies, an average of 200 units a recording (sorry, “under 1,000”). And yes, that includes downloads.

Read the entire article at

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/29/AR2010012904193.html>



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www.ptgcolumbus.org

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

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*Contributions and pictures for
the Buckeye Backcheck and the
web page are always welcome,
(even if they are only periph-
erally related to pianos)!*

- David

Upcoming Events

Chapter Meetings

February 16, 2010, 7:30pm
Henderson Music
Program: Hammer Shaping

March 16, 2010, 7:30pm
Graves Piano & Organ
Program: Dampp-Chaser

April 20, 2010, 7:30pm
Towers Hall, Otterbein
Program: Square Grands

In the last issue of the AARP Bulletin, 20 or so celebrities were asked "When will the recession end?"

There were some interesting answers.

From author Jeremy Britton:

"When I can afford the fuel to mow my lawn and tell the goat he is fired"

And from columnist Clyde Haberman:

"When I can stop putting up with two malfunctioning keys on my piano and finally call in the tuner"

Thank you to Kim Hoessly, Tom Harr and Mark Ritchie for their contributions!

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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