

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 42 Issue 6 November 2017



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Chapter Meeting Minutes October 17, 2017

The meeting was held at Solich Piano Columbus.

Attendance:

Mitch Staples, Chris Burget, Kim Hoessly, John Schmoll, Mark Ritchie, and hosts Kyle Merritt, and Thomas Solich

Treasurer's Report:

\$2,060.24

Old Business:

The November technical will cover vertical action servicing, and will take place at Graves Piano & Organ Co. *Note: As of publication date, the November meeting has been cancelled and this technical will be given in February.

Post-Holiday Dinner plans were discussed, and it is planned for January 27, 2018, and will once again be held at the Old Bag Of Nails in Westerville.

Former Chapter member, John Spangler, recently passed away and Kim Hoessly suggested the Chapter make a donation to the PTG Foundation. The Chapter voted to donate \$100 to the fund.

New Business:

Kim Hoessly announced that the Exam Committee is getting closer to adopting a three note grand action model for the technical exam. As of now, the vertical portion is done on a three note model, while the grand portion is done on a single note model.

The March technical may cover bass bridge repair. This is still tentative. Kim Hoessly has a church client with a Baldwin-Hamilton vertical that has a separated bass bridge, so she thought it would be a good candidate for a hands-on technical on the subject.

Butts & Flanges

During the meeting there was a brief discussion about string splicing and Mark Ritchie offered a useful tip. Whenever he restrings bass sections, he will keep the trimmings of excess core wire because they are useful for having leader wire ready for use in splicing bass strings. The amount of excess from each string is usually more than long enough, and they are easily stored in a tube.

Mark also said that he has a lot of extra Roslau wire in unopened quarter pound packages in sizes ranging from 13 to 19 1/2. He said he could probably let them go at a reduced price if anyone was interested.

Kim Hoessly serviced an Apollo grand with a large crack in the soundboard that was buzzing against several loose ribs. Kim was thinking of ways to clamp the board without removing a bunch of strings. She also didn't want to just resort to using screws since they would be in the middle of a large, and rather beautiful, decal of Apollo. Several ideas were discussed including using traditional soundboard clamps (tuning pin set into pinblock material with piano wire running through) with a few modifications. One idea involved using quarter inch, or thinner, hardwood slats that could fit between the unisons that could be placed in the appropriate spots and mount the clamps on top of them. The bottom of each clamp may need feet, or a channel, to mate with the slats. Or, another slat of wood could be place on top of a series of vertical slats and broader pressure could be applied by fewer clamps. Mark said he also has a dowel-like contraption using a wingnut that may also serve the purpose but may require a little more slack, or space, between unisons.

Announcement

Though there is no meeting for November, there will be a Yamaha technical presentation at Solich Piano Cleveland on Monday, November 20. It will feature two of the instructors mentioned in this month's technical article on page 3. Details for the event are listed below on page 4. Chris Altenburg had expressed interest in attending and suggested carpooling. Contact Chris if you are also interested in going.

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Yamaha Performance Piano Service Seminar

Thanks to Solich Piano Columbus for hosting the October meeting and providing food and beverages. And thanks to Mitch Staples for sharing some of his thoughts on the Yamaha Performance Piano Service Seminar he attended this last Spring in Buena Park, California. The following is more of a recollection of the seminar in general, with some discussion of a few of the concepts taught.

Each day consisted of a group class in the morning, and individual work on separate pianos in the afternoon. There were five students enrolled and three instructors, each with their own style of teaching and communicating. They were Dave Durben, Greg Rohrbaugh, and Atsushi "Ace" Ugai. Ace's words were described as "final" and representing the Yamaha Factory Way. And there definitely is a factory way, wherein, all tasks, procedures, and methods are performed in the exact same way by everyone. This goes down to every detail, like how actions are removed, or punchings are handled. Mitch demonstrated action removal by crossing his left leg over his right, and saying that the action is then pulled and placed on top of the left leg. Punchings are removed and replaced by the fingers, not tweezers. This uniformity in all details is largely why their pianos are so consistent from one instrument to another.



Mitch recommends that anyone wanting to enroll in the seminar should familiarize themselves with Yamaha's "37 Steps For Regulation", as much of that knowledge will be needed in order to keep up. Yamaha pretty much teaches that their pianos are to be regulated to spec, as opposed to feel. So, if a let-off of 2mm is called for across the board, bass and treble, then that is exactly what they ask for. Everything has a number, and is set to that number. Though, Mitch did point out that Ace likes to set blow distance by feel, which is a curious exception. Perhaps after regulating thousands of Yamaha pianos, one could set blow distance this way, however, most technicians should just use a measuring device.

Tuning was also discussed a bit, most notably the concept of "cracking" the unison. It was discussed, but not exactly defined succinctly. Mitch shared a link: www.speech.kth.se/music/5_lectures/weinreic/weinreic.html covering the concepts of the coupled motion of piano strings, which is helpful to understanding the topic. Cracking unisons is a high-level tuning technique that requires that one can first tune unisons that are dead still before cracking them. The unison isn't detuned so much that there is a beat or wave, per se, but perhaps the volume and decay of the sound is reinforced or altered. This has to do with how the bridge and multiple vibrating strings interact with each other. It is possible that multiple strings that are very close to unison, yet at ever so slightly different tensions, can actually lock together systemically and produce a pitch and tonal envelope that sounds, as a whole, more uniform than the mere sum of their parts. Almost like how pendulum clocks sharing a common wall will eventually have their pendulums swinging in sync due to the subtle pulse of vibrators in the wall that eventually reinforces the motions of all. Phase cancellation may be a part of it, but it also has to do with impedance of vibrations in the bridge, as well as how the strings are vibrating in multiple axes of direction. There may be a decay in the string's motion in the vertical axis that is different than it is in the horizontal. That, and the mere presence of another string changes how the former, and therefore both, vibrate as a set. It is attempting to change the texture of a unison while not really introducing beats, which is like walking a razor's edge. In addition to skill, a piano that has enough clarity in tone is a must; so this may not be possible on many pianos. Also, it should never be used as an excuse for sloppy tuning. We all had a laugh at Mitch's quip about cracked tuning vs crackpot tuning!

Mitch also related how they were trying to put forth the idea of using visualization techniques while tuning. Dave Durben described his personal preference to visualize where the sound is coming from as the character of a unison changes. Mitch said he used to visualize wave forms changing in his mind as he tuned. It seems that, perhaps, the most important thing here is that when you are trying to "see in your mind what you're hearing", you are using more than just auditory centers of the brain to process the incoming information, and are thus using more brain power to recognize subtleties and make changes. He said that there were a couple students who may, or may not, have bought into some of those ideas, but perhaps there was merit to some of it, even if it was a bit esoteric in presentation.

Voicing wasn't really discussed here beyond their printed materials, which was a bit of a surprise to all of us, really. Mitch said he would have liked to receive more instruction in that topic.

Though there were a few concepts that bordered on the abstract, most methods presented were very straight forward and quantifiable to a high degree of detail. Overall, Mitch said it was a positive learning experience and that most technicians would benefit from it, as long as they had certain areas of knowledge under their belts, as described earlier.

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Piano Technicians!

You are invited for a historic evening of information and relaxation. Join us for a technical featuring Yamaha Technicians Ace Ugai & David Durben

Save the Date: **November 20th Starting with Dinner @ 5:30pm**

Where: **Solich Pianos, 27730 Chagrin Blvd, Woodmere, Ohio 44122**

Ace (Atsushi) Ugai

Ace graduated from the Yamaha Piano Technical Academy in Japan in 1990. He went directly to work for Yamaha Piano Service in Japan.

In 2005 he was promoted to the Concert Piano Factory and given charge of voicing and Artist Service in that facility.

In 2007 he was relocated to Yamaha Europe Belgium, and in 2010 moved to Yamaha Europe Germany.

He came to Yamaha Corporation of America in 2014 to supervise piano service in the US, and has been very active in providing service and support, especially for the CFX concert grand piano. Ace has also been heading up training for technicians in the US.

David Durben

David Durben has more than 40 years of experience in the field of acoustic and hybrid pianos. He holds a certificate from the Yamaha Technical Academy in Japan and joined the Piano Technician's Guild in 1979. He has served as a chapter officer and also on the National Board of Directors for seven years, stepping down from the office of President after two terms in 2001.

David joined Yamaha in 1999 as a full-time Yamaha technical specialist. His duties include service assistance for Yamaha and Boesendorfer pianos, head instructor for the Performance Piano Service Seminar, as well as a prep technician for Yamaha Premium and Boesendorfer pianos in the Concert and Artist suite at the Yamaha corporate headquarters in Buena Park.

~ **Post-Holiday Dinner** ~

Saturday, January 27, 2018

6:30pm

Old Bag Of Nails Pub

24 North State St # 26

Westerville, OH 43081

Phone: (614) 794-6900

www.ldbagnails.com



Map Link: goo.gl/maps/u7qHrp2U3h62



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www.ptgcolumbus.org

~ Happy Thanksgiving ~

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

- Officers -

President	Mitch Staples, RPT
Vice-President	Chris Altenburg, RPT
Treasurer	Ron Kenreich
Secretary	Chris Burget
Imm. Past Pres.	Kim Hoessly, RPT

Chapter Meeting

**Tuesday, February 20
7:00pm**

Graves Piano & Organ Co.
5798 Karl Road
Columbus, OH 43229
www.gravespianos.com

Topic: Vertical Piano
Troubleshooting

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

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Comments, articles, and advertising requests may be sent to the editor:

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