

# The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild  
Volume 35 Issue 2 March 2010



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well the weather outside certainly has been frightful. These are the kind of days when I wish I had stuck with my original plan of being a HS band director so I could take advantage of snow days (of course, on cold, rainy Friday nights in the fall, you can bet I'm happy to be warm at home and not on some forsaken football field doing a halftime show). I actually only had to move 2-3 appointments due to the snow, so that's not too bad. It's not a bad idea to leave a little wiggle room in your schedule in the winter months just for such emergencies. I like to leave Friday afternoons open to work at home and if the weather is bad, say on Tuesday, I can work at home that day and reschedule appointments on Friday (or at least most of them). If Friday is bad as well, that's just the way it is. I have never had a customer be angry about rescheduling due to bad road conditions. More often than not, they are surprised, if not shocked, to see me when I show up during snow days.

Scheduling can be a tricky part of our business. There is a great temptation to schedule 24-7. No one can sustain that kind of schedule and their sanity, not to mention their health. If you feel the need to schedule evenings and weekends, give yourself some weekday time during the day to do your paperwork and other office chores rather than doing them at 11 o'clock at night. Of course, some technicians are doing this in addition to another job, so that's a whole other ballgame. Still, it's important to not over book yourself. I believe what I do is important, but it's not heart surgery, so in my humble opinion, not too many Piano emergencies actually qualify as emergencies. Certainly, I make every effort to do repairs and such as soon as possible (especially at schools and churches

where a performance may be involved), but if someone calls me on the day before they "need" a tuning, I have to wonder where the piano really is on their priority list. It's kind of a fine line and I make lots of extra efforts where my regular customers are involved, but as one bumper sticker says: Failure to plan on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part. Everybody needs to do their part, after all, it is their piano, we as technicians, can only do so much. Does that sound crabby? Maybe it's the weather. - Kim

Be sure to make time for our March meeting, Tuesday the 16th at Graves. A Damp-Chaser representative will be there and will hold a drawing for a full system to be given to a lucky chapter member. - ed.



Bud and I did our snowman Feb 5. Couldn't resist the perfect packing snow. His head finally fell off last week; that's what happens when you stand over a putt too long!

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## Tech Tip

Since the topic of our cancelled meeting was hammer shaping, I will submit this tip suggested by one of our colleagues.

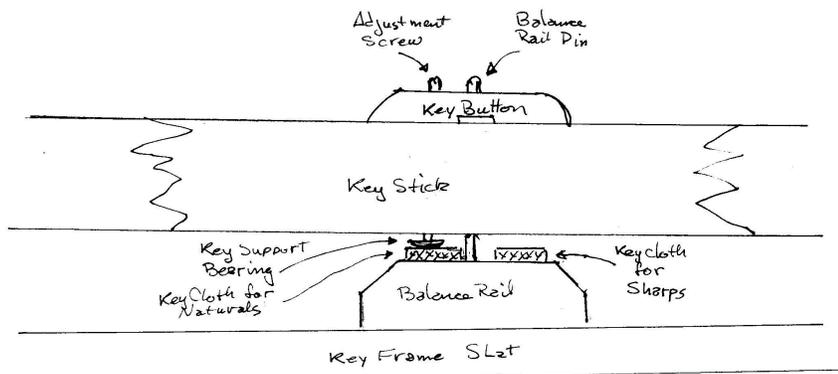
Here's an efficient way to do the first pass at hammer filing. Clamp 5 or 6 hammers together so they are stable and in a good position for filing. Take a half-sheet (8x5) of 60-grit sandpaper and wrap the first couple of inches around a dowel so that it is comfortable to hold. Then do the filing by pulling the sandpaper over the hammer surfaces. Use the other hand to lightly press the sandpaper against the surfaces as it is pulled. To cut down on friction on the backing as you pull, you may want to cover the back of the sheet with packing tape.

- David

## Winter Woes

by Tom "Tuner" Harr

The recent meteorological unpleasantness and declaration of a Level 3 Snow Emergency in Fayette County reminded me of some piano servicing adventures in that territory some years ago. Except for moraines, eskers, kames, drumlins and other debris they left behind in the southeast quarter of the county the glaciers planed the land there flat as a tabletop. So the wind blows unimpeded by trees or anything else. When it snows the conditions can be fierce and the drifts very deep on the roads. I always dreaded going up there in bad weather, but my sturdy Ford Bronco faithfully carried me through. One particularly bad day when it was nearly a full blizzard I went up north of "Jeff" (Jeffersonville) to deliver a set of recovered keys for an elderly distressed grand piano. When I opened the storm door to knock a gust ripped it right off its hinges and sent it whirling through the snow leaving me with the handle in my hand. Fortunately the piano owner was a lot more interested in seeing the keys reinstalled than in the fate of her storm door (well, they did look very nice!). The piano was an ex-expression piano, id est, not a reproducer but a step above a straight player and originally capable of some interpretive verisimilitude playing appropriately coded rolls. A Recordo, Artech or Angelus or some such system. As a consequence it had some idiosyncratic features. Since the entire player mechanism was long gone I had no hesitation in changing out the trapwork to make it more functional. One oddity which had nothing to do with its former player status was that the keys were supported on "thumb tacks" with regulating screws running through to the tops of the keys (see drawing). Hence the key level could be set or individually adjusted for each key without removing anything but the fallboard. Neat idea, but one likely to be appreciated by only a piano technician. I can't remember whether this piano had the corresponding feature of setting the key-dip by screws running up through the keyframe although I have seen a couple of examples of this.



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## FROM THE MUSIC TRADES AND NAMM 2010

### Quarterly Sales Data: Retail Market Firms Up

For the first time in two years, retail sales showed signs of firming according to retailers reporting to The Music Trades' fourth-quarter retail sales survey. For the three-month period ending December 31, 2009, sales inched ahead .7%, bringing a close to the most challenging retail year in memory. These results compare to a near double digit... ..drop in the year-earlier period when the fallout from the financial crisis left Americans shell-shocked. Echoing the sentiments of so many reporting to this quarter's survey, a dealer from Chicago remarked, "The consumer is still struggling in a weak environment. We see it getting better, but it's painfully slow."

"The piano players are still buying, but the buyer that a few years ago would have purchased a grand is now buying a vertical," remarked a dealer from Miami. "The decorator that needed the cherry finish for a big new house is all but gone." Nationwide data supports this anecdote, as vertical pianos, which once sold in similar quantities as grands will now eclipse them by approximately 65% in 2010.

### New From Yamaha

Entering its 50th year in the United States, Yamaha didn't sugarcoat the continued challenges in store for the piano market in 2010. Instead it came to its annual keyboard dealers' meeting with all guns firing, announcing new product introductions, dealer resources, and web tools designed to send a clear message to retailers: Yamaha is prepared to deliver a complete package in a troubled time for the industry.

Yamaha's top product introduction for 2010 will be its new CFX grand, scheduled for production in early June. The product of nearly two decades of R&D by an international design team, the CFX replaces the CFiii at the top of Yamaha's CF series.

Yamaha also announced enhancements to its Disklavier line, including access to streaming web-based player-piano music via iPhone and the introduction of a remote teaching concept that allows teachers to conduct one-on-one lessons or master classes through iChat or Skype.

Yamaha presented its Inspiration Award to LaRoy Edwards, who joined Yamaha Corporation of America in 1962 and created the company's Little Red Schoolhouse

program, the longest-running piano service course of its kind. Upon presenting the award, Calvin said Edwards "embodies YCA's core vision and values, inspires others, and has been a key person with Yamaha since the beginning."

### Mason & Hamlin, PianoDisc new product affiliation

PianoDisc, a leading manufacturer of player and other retrofit systems for the acoustic piano, and its sister company, piano manufacturer Mason & Hamlin, made a joint announcement at the 2010 NAMM Show. PianoDisc announced that it is partnering with AirTurn, Inc. of Boulder, CO., to bring the AirTurn AT-104 hands-free wireless page-turning technology and MusicReader software to PianoDisc's product line.

Sync-A-Vision features a high-def monitor that is built directly into the center of a music rack and powered with a Mac Mini computer. Digital scores can be downloaded directly onto the Sync-A-Vision monitor, read and even annotated using MusicReader software, and the pages can then be turned, hands-free, via the wireless AirTurn AT-104 transmitter connected to a foot pedal. It is seamlessly connected into the PianoDisc MIDI and player piano components retrofitted into Mason & Hamlin's acoustic piano.

### Pearl River's New Concert Grands

The new Ritmüller GH212R and GH275R concert grands represent the newest products in Pearl River's efforts to totally redesign and re-engineer the entire Ritmüller line under the supervision of master piano designer Lothar Thomma. The new concert grands are touted to be competitive with any in the industry. Pearl River has made a serious commitment to establishing the Ritmüller brand by building pianos that combine old-world craftsmanship, cutting edge technology, and the finest in quality components. The GH212R features a tapered solid spruce soundboard, Renner concert-grade hammers, a multi-laminated beech pin block, and functioning duplex scale. The GH275R 9' concert grand features include a one-piece continuous unibridge, a Strunz tapered, solid alpine spruce soundboard and Renner concert-grade actions and hammers.



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

## ON THE INTERNET

### Happy Birthday, Fryderyk

February 22 was the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth, so there is quite a bit of commentary out there about him:

<http://preview.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=123924904>

<http://chopin2010.pl/>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/18/AR2010021806498.html>

## Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

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**Secretary** David Stang

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

*- David*

## Upcoming Chapter Meetings

March 16, 2010, 7:30pm  
Graves Piano & Organ  
5798 Karl Rd.  
Program: Humidity Control System  
Technical Tips, led by  
Bob Grubb.  
Drawing for a Damp-Chaser system !

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

This newsletter was created using the open-source program *Scribus* running on the Linux/Ubuntu operating system.

### Disclaimer:

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