

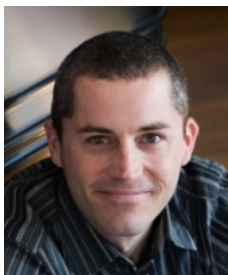
# The Buckeye Backcheck

*Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild*

Volume 39 Issue 1 February 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Piano Fixer, what do you know of the heart?

Well, we try:

Soldier through snow, cold, desiccating dry

Pet the rabid dog

Cough and wheeze in the mildew

Watch out for the beer bottles, dude

Listen here, 'This note sounds funny'

Nail the tuning, balance the voicing

Make the artist happy

Sit for a spell with the lonely old lady

Now, where did that mouse get off to?

All of this in search of beauty.

What good is it coming from elsewhere than the heart?

Bryan Hartzler, RPT

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## From Mark Ritchie...

To my Columbus Chapter PTG family,

Marilyn and I would like to thank you for the expression of sympathy with the flowers on the passing of my father. I wish to extend a special thanks to Ron Kenreich for the special delivery on the coldest day of the year and my somewhat treacherous driveway.

Thank You,

Mark & Marilyn Ritchie

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## Chapter Meeting Minutes November 19, 2013

The meeting was held at Solich Pianos & Music Co.

### Attendance:

John Schmoll, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, Chris Altenburg, Bob Grubb, Kim Hoessly, Mark & Marilyn Ritchie, David Stang, Phillip Walters, Ben Wiant, Victor Wolfe, Thomas Solich and Jay Grayson of Solich Piano, and several other guests whose names are unavailable.

### Treasurer's Report:

The Chapter has \$3,361.50 in checking.

### Old Business:

Arrangements for the Winter Dinner were made for either January 11 or 18, 2014 at The Worthington Inn.

### New Business:

John Schmoll applied for reduction of his PTG dues.

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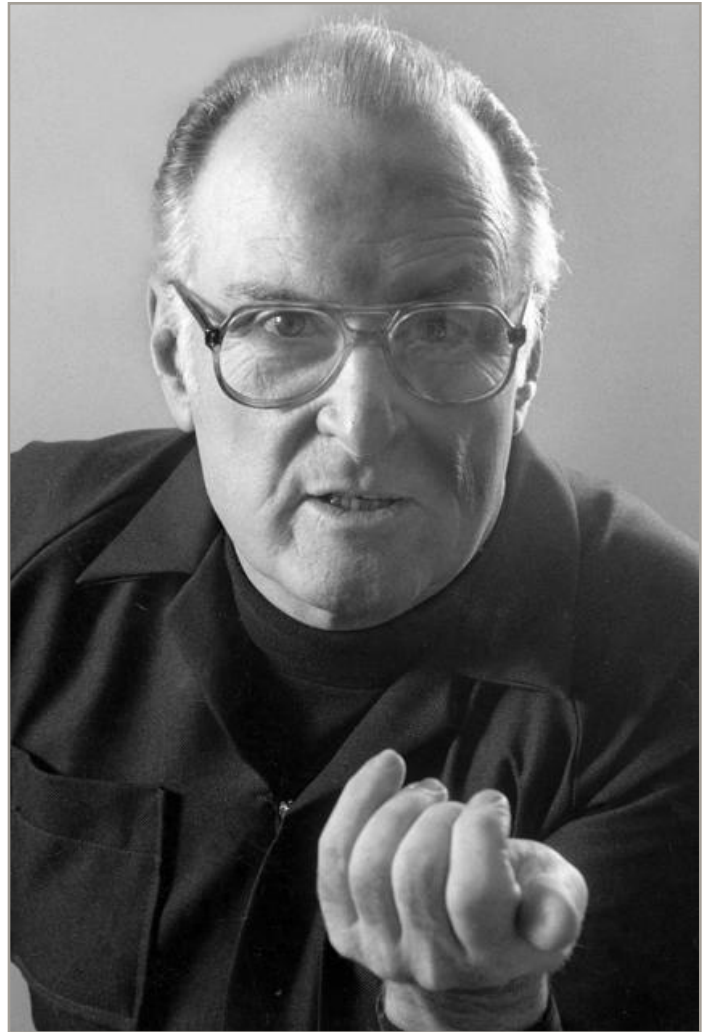
## Butts & Flanges

Mark Ritchie inquired if any other technicians had noticed how sharp many of their pianos were coming out of summer and through the fall. Several others agreed and commented that humidity averaged fairly high this summer even though precipitation was actually below average for the region.

Kim Hoessly brought in some small magnetic clamps that are useful as another set of fingers to hold parts while working on them.



## In Memorium



**Ben McKlveen, RPT  
1922-2014**

Benjamin Hamilton "Ham" McKlveen was a member of the Cincinnati Chapter and was a Founding Member of the PTG. He was a pillar of the piano technician community and, as such, was a recipient of the Golden Hammer Award and was inducted into the PTG Hall Of Fame. He was also a pilot and a professional oboist. He was highly regarded for his enthusiasm toward his profession and the education of those entering it, including our own chapter member, Ben Wiant, whom he mentored. On being asked to describe being a concert technician for many artists he replied, "We are Sancho Panzas to pianistic Don Quixotes."

To read his obituary and view, or leave a message, in his guest book on legacy.com, go to:

<http://goo.gl/oUd6mr>

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## **Strassel: Piano Sonata in FTC Minor**

**Music teachers, beware. The feds are onto you. Better not try to raise the price of your lessons.**

### **Kimberley A. Strassel**

(Op/Ed reprinted from The Wall Street Journal and submitted by Jonathan Chandler because he thought we would appreciate knowing this. Especially since so many of our clients are teachers and the ramifications could very well extend to PTG Bylaws, etc.)

Teddy Roosevelt busted Standard Oil. The Obama administration? It's making the world safe from rapacious piano teachers. Every month, it seems, brings a new story of this presidency leveling the intimidating powers of the federal government against some law-abiding citizen. Now comes a terrifying tale of how the Federal Trade Commission, a governmental Goliath, crushes an average David—because it can.

In March of this year, a small nonprofit in Cincinnati—the Music Teachers National Association—received a letter from the FTC. The agency was investigating whether the association was engaged in, uh, anticompetitive practices.

This was bizarre, given that the MTNA has existed since 1876 solely to advance the cause of music study and support music teachers. The 501(c)(3) has about 22,000 members, nearly 90% of them piano teachers, including many women who earn a modest living giving lessons in their homes. The group promotes music study and competitions and helps train teachers. Not exactly U.S. Steel. X +1.13%

The association's sin, according to the feds, rested in its code of ethics. The code lays out ideals for members to follow—a commitment to students, colleagues, society. Tucked into this worthy document was a provision calling on teachers to respect their colleagues' studios, and not actively recruit students from other teachers.

That's a common enough provision among professional organizations (doctors, lawyers), yet the FTC avers that the suggestion that Miss Sally not poach students from Miss Lucy was an attempt to raise prices for piano lessons. Given that the average lesson runs around \$30 an hour, and that some devoted teachers still give lessons for \$5 a pop, this is patently absurd.

MTNA Executive Director Gary Ingle, who has been at the organization 17 years—and who agreed to talk when I reached out about this case—said that he and the group's attorneys immediately flew to Washington to talk to federal investigators. They explained that this provision had been in the group's code for years, and that it was purely aspirational. The association has never enforced its code, and no member has been removed as a result of it.

The FTC didn't care. Nor did it blink when the MTNA pointed out that the agency has no real authority over nonprofits (it is largely limited to going after sham organizations) and that Congress has never acted on the FTA's requests for more control over 501(c)3 groups. Nor was the agency moved by the group's offer to immediately excise the provision. The investigation would continue.

With a dozen employees and a \$2 million budget, the group doesn't have "the resources to fight the federal government," Mr. Ingle says. The board immediately removed the provision from its code, but the MTNA staff still had to devote months compiling thousands of documents demanded by the agency, some going back 20 years: reports, the organization's magazines, everything Mr. Ingle had ever written that touched on the code. Mr. Ingle estimates he has spent "hundreds upon hundreds" of hours since March complying with this federal colonoscopy.

This October, MTNA signed a consent decree—its contents as ludicrous as the investigation. The association did not have to admit or deny guilt. It must, however, read a statement out loud at every future national MTNA event warning members against talking about prices or recruitment. It must send this statement to all 22,000 members and post it on its website. It must contact all of its 500-plus affiliates and get them to sign a compliance statement.

The association must also develop a sweeping antitrust compliance program that will require annual training of its state presidents on the potential crimes of robber-baron piano teachers. It must submit regular reports to the FTC and appoint an antitrust compliance officer. (The FTC wanted the officer to be an attorney, but Mr. Ingle explained that this would "break the bank," so the agency—how gracious—is allowing him to fill the post.) And it must comply with most of this for the next 20 years.

The MTNA is not yet free of fear; the FTC has still to approve the consent decree. An FTC spokesman told me the agency does not confirm or deny the existence of investigations. The organization to this day has no idea how it became a target,

(continued on next page...)



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## Post-Holiday Dinner

by Mark Ritchie



(Strassel continued...)

nor will it ever because the FTC doesn't have to provide it. While this abuse of power has received no national attention, it has riled the music community. Brian Majeski, the editor of the journal *Music Trades*, lambasted the FTC in a December editorial, noting that "a consumer watchdog that sees piano teachers as a threat either has too much time on its hands, or badly misplaced priorities."

That might be too kind. Whether it is the IRS targeting conservatives, the Justice Department hounding Gibson Guitar, or the EPA conducting an armed raid on an Alaskan mine—this administration has a tendency toward abuse of power. That's how antitrust laws created to tackle megamonopolies end up being used to hound and hammer a nonprofit devoted to piano teachers.



(Photo: Xinhua/Chen Bin)



(Photo: bg6agy)

Mark Ritchie sent in a picture of this building from China. It was built in 2007 in Huainan City, China. It was designed by Hefei University of Technology and has been built to a scale of 50:1. Some sources say that it houses practice rooms for a local conservatory in addition to showcasing architectural plans for the area. It is a popular tourist attraction and has been dubbed by locals as "The Most Romantic Building In China".

Source: <http://armchairtravelogue.blogspot.com>



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[www.ptgcolumbus.org](http://www.ptgcolumbus.org)

So... that old piano won't stay in tune?



via Doug Brandt and Chris Burget

<http://theverybesttop10.com/2013/08/13/uses-of-old-pianos/>

## Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

**President** Bryan Hartzler, RPT  
**Vice-President** John Schmoll, 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

### Chapter Meeting

Tuesday, February 18, 2014,  
7:30 pm

### First Congregational Church

444 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone: 614-228-1741  
[www.first-church.org](http://www.first-church.org)

Map Link:

<http://goo.gl/maps/x5uHc>

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### Disclaimer:

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