

# The Buckeye Backcheck

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

**Volume 32 Issue 2 March 2007**

## **CHAPTER MEETING Feb. 20, 2007**

Thanks to Henderson Music for hosting the meeting. Norwin Mergler gave a brief history of the state of the piano industry.

Attendance: Dean Nedvecki, Dwight Hansen, Kim Hoessley, Bob and Lou Grubb, Ron Kenreich, Ben Wiant, Rick Miller, Mike Varrone.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

\$1491.02 is currently in the checking account. \$500.00 is in the CD account.

### **New Business:**

Kim Hoessly has made arrangements with Otterbein College, who has offered a piano for the Tuning section of the RPT exam. Thank you Otterbein College for your support.

RPT Doug Atkins from Cedarville also has offered his services to test candidates. Those interested should contact Kim for arrangements.

All candidates please consider taking the test with the CTE position in mind. If you request to take the exam as a CTE, passing with a 90% not only awards you the certification, it also allows you to take the test for free.

**A Delegate and an Alternate is needed for this year's convention. If you are interested please tell Chris Altenburg as soon as possible.** The Delegate will receive the two extra nights free.

Paul Jacobs, Chair of the Organ dept. at the Julliard School of Music, will perform Fri. March 9, 7:30pm at Capital University's Mees Hall. A Master class will follow the next day at Christ Lutheran Church 1234 E Main St Bexley. For more information call 614-236-6474

Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Varrone

**The next chapter meeting will be hosted by Ben Wiant, 3299 Dublin Rd., March 20, 7:30pm.**

### **Butts and Flanges:**

Yamaha Electric Pianos

A question was brought up about tuning a Yamaha Electric grand.

These pianos, the CP-70 and CP-80 have a small cast iron plate, no wood at all except for the tuning block; no wooden soundboard/bridge system. This makes them very stable. However, the bass strings are extremely short and fat compared to other pianos and therefore more inharmonic. You can expect difficult to distinguish bass notes, especially the lowest ones.

In addition, the usual voicing requirements do not apply. The hammers are covered with buckskin so they last a lot longer than felt and do not present the same problems. There is no need to harden or soften the material. Since the piano is only used with an amplifier, the desired tone can be manipulated with the piano's and/or amplifier's tone controls.

### **From Mark Ritchie: The Mystery Key**



Unfortunately I never did get a response from the person that sent the keys even after making a couple of phone calls to him.

Tom Harr and I are fairly certain that the key set is from a transposing piano of unknown maker.

The entire keyboard shifted one note to the treble, not quite as exceptional as the ones below:

From the *Virtual Piano Museum*:

This upright piano was customized for composer Irving Berlin, with a special transposing lever beneath the keyboard, allowing the pianist to play in any key without the need to transpose. (Berlin could only play in one key.)

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Around 1910, as his career was starting to take off, he bought an upright “transposing piano” for \$100. To one side of the keyboard was a small wheel. Turning the wheel shifted the keyboard right or left relative to the strings, positioning the hammers over higher or lower notes than they would ordinarily strike. Thus while still playing on the (mostly) black keys of F-sharp major, Berlin could hear the music in a variety of other keys. Transposing pianos were common back then; almost every music publishing house on Tin Pan Alley had one. Berlin called his instrument his “trick piano” and sometimes his “Buick”, presumably because of the transposing wheel’s resemblance to a steering wheel (he later got another model that used a lever instead).



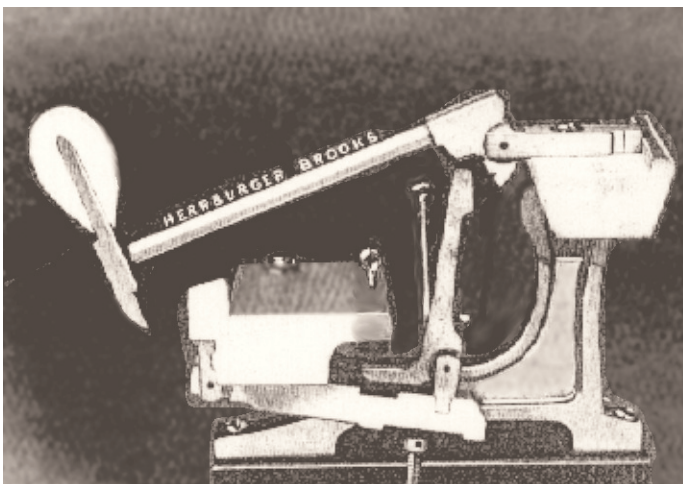
(see <http://www.concertpitchpiano.com/TinPanAlley.html>)

### Follow-up on the S-A Grand Action by Tom Harr

Mark’s notes and pictures of the Staib-Abendschein action last month reminded me very vividly of some encounters with this — what almost appears to be a “throw-back” to an earlier stage of development — simplified piano action. Without actually removing anything but the music desk you can identify this by the distinctive, enormously thick bass hammer shanks (other than adding mass I can’t imagine what function these serve) and the absence of drop-screws on the flanges. This action shows up almost exclusively in small grands made by some of the lesser New York houses such as Strich & Ziedler, Brambach, Ludwig, and others I can’t recall right off-hand.

If the picture is clear enough you can see that it derives, in principle if not in detail, from the Herrberger-Brooks “loop-and-spring” (sometimes miscalled “simplex”) action for small grands dating from 1885 through about 1953.

The important thing about these is not so much the hammer action itself, but the back action. The underlever flanges **have no screws** and they *will* come unglued from the rail! Naturally the dampers then wander around and fail to function. The only real cure for this is to pull the entire back action and screw the things down. Details forthcoming if anyone wants to know about this. (You cannot glue them back in place inside the case because of the old glue, and *don’t*, for heaven’s sake, scrape it off, because it shows the locations of the flanges.)



[Incidentally, has anyone heard anything to substantiate the rumors about Brambach plate failures?]

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### From Kim Hoessly: Young Chang Brackets

There are a number of Young Chang grands out there whose action brackets need to be replaced. I've been having trouble lately getting hold of someone in warranties. I used to contact Pam Woods, but she is no longer responding to emails. Dave McDonald told me they had moved their operations and changed some personnel. The new contact person is Jackie at 1-310-637-2000, ex. 123. I don't have an email address and she hasn't returned my call, but I hope to catch up to her soon. We'll see. It's important to find someone who will respond seeing as I keep coming across Young Chang/Weber action brackets that are bad.

### FROM THE ARTS JOURNAL ...

#### Grammy-nominated pianist Angelin Chang

by Donald Rosenberg, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

Concert pianist Angelin Chang, head of the keyboard area and an assistant professor at Cleveland State University, will be in Los Angeles on Sunday to attend the 49th annual Grammy Awards ceremony.

Chang, along with conductor John McLaughlin Williams and the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, is nominated in the best instrumental soloist(s) performance (with orchestra) category for her recording of Olivier Messiaen's "Oiseaux Exotiques." The recording is part of the Cleveland Chamber Symphony's six-CD set of performances on the TNC Music label.

A native of Muncie, Ind., Chang studied French and music at Ball State University. She worked with French composer Messiaen (1908-92) while studying at the Paris Conservatory in the late 1980s.

Her piano teacher there was Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen, the composer's wife. Chang later studied at Indiana University with Menahem Pressler and Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory.

The Cleveland Chamber Symphony recording of "Oiseaux Exotiques", made in 2004 at CSU and engineered

by the university's David Yost, is the only American entry in its Grammy category.

Before heading to Los Angeles, Chang spoke about the thrill of the Grammy nomination and her relationship with the Messiaens.

*What is your reaction to the Grammy nomination?*

It's so special that this is a Cleveland project. We did the performance here, recording here and the musicians are here. It's recognition for all of us here.

*What did you study with Messiaen in Paris?*

He did different things -- composition, analysis, master classes. I remember that was around the time of his 80th birthday. He was fantastic. He had such a lucid mind. He was physically weak, but the way he spoke, the way he would analyze and talk about music, was just illuminating.

One of the milestones for me was how he saw color. The modes were so vivid for him. To be able to see and relate to those tonal centers and colors was really helpful.

*Read the complete article at:*

<http://www.cleveland.com/entertainment/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/friday/1170929239283650.xml&coll=2>

*Note: Chang went on to win the Grammy on Feb. 11*

#### From The Pianotech On-Line Journal

Sometimes news happens that needs to be shared. At this past Sunday's Grammy awards, the winner in the classical music category for "Best Instrumental Performance with Orchestra" was pianist Angelin Chang, with the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, in a performance of Olivier Messiaen's "Oiseaux Exotiques". I thought you'd like to know that I was the piano technician for the recording. It's not my intention to "blow my own horn" as much as it is to remind us that the tuner is often the unseen artist, and also to remind us that sometimes our efforts get rewarded in ways we never expect.

Steve Kabat, RPT

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### **A Pianist's Recordings Draw Praise, but Were They All Hers?**

By Alan Riding, *The New York Times* 2/17/07

PARIS — In the autumn of her life, decades after she had last performed in public, the British pianist Joyce Hatto was rediscovered by a small group of musicians and critics who contended that her recordings of Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Liszt and others ranked alongside those of the 20th century's most exceptional virtuosos.

The pianist Joyce Hatto may have been less prolific than she seemed.

When she died last June at 77, some of those same enthusiasts again proclaimed her to be a neglected genius, in glowing obituaries written for British newspapers. In *The Guardian*, the music critic Jeremy Nicholas described her as “one of the greatest pianists Britain has ever produced.”

Mr. Nicholas and others, it seems, had accepted the explanation for her lack of renown among music lovers: a long battle against cancer had forced her to abandon her concert career in 1976 and led her to devote her energy to recording all the great works in the piano repertory, from Scarlatti to Messiaen, for the small British label Concert Artist.

But now Ms. Hatto's reputation for excellence and originality has been shaken by a charge of plagiarism. *Gramophone*, the London music monthly, has presented evidence that several of the recordings issued under her name were in fact copied from recordings of the same music by other pianists.

In an article posted on the *Gramophone Magazine's* Web site ([www.gramophone.co.uk](http://www.gramophone.co.uk)), Editor James Inverne said initial doubts about Ms. Hatto's recordings had been confirmed by a sound engineer, Andrew Rose, who compared the sound waves of her recording of Liszt's 12 “*Transcendental Études*” with those of an earlier version by Lazlo Simon. In 10 of the *études*, the sound waves were identical.

Mr. Rose, who runs *Pristine Classical*, a small company based near St. Émilion in southwest France, has since created a Web page ([pristineclassical.com/HattoHoax.html](http://pristineclassical.com/HattoHoax.html)) where Liszt recordings by Ms. Hatto can be heard alongside those by Mr. Simon and one by the Japanese pianist Minoru Nojima.

William Barrington-Coupe, Ms. Hatto's husband and the owner of *Concert Artist*, which issued more than 100 of her recordings (available online at [concertartistrecordings.com](http://concertartistrecordings.com)), is perhaps the only person who can clear up the mystery. But he could not be reached at his home near Cambridge on Friday and did not respond to telephone or e-mail messages.

As it happens, questions about the authenticity of Ms. Hatto's recordings had for some time been aired in Web chat by music lovers who asked how it was possible for an aged and ailing woman to record so much. They also pointed out that most of Ms. Hatto's more than 100 CDs were issued over the last 10 years and a number since her death.

Then, this month, Jed Distler, a composer and music critic who was among Ms. Hatto's admirers, contacted Mr. Inverne with a strange story. When he put the Hatto CD of the Liszt *études* into his computer, Mr. Inverne recounted, “his iTunes player identified the disc as, yes, the Liszts, but not a Hatto recording.” Instead, it identified Mr. Simon as the performer.

“If all this is true,” Mr. Inverne said, “what strikes me is that this sort of piracy was made possible by technology, and later advances in technology uncovered it.”

He added: “As far as I know, the classical music world has never known a scandal like this. The art world has, but not classical music.”

Read the complete article at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/17/arts/music/17hatt.html?ref=arts>

*Note: Since the publication of this article Mr. Barrington-Coupe has admitted to some of the allegations of fakery.*



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

## Upcoming Events

### Organ Recital by Matt Scavo

Tuesday, March 13, 12:15 pm  
First Congregational Church, 444 E. Broad  
(Part of their lunchtime "Tuesdays at First" series)

### Chapter Meeting

Tuesday March 20, 7:30 pm  
Home of Ben Wiant (Wesley Chapel), 3299 Dublin Rd.

### Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

April 19-22, 2007 King-of-Prussia, PA  
[www.ptgmarc.org](http://www.ptgmarc.org)



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Valley Forge is the centerpiece of the area's many attractions: More than two dozen historical sites; fabulous shopping; more gardens than anywhere in North America; and exquisite museums.

### PTG 50th Anniversary Convention

June 20-24 2007, Kansas City



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David Stang, 286 E. Kelso Rd., Columbus, OH 43202 stang\_db @ yahoo . com