

# The Buckeye Backcheck

*Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild*  
Volume 40 Issue 3 March 2015



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



What is your favorite part of this business? Is it the satisfaction of a fine tuning on a fine instrument, or at least making a less than perfect piano sound better? Is it making a piano action feel better? How about finding and fixing that problem that the previous technician could not solve? I'll bet it's not doing paperwork. As I make some preliminary plans to attend the PTG Convention in Denver, one of the things I will do is look through the class offerings and decide how I will spend my time. There is always a good selection of topics covering tuning, rebuilding, voicing -- all the interesting things. But there are also many business classes and I think sometimes we neglect that aspect of our work especially early on in our

careers. One of the best classes I attended at previous conventions, was Vivian Brooks' class on calculating the cost of doing business (I was not making an error when I used the plural for conventions because that class was so worthwhile, I did it more than once and would probably do it again if she offered it). Vivian reminds us that we need to calculate into our fees, not just the actual work, but things like travel time, office time, need for vacation time, sick time, insurance (health, business, car and for me, now long term care insurance) and so forth. Your fee should be balanced between the cost of doing business, what you feel you need to make and what the market will bear (don't underestimate that one). I notice sometimes that meeting attendance, while never particularly stellar (ahem), is perhaps even less so when we do business technicals. Let's not forget how important that day to day office stuff is to our financial success as technicians. Many of you are getting ready to file your tax reports for 2014, if you haven't already done so. Will you find what you expected or will you be shocked at how little you really earned compared to the amount of work you did? Something to consider in the coming year. And the picture I chose this month? That's my new paper shredder (shreds credit cards too, oohh aaah). One of my favorite business things this time of year is to clean out my files and shred anything older than 7 years. More satisfying than you might imagine. A tidy office is a happy office.

Kim Hoessly. RPT



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## Chapter Meeting Minutes February 17, 2014

The meeting was held at Solich Piano Columbus.

### Attendance:

Kim Hoessly, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, John Schmoll, Chris Altenburg, Lawrence Peters, Mark Ritchie, David Stang, Tim Thompson, and host Jay Grayson of Solich Pianos.

### Treasurer's Report:

\$3070.82

### Old Business:

Kim will be ordering a new action model for testing purposes.

Arrangements are still in the works for relocating the Chapter Library and cataloguing all of its contents. If there isn't space to house everything in one location, then the possibility of redistributing some of the contents among the Chapter members was also discussed. Attempts to reach former Chapter Member and Librarian, Mike O'Neill, have been unsuccessful to date.

### New Business:

Delegate to Council was discussed, though nobody has been chosen or volunteered. Kim Hoessly and Chris Altenburg may, or may not, attend the Convention which is Denver, CO.

### Announcements:

Anyone who wants to get rid of any extra/unwanted wound piano strings can contact Chris Burget ([cjburget@gmail.com](mailto:cjburget@gmail.com) or 614-214-2631) or bring some to the next meeting. He was contacted by an artist who is looking for some and he can get them to her.

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## Butts & Flanges

Chris Altenburg mentioned that a client's piano had one or more of the action bracket mounting bolts break off at the plate. Some of those may not be as sturdy as they would appear to be as they may just be screws that are mounted in wood behind the plate and they can break there. Possible solutions discussed involved drilling the damaged hole and plugging it with pin block material and retapping/drilling a new hole for a new screw.

## For Sale

### 1899 Steinway Upright

From an email sent to Kim Hoessly:

Attached are pix of an 1899 Steinway upright that belongs to clients of mine who are selling their house on Bryden Road. (Bill Shaffer & Ann Twiggs)

They'd like to see it go to someone who would appreciate its potential. It's playable - but has not been tuned in a very long time.

"It was found here at the Garden Manor when we purchased our home in 2003."

The Garden Manor story is that it was once used to house jazz greats who played the clubs on Mt Vernon Ave and Long St. Legend has it that the likes of Cab Calloway, Count Basie and Duke Ellington are among those who 'slept here' -- and presumably practiced here as well.

If you know anyone who may be interested or have any questions about it, please let us know.

Thanks!

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## Magnetic Tips

We all like to have multiple uses for the tools in our bags, saves space and makes us feel clever for coming up with those ideas. Everyone should probably have magnet in their tool box, it's handy for retrieving items in the piano (often in conjunction with the ever useful tweezers). I have dropped many a screw in vertical pianos when putting action parts back in, I'm sure I am not alone. But if you have an expandable magnet, there are at least 2 other uses for that tool. If you are taking a grand action back to your shop for work and plan on doing some bench regulation, you will need to take string heights in the piano to transfer those measurements to the bench. You can use a tape measure, but in the top sections, it can be awkward. You can, instead, take your magnet and set it on the keybed, expand it up to the bottom of the string and then use the tape measure to measure that distance. The other use I have is for Damp-Chaser installations. I use a similar process to measure between the beams so I can cut the hanging rods to the right length. Much neater than draping them over the beams and doesn't not take much time at all.

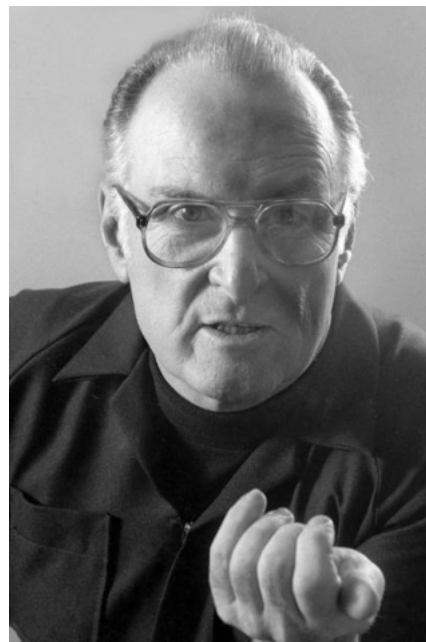
Kim Hoessly



## Ben McKlveen Memorial Tuning Seminar Saturday, April 18, 2015

**Piano Pros Piano Store**  
10177 International Blvd  
West Chester Township, OH 45246

The Cincinnati Chapter of the PTG met to determine what we could do to honor the memory of Ben McKlveen. Since Ben was devoted to teaching the craft of piano technology to others we decided to present a one day tuning seminar in his name.



Instructors for the 2015 seminar are Dan Levitan, from NYC and Lawrence Becker from Cincinnati. Their combined efforts will cover the theory and practice of tuning a piano in equal temperament.

This seminar is open to beginning and experienced tuners. The cost is \$60 and we will provide a

breakfast and lunch, and 4 classes, 1.5 hours in length each. Please feel welcome. Come and get to know us as we celebrate the life and career of one of our most ambitious and creative friends and founding members, the late Ben McKlveen.

Matt Shoemaker, RPT  
President, Cincinnati, OH PTG Chapter  
937-452-7325  
[mshoemaker1@who.rr.com](mailto:mshoemaker1@who.rr.com)

Download a seminar flyer with mail-in registration at:  
<http://www.ptg.org/scripts/4disapi.dll/userfiles/Events/BenMcKlveenSeminar.pdf>

Register online at:  
<https://www.payitsquare.com/collect-page/60986>

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## Review Of "The Craft Of Piano Tuning"

Thanks to Solich Piano Columbus for hosting our February meeting and providing food and beverages. The technical portion of the meeting was lead by John Schmoll, who gave a review and summary of Dan Levitan's book "The Craft Of Piano Tuning". John stated, "I wish I had this book when I started tuning because there are many valuable lessons to be learned here, many of which took many years for me to learn through experience." He also says that there is enough information in the book that more is learned from subsequent readings.

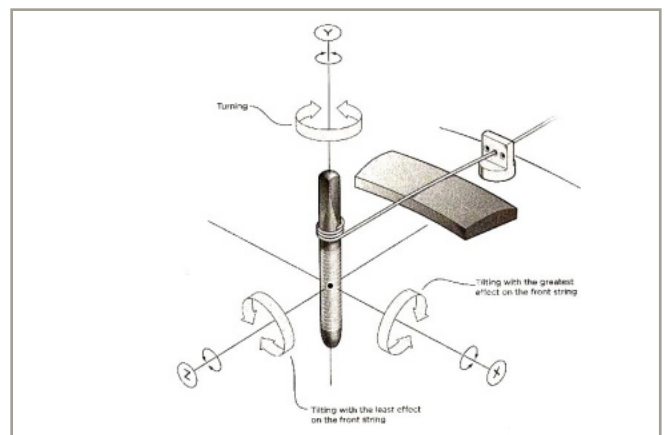
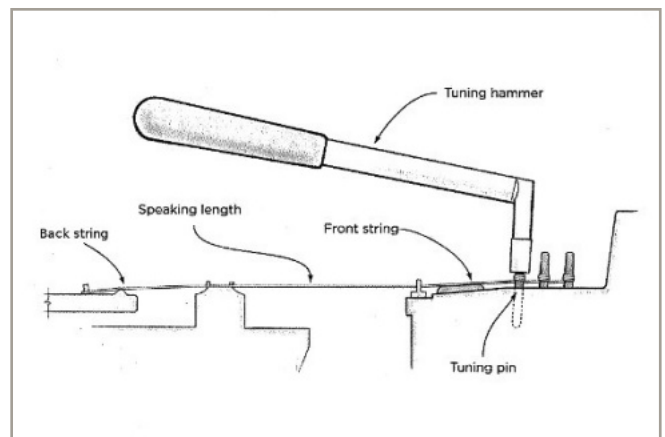
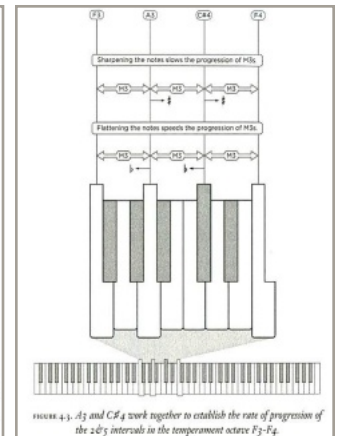
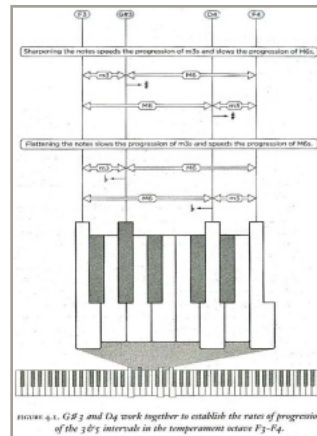
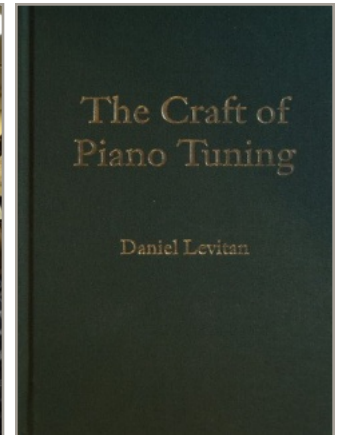
The book itself is divided into two main parts: The Tuner's Ear; and The Tuner's Hand. Each part also has several supplemental sections that explain various subjects in greater detail. Some of what is in the book can be found in other sources, while a few things may not be. He does not go into great detail about voicing hammers, regulating or electronic tuning. He doesn't codemn ETD's and even acknowledges their worth but does say that, at the highest level of skill, one's manipulation of beats and intervals may even surpass the accuracy of ETD's. He does not even really say "this is how you do this or that" but just relays what many experienced and "successful" tuners do as he has gathered by observing them over the decades.

What is a little different about this book, though, is how it is organized and how certain concepts are described in terms that can be considered novel. His explanations of inharmonicity and how it is dealt with is an example. He describes a string subdividing into separate "Virtual Strings" that each have their own partial series. This is just another way to imagine inharmonicity.

He also has a different way of presenting the temperament octave than what most literature communicates. He doesn't list a specific sequence, per se, but offers up a way to categorize a variety of related intervals whose widths can be manipulated and how they affect other intervals. In time, this might allow one to tune a temperament starting from just about any note. It may not be so different than how many experienced tuners may consider how to divide up an octave into various related intervals, and how to tune them to compensate for inharmonicity, but it may be different than what many beginning tuners might consider.

Levitan then goes on to describe tuning with higher partials; octave tuning; unison tuning; and intentional mistuning and floating pitch.

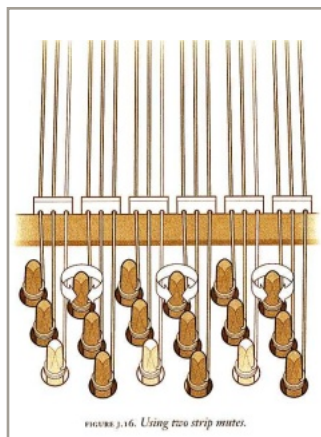
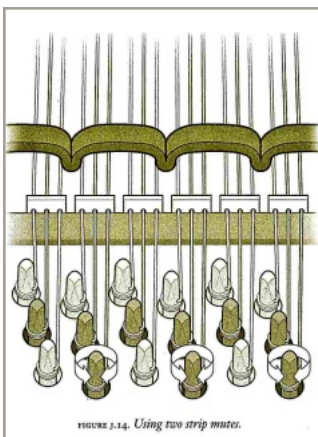
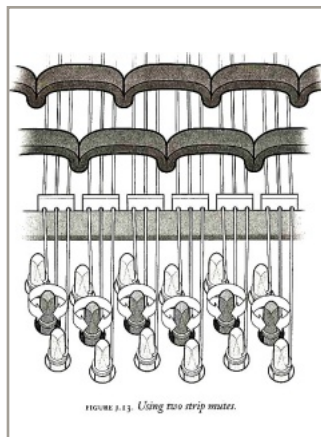
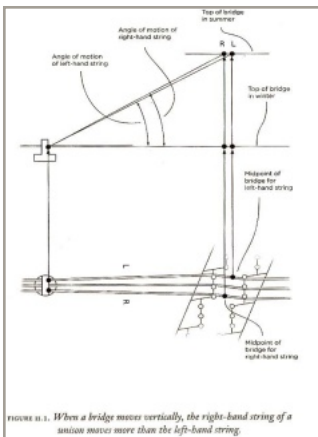
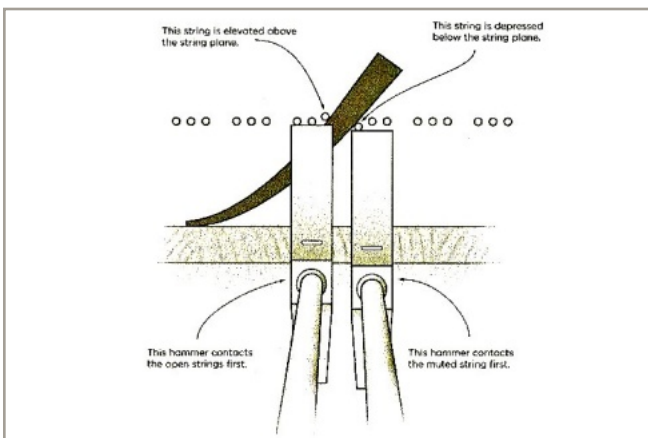
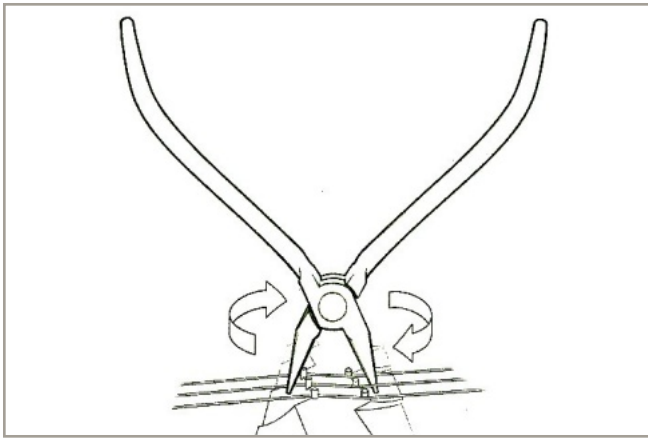
The second half of the book focuses on the relationships between the various string segments, tuning pins, and tuning lever and what happens when they are manipulated.





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He starts this half by saying that, ultimately, piano tuning is more a skill of the hand than it is the ear. Not to diminish the ear's role but, often, much is written and taught about how to hear intervals and beats and unisons only to leave the hand on its own, or just give cursory notions of "tweaking the pin" and so on. He goes on to explain the various string segments and how they affect tuning stability.

He stresses great importance on the front string segment between an upper termination point and the tuning pin. He says that what is often considered as "setting the pin" is actually the act of adjusting the tension in the front string so that it is slightly higher than that of the speaking length. "When the speaking length is struck forcefully, a shock wave runs down the string to the upper termination and it's tension increases slightly...." The tension of the front string must be high enough to prevent any of it from slipping past the termination when the shock wave momentarily releases it's static friction causing the string to go flat. Yet it can't be so high that it pulls some of the speaking length up causing it to then go sharp.

Levitan then describes the behavior of the tuning pin as it is manipulated. He claims that once the pin is released from the lever it usually immediately springs back to it's unflexed state, so to speak. This is contrary, at least on the surface, to what some others may say in regard to a pin slowly twisting if not properly "tweaked". He also explains that it is useful to sometimes separate the rotating of the pin from tilting it. Much early literature stressed the importance of "never tilting the pin" while modern opinions seem to differ from that. Levitan, however, tries to separate intentional tilting from unintentional tilting. He also explains various tuning lever positions, lever designs, and interpreting the feel of tuning pins in the the pin block and how vaious tuners react to that feedback.

Other supplements deal with pitch raising and muting techniques. How to equalize tension on the back string segments with pliers during pitch raises is illustrated. By lightly rotating some round nose pliers on a string between the bridge pins one can stabilize the string as well as reseal it to the bridge with out the risk of kinking the string or the bridge. Dan also describes various muting techniques and shows how using multiple strip mutes can be very efficient. Why pianos go out of tune and how humidity affects the bridges are discussed, as well as minimizing physical stress and hearing protection.

This book, it seems, has something to offer technicians of various skill levels and provides some different ways of conceptualizing familiar topics.



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



*"Which is your favorite requiem?"*

Pablo Helguera

## Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

President	Kim Hoessly, RPT
Vice-President	John Schmoll, RPT
Treasurer	Ron Kenreich
Secretary	Christopher Burget
Imm. Past Pres.	Bryan Hartzler, RPT

*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, March 17**  
**7:30pm**

**Graves Piano & Organ Co.**  
5798 Karl Road  
Columbus, OH 43229  
[www.gravespianos.com](http://www.gravespianos.com)

**Topic:** Troubleshooting

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

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