

# The Buckeye Backcheck

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

Volume 40 Issue 5 May 2015



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Why come to chapter meetings? At the end of a work day, few of us really look forward to going back out (if we, indeed, have had a chance to go home), especially if the weather is cold, wet or otherwise nasty. And if the weather is nice, I'm sure most of us can think of other things we'd like to be doing. But, for most of us, the chapter meeting is also the one consistent source of face to face information about our profession. The meeting is a chance to ask questions and get feedback right away from colleagues. The chance to commiserate about problems with an audience that truly understands. Okay, so really that first thing is the best reason. What can we learn at the meeting to take home and use later? What can we learn about the piano, about our business, that might come in handy, even if it seems rather esoteric or obscure at that particular moment in our careers? What is the takeaway? I don't think I have ever been to a meeting where I didn't learn at least one thing that I was able to use later. And sometimes I learned a lot of things. Sometimes, there were things I just put in the back of my mind and pulled out much later. Over time, that is quite a lot of things that have become part of who I am as a technician and a big part of what I can now offer to my clientele. Don't underestimate what you can learn from your colleagues as well as outside clinicians who come in to do technicals for us. And don't underestimate what you can offer even if you are new to the business (we often need a fresh perspective to reinvigorate the conversation).

I'd like to put together a new feature for the newsletter I'm going to call The Takeaway. In the US, we have Carry Out, in England, they call it Takeaway and I thought that was a fun way to put it and apt for this newsletter series. I'm starting with the techs who were at the last meeting and asking them for at least one thing they took away from the April Meeting. Hopefully, you'll be able to benefit from that either 1) because you had to miss the meeting, 2) you missed that particular point at the meeting or 3) you'll find a reason to come to future meetings. And in an organization such as ours, what benefits one, benefits all.

Kim Hoessly, RPT

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## Chapter Meeting Minutes April 21, 2015

The meeting was held at Columbus Piano Leasing.

### Attendance:

Kim Hoessly, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, David Stang, Tim Thompson, Phil Walters, and host Mahlon Ray.

### Treasurer's Report:

\$2771.80

### Old Business:

No update on status of the Chapter Library.

No update on the Fortepiano mini seminar in September or October.

Kim Hoessly may be Delegate to Council this year.

### New Business:

It was suggested that the Chapter picnic be moved to earlier in the Summer, possibly June.

The Chapter approved ads for OMTA and AGO. They often request ads when the Chapter is on break for the Summer, so we moved to approve the ads in advance.

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## Bartolomeo Cristofori's 360th Birthday



May 4, 2015 was Bartolomeo Cristofori's 360th birthday, and to honor the inventor of the pianoforte Google presented it's latest Google Doodle showing him playing the instrument. Google often replaces it's famous logo on it's home page with a variation, or doodle, that may honor famous historical figures or dates of notable events, and they are often interactive. In this case, one can adjust the slider on the right side of the image and witness Bartolomeo playing louder or softer. To see the Doodle, go to:

<https://www.google.com/doodles/bartolomeo-cristoforis-360th-birthday>

or watch it on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABLNoXhWXxA>

## Butts & Flanges

Ron Kenreich brought up the question of being licensed, bonded and insured, and what each means for piano technicians.

Piano techs are not required by Federal and State laws to be licensed to practice their trade, though many institutions may require RPT certification.

Insured generally means liability insurance for any property damage or personal injury incurred by the technician while performing a service. Knocking over an expensive vase while removing case parts would be an example.

Bonding, in a nutshell, generally protects the customer from unfinished or shoddy work that may need to be completed by someone else. Requirements vary from state to state, but usually it is money payed by the contractor, or technician, to a bond surety company (if separate from insurance company) and is held by the State. Only when a claim is made, is the money administered.

Chris Burget and Kim Hoessly attended the Ben McKlveen Memorial Tuning Seminar hosted by the Cincinnati Chapter. Several people shared stories of Ben, who was a founding member of the PTG and a huge influence on many technicians throughout the industry. Ben was fond of jumpsuits, as many know! One of the better jokes of the day was a recollection of Ben describing tuning most spinets and knowing when the job is done. "Well, if it's a two hour appointment, and two hours are up, then you're done!"

One of the presenters was Dan Levitan, author of "The Craft Of Piano Tuning", and it was interesting to hear him demonstrate and explain some of the concepts of his book. One of the more curious and novel demonstrations, involved him placing a laser pointer on a tuning pin and marking the spot on the wall upon which it shined. He then proceeded to turn the neighboring pin with shared piano wire, and in doing so caused the point of light to move across the wall, indicating that the original pin was influenced by the turning of the latter one. Lawrence Becker also gave a presentation but Kim and Chris were not able to stay for much of that.

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## The Takeaway

by Kim Hoessly

Here's what folks took away from the April Meeting:

David S: My Takeaway from the meeting was when we discussed residual tension between the tuning pin and the front termination point. In fact, shortly after that discussion I tuned a Chinese-made Baldwin small grand which was especially difficult because of it. After a first-pass tuning I took a little break for 15 minutes or so. After that I was shocked at how badly some of the notes in the 5th and 6th octaves had gone out already. The lesson here is that hard test blows really are important in some pianos. A little bit of lubrication on the strings in that area may be a good idea also.

Kim H: When doing vertical regulation, don't wait to do the dampers last when you are tired and possibly losing focus. Make sure letoff is at least working and proceed with damper regulation, first with the pedal and then with the spoon.

Chris B: 1 - When dampers lift at halfway point of hammer travel, then it is more likely that the key touch will feel the same when damper pedal is, and is not, engaged. This is because most of the energy from the key has been transferred through the action at this point.

2 - Some modern piano manufacturers are using stronger springs these days, because they can cover up small imperfections in damper regulation. However, it can make the touch feel a little heavier because of this. Pulling back lightly on the dampers a few times can lighten them up a bit.

Ron K: This is a great idea but now all I can remember is the fine pizza and fellowship. When piano selling, get all the information you can and perhaps they (the seller) might get an app to see how low the pitch is. Also, Mahlon sometimes buys pianos.

I didn't hear from Phil or Tim, but I hope they did take away good things from the meeting. Don't be shy ladies and gentlemen, we'll be back with this next month.

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## Tips For Regulating Vertical Dampers

Thanks to Columbus Piano Leasing and Mahlon Ray for hosting our February meeting and providing food and beverages. The technical portion of the meeting was lead by Phil Walters, who offered many tips for vertical damper regulation. Following are a few, but not nearly all, of his suggestions.

First, when looking at dampers and how they are behaving, Phil likes to engage the damper pedal, in slippers or socks preferably, and lightly feather the pedal and get a sense for which ones, or which sections, are moving sooner or later. It often may be the case that the bass dampers are lifting a bit earlier than the rest due to stronger damper lever springs that push the damper felts in further at the strings compressing them, thus causing the bottom of the damper levers to rest closer to the pedal rod, and spoons, resulting in earlier damper lift. Then he checks damper lift to the keys seeing if they are lifting at near half the hammer blow distance. He also will look at how the spoons are positioned to start out with. Using a flashlight and mirror, he gets a sense if some spoons are too far forward or back, or nearly straight up as this may influence how he sets the timing of the dampers. More on that later.

When regulating dampers, you want to regulate them to the pedal first. Once you decide which ones are the standards, you adjust the others by bending the wires on the damper levers, at the base of the wires where they enter the levers. How a wire is bent may seem counterintuitive, at times. If you want a damper to lift slower, or later, then bend the wire away from you toward the strings. This will actually force the bottom of the lever to move further away from you and the action rail holding the damper pedal rod. To quicken damper lift, you bend the wire back toward yourself and the keys, and this will in turn move the bottom of the lever closer to the rod. Often a second bend under the damper block is needed to properly realign the felt to the strings. This can get tricky in the bass sections of tiny pianos where extreme angles are already encountered. Often slight rotation of the blocks on the wires is needed. All of this wire adjusting will also affect damper lift from the spoon as well.

So, as mentioned before, it is important to note where the spoons are positioned before even though you are just regulating lift from the pedal. Usually, damper lift is early from both the pedal and spoon, so slowing lift with the pedal will improve the other, thus making spoon regulation easier. However, if lift is slow to begin with then, or damper lift between pedal and spoon is very different for some



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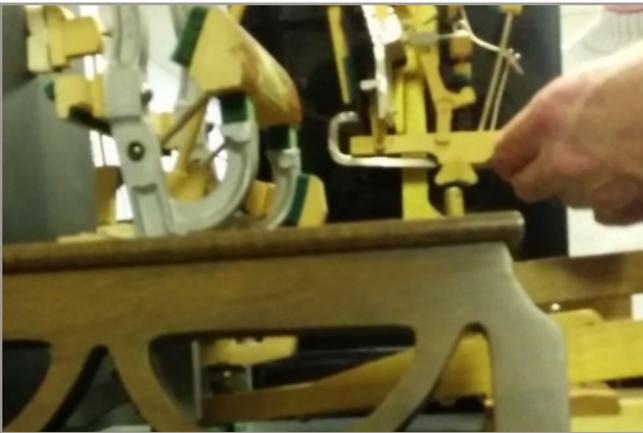
reason, then you need to know what is happening with the spoon. If the spoon is already close to the lever and you angle it even closer, then there is a risk that the spoon will eventually dig into the damper lever felt and gouge it. If the spoon is already leaning back and you still wanted to slow damper lift, bending the spoon back any further may cause it to bind or rub on other action parts. These may be extreme examples, but they are possible. So, in short, one setting can affect the other.

Phil then demonstrated several different spoon benders and how to use them. He also mentioned that some of them need to be modified to be useful, especially the fork style benders. Often they need to be ground thinner and the slots deepened. He showed how to slide the forked tool along the same side of the whippen as the spoon then engage it. Pressing the damper pedal to get the damper levers out of the way may also make it easier to engage the spoon too. He also showed how to slide the wrap around style under the whippen, if possible, until the end is reached then up and back to grab the spoon. Lifting up moves the spoon away from you, and pushing down brings the spoon toward you. It's usually easier to move it away from you. Spoon adjusting is generally easier with keys out in smaller pianos, like consoles. Phil also advocates regulating dampers with the keys out if there has already been extensive action and key work done as well. So, if possible, do it first while you're fresh instead of putting it off until last. He also discussed how to block up the hammer rail to the half way point and then adjust spoons until dampers "wink" slightly as a way of regulating them on the bench.



One thing Phil checks on most, if not all, pianos is the strength of the damper lever springs. More and more modern manufactures are increasing the strength of these springs, and they are getting stronger each year. Stronger springs can cover up imperfections in damper installation and regulation in the factory, but it also can make touchweight feel heavier. He usually starts in the high treble and works his way down, lightly pulling back on the dampers and letting them spring back. If he thinks they may be adding unwanted friction, he'll just rock the damper head back and forth a few times, slackening them slightly.

Other topics included: split damper and bass damper rod issues; broken hangers and brackets that need rebushed; polishing and lubricating damper rods; feathering the damper to listen for even damping; adjusting misaligned dampers on new pianos before grooves form; and trimming felts with razor scissors. All in all, a pretty informative technical.





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



Unknown

## Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

<b>President</b>	Kim Hoessly, RPT
<b>Vice-President</b>	John Schmoll, RPT
<b>Treasurer</b>	Ron Kenreich
<b>Secretary</b>	Christopher Burget
<b>Imm. Past Pres.</b>	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*

## Chapter Meeting **Tuesday, May 19**

### Classic Pianos

1313 Cameron Ave  
Lewis Center, Oh 43035  
(614) 436-0200

[classicpianosohio.com](http://classicpianosohio.com)

Food & Drinks at **6:30pm**

Technical at **7:00pm**

Meeting to follow after

### Map Link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/o2gRX>

**Topic:** Yamaha and Bösendorfer pianos  
by Ray Chandler Sr., Technical Manager  
of Yamaha

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

### Disclaimer:

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