

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 44 Issue 5 November 2019



President's Message

Greetings members and friends,

I am thoroughly enjoying the cooler temperatures and the evacuation of those pesky warm weather flying insects. The colorful show of autumn leaves is delightful to see all around every neighborhood and highway. A wonderful beginning for the approaching holiday season.

A few things that are a ritual for me is getting the vehicle ready for colder weather and the arrival of winter precipitation. I check the tire air pressure as the colder temps will decrease the recommended air pressure. Some tips are....

1. **Tire Cool Down.** Proper tire inflation should be checked when the tires haven't been driven on for several hours and have had time to cool down.
2. **Vehicle Manufacturer's Recommended Tire Pressure.** Check manufacturer's recommended tire pressure on the door placard.
3. **Check Tire Pressure.** Check tire pressure with an accurate tire pressure gauge.
4. **Inflate to Recommended PSI.** Fill each tire with air to the recommended PSI. Sometimes rear tires require a different PSI than the front tires

For every 10 degrees of temperature drop, tires will drop 1-2 pounds of pressure. It is important to keep your tires within the recommended PSI to maintain traction, handling and durability. Most of us might already own a shop compressor which is useful for maintaining proper levels and it's a bit of a pain getting air from the gas station coin compressors.

Car Batteries discharge quicker in cold weather. I usually replace my battery every two years. I got in the habit of doing this when I lived in the desert due to the extreme heat that weakened the battery voltage.

Tires with deep treads are helpful in snowy situations to get better traction. A radiator flush and replacement with a mix of cold weather antifreeze and water is a must for me. Get some rugged winter windshield wiper blades and keep plenty of windshield washer solution in the tank, which is usually located in the engine compartment. Don't forget to use a small bottle of Dry Gas treatment and/or Injector Cleaner when filling up at the gas station.

I have a good quality window scraper to deal with the morning ice. It has a long handle for cleaning the area around the doors and windows. I also use a rubber treatment on the door gaskets or just lightly spray some (of the dreaded) WD-40 to keep the doors from freezing closed.

Our service vehicles are an important component in our livelihoods. Properly maintained they will push us down the road for thousands of miles in all types of weather.

PS... I hope you ALL will attend the presentation from the Yamaha Senior Piano Technician Kevin Suzuki on Tuesday, November the 12th. Solich is providing food and I will be bringing Beer and Wine for all those who wish to Imbibe. All Columbus Chapter technicians should come and take part in this presentation. Our venerable Vice President Christopher Purdy put it wisely, "If you are paying Chapter dues, come and get your money's worth!!!"

David Chadwick, RPT

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Chapter Meeting Minutes October 15, 2019

The meeting was held at Solich Piano.

Attendance:

David Chadwick, Chris Burget, Ron Kenreich, Kim Hoessly, David Stang, Walter Bagnall, and guest Cathleen Gillette.

Treasurer's Report:

\$1,565.32

Old Business:

Ads for both the Ohio Music Teachers Association (OMTA) and the American Guild Of Organists (AGO) were renewed over the Summer.

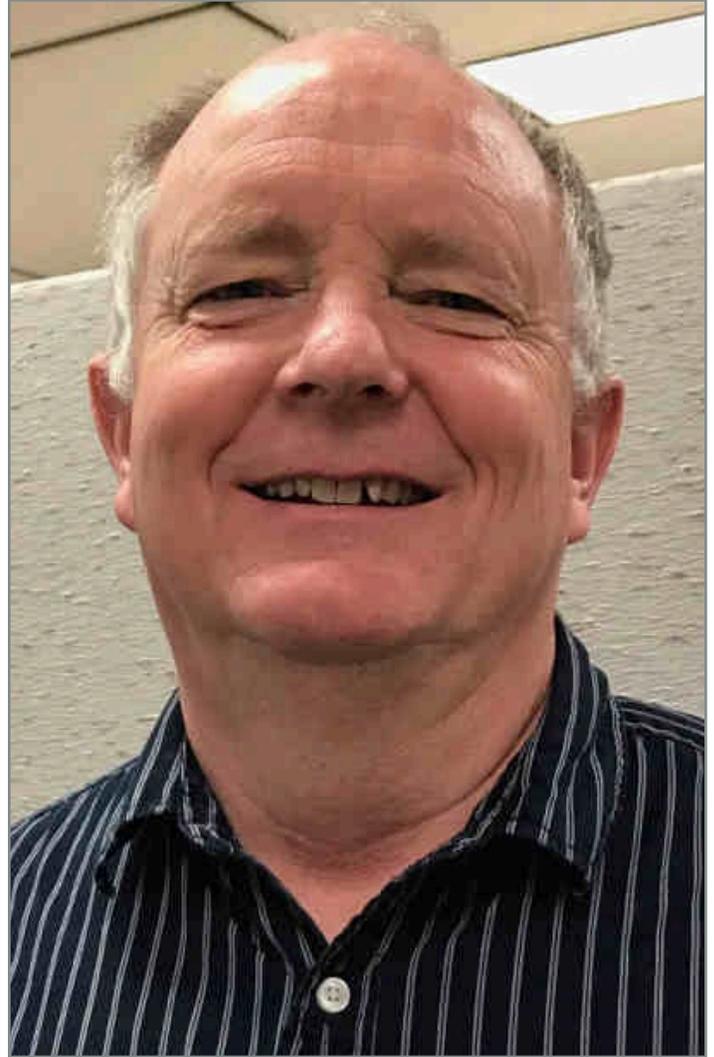
Chapter by-laws are still under consideration for revision.

New Business:

PTG membership renewal notices will be sent out in November, and are due by December 31.

Mitch Staples went to the national Convention in Tuscon, and may give a synopsis of his time there.

Congratulations To The Chapter's Newest RPT!



Walter Bagnall, RPT

Walter Bagnall's first contact with the PTG was at the age of 19 at the historic 1980 Convention in Philadelphia. He tuned pianos until the 90's when he left the piano industry for other types of work. He has returned to the career after two decades and is delighted to find a healthy demand for piano technicians. He and his wife Debbie reside near Chillicothe, Ohio and have two grown children.

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Voicing Tools & Techniques

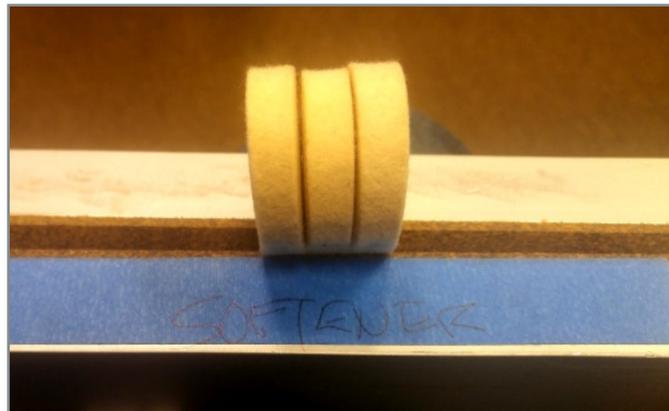
The October meeting was held at Solich Piano with David Chadwick giving the technical presentation on voicing tools and techniques. The technical was a kind of show-and-tell of David's assorted voicing tools, along with some description of how he uses them. When it comes to hammer voicing, there are several categories of techniques that come to mind, including: filing and shaping; needling; steaming and ironing; hammer-to-string mating; and chemical treatments. There are also other things beyond that list that can also change voicing like action adjustments, and soundboard and belly work, but those are beyond the scope described here. Also, this was not a step-by-step guide to the voicing process as a whole, but more of a primer on how some of these tools are used.

First, David passed around a clamp holding several hammers of various brands and hardnesses, with some having been treated with chemical hardeners and softeners and others in their raw states. This allowed us to actually feel and physically inspect the differences between them.

David's first tool for voicing single hammers, as opposed to a whole set, is a string lifter. He wants to make sure that all strings and hammers are mated together, and the hammers are striking evenly and squarely all the strings in a unison. Often that is enough in itself to improve the tone. For those unaware, you block a hammer against its strings and pluck. If one rings out more than the others in a grand, then that string is higher than the others. You would then lift the other strings near their strike points so as to match the height of the third, until all three strings "plunk" evenly when blocked and plucked. David said that he will sometimes push down the ringing string instead and lower it if lifting does not yield a change.

Next, he demonstrated using brass and steel bristled brushes to quickly resurface hammers; the steel is more aggressive than the brass. After that, he'll lightly sand them to polish them off a bit. This is a technique that is "quick and dirty" and is useful on pianos that rarely see service, where a change is desired without starting a whole science project, so to speak.

Another quick voicing method to bring down the tone of overly bright hammers is to steam them. Basically, you lay a damp rag on the hammers and rub a hammer iron on them, injecting steam in the process. Keep the iron moving to prevent scorching. You also don't want to drench them in



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steam either; just a quick massage of the hammer and a short hiss of steam. Some hammers will react more quickly and profoundly to this than others. So, be conservative and do quick passes, then remove the rag, and iron the hammer directly just to facilitate faster drying. Let sit for a few minutes until the hammers are cool and dry, then test the sound. Repeat if needed. The effects of this are somewhat temporary depending on the hammers, piano, and nature of use. You may get a year or two out of it, tops, and possibly much less. For a more lasting effect, needling should be done.



David then showed us a few of his voicing, or needling, tools. His go-to is a Yamaha tool, for its ease of use. It has a metal cover for the head that quickly and firmly comes on and off, as well as a hex tool stored inside the handle for replacing the needles. The needles are easy to adjust as there are set screws on just one side of the head, so there is less fumbling about trying to get them all straight and set to the desired length. He had several other similar voicing tools of various makes, including one from Steinway that was essentially a large triple-jawed pin vise. He can insert larger single needles into it, though some need to be clipped and shortened somewhat. He also had one with a pivoting head that mounts in a tool handle. David also described a "ring voicer" with needles on a ring that can be used on vertical actions in the piano; just feel around to the front of the hammer and squeeze to insert where needed. Kim Hoessly showed us a voicing tool made by John Schmoll that is a tiny block with three small needle tips sticking out that can be used to sugar coat strikepoints. Single needle chopstick tools can also be used at both ends of a string groove to balance out tone as well. This edge point of compression will lift and often fluff up the area in between to some degree. He also demonstrated how he will needle various sections of the hammer around the shoulders and crown, using varying numbers of needles at different lengths for shallow and deep needling. He tries not to needle in the base of the hammer much, but if he feels he has over-needled the upper portion, he may give one or two pokes in the base to transfer tension upward. Hammers have various areas of differing tensions and needling is basically a manipulation of those tensions. The technique just described is how one might voice "up" tone with needling. Usually needling is associated with voicing "down" but can be used for both when there is an understanding of the makeup of particular hammers.



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Various chemical softeners were discussed. He passed around a hammer softener from Pianotek that is usually applied to the crown. He also had dropper bottles of vodka, and 50/50 mix of vodka and water, that can be applied to the string grooves a drop or two at a time. As in life, moderation here would be wise! Maybe one or two passes, at most. The alcohol helps to break the surface tension of the water and carry it into the felt, which will swell slightly, then the vodka eventually evaporates. Some prefer this to steaming because it doesn't penetrate so deeply on some hammers.

He also had some droppers of hardeners consisting of solutions of plastic pellets dissolved in acetone. One nickname for this is "keytone" as the pellets are the same acrylic used in keytops. It is useful to have mixtures of various ratios like 4 or 5 to 1, and so on. With some experience you'll find some mixes that work best for you on various types of hammers. To apply, David just added a few drops on the strikepoints of the desired hammers and let them dry for about 10 or 15 minutes. After that, they can be "sugar coated" or shallow needled lightly to break up the solution which will crunch slightly in the process. Basically the acetone carries the melted plastic into the hammer. The acetone evaporates and the plastic hardens inside the felt. Lacquering was only briefly discussed as David related a story from a Steinway training class where they soaked hammers completely.

He also showed us various sanding strips and sticks. He had some strips from Piano Forte Supply that have a flexible yet firm mylar backing that can only bend in one axis at a time, which facilitates straighter and parallel sanding of hammers. He feels that he is less like to favor one side of the hammer over the other while using these strips. He also had a clear flat plastic filing stick with a very narrow strip of grit glued onto it that can be used for filing along a single string groove without disturbing the rest of the strikepoint. This can be used for fine tuning hammer-to-string mating; just remember to file the groove that is higher than the others to match the desired height. The clear plastic allows you to see where you're working. The file, also available from Piano Forte Supply, is featured in the book "The Voice Of The Piano" by André Oorebeek. David had a copy of it and passed it around and highly recommended it. It also has a companion DVD.

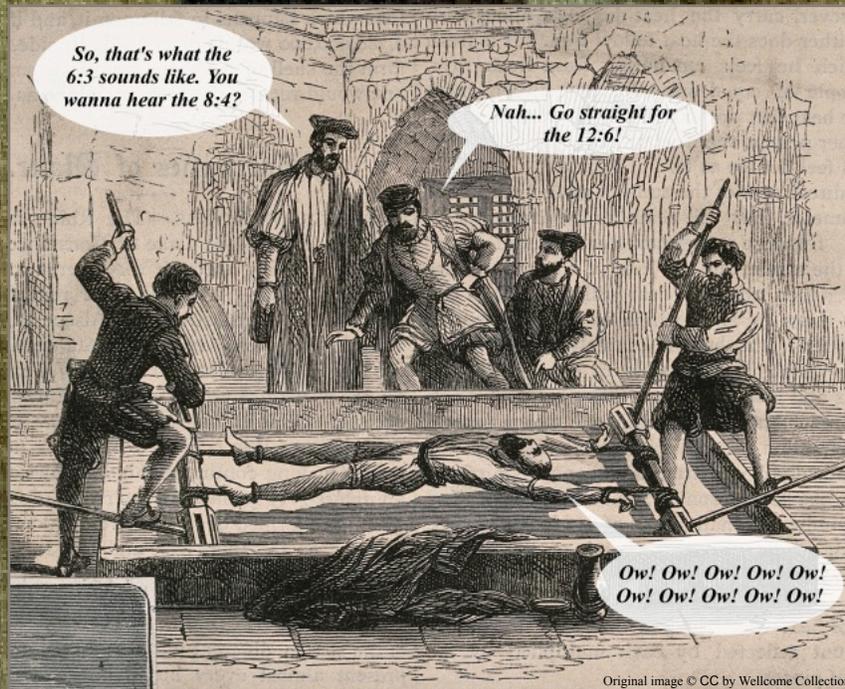




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www.ptgcolumbus.org



Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

- Officers -

President	David Chadwick, RPT
Vice-President	Chris Purdy, RPT
Treasurer	Ron Kenreich
Secretary	Chris Burget
Imm. Past Pres.	Mitch Staples, RPT

Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, November 12
7:00pm

Refreshments:
6:30pm

Solich Piano Columbus
6370 Proprietors Rd,
Worthington, OH 43085
(614) 8883441
www.solichmusic.com

Topic: Damper Regulation, by
Kevin Suzuki, Yamaha USA

Map Link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/oSyuD7HKTaU2>

Disclaimer:

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