

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild
Volume 34 Issue 7 October 2009



MEETING MINUTES Sept. 15, 2009 and PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The September meeting of the Columbus Chapter PTG was held in the Chapel of Worthington United Methodist Church in Worthington. Members present were Kim Hoessly, Ron Kenrieck, Chris Burgett, Mike O'Neal, Bob Grubb, Mark Ritchie, Doug Brandt, Mike Hill, Rick Miller and Victor Wolfe. Our guest and technical presenter for the evening was Doug Atkins from the Dayton Chapter.

President's Report:

Next year's convention theme is "The Practical Technician", so the Institute Committee is looking for suggestions and requests for classes for the Las Vegas conference. Kim said any and all recommendations can be submitted via email at class-ideas@ptg.org

Committee Reports:

Testing: Part of the result of Doug's presence in Columbus today is that we now have a piano in the area for the tuning exam. Doug, with the assistance of CTE trainees Ben Sloane from the Cincinnati Chapter and Blaine Vesely from the Cleveland Chapter and also a bit of help from Kim, did a master tuning on the church's 7' Boston Grand in the Chapel. Doug says it will be a very good instrument to give the exam on. Members interested in the Tuning Exam should contact Doug Atkins and Kim and a time will be arranged. Kim mentioned that we have had associate training in the past and if there is interest in doing that again in some form, please let her know and she would be happy to get the ball rolling.

Old Business:

We have most of the chapter technicals lined up for this year. We still need to line up ones for Feb. and May. If anyone is interested in presenting a technical, please contact Kim

New Business:

Mark Ritchie received an email from Damp-Chaser exploring the possibility of advertising in our chapter newsletter. Some Chapters do quite a bit of advertising. The consensus was that it was worth looking into, but the Newsletter Editor needed to part of that conversation since he would have to do the extra layout work in the newsletter. Further discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Jumping ahead a bit to next spring, Bob Grubb mentioned that he and Lou were fairly sure they were going to Las Vegas for the 2010 Convention and he would be interested in serving as delegate.

Announcements:

October meeting is on the 20th at 7:30pm @ Bryan Hartzler's Shop. He do a presentation on a rebuilding topic.

November meeting is on the 17 at 7:30pm @ Rick Miller's house/shop. He will speak on string replacement, string splicing and related topics.

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Technical Presentation

Following the meeting, Doug Atkins gave a very informative talk about the Tuning Exam. He covered how the Master Tuning was done and then went over the different parts of the test. Many questions were asked and many answers were given. The test isn't quite as intimidating when it is broken down. Associates with further questions were encouraged to contact Doug and / or check out information on the PTG website. On a side note, the chapter does have copies of both the Tuning Exam and the Technical Exam Source Books for those interested in preparing for either test.

From the Roanoke Chapter:

A fellow technician south of us has contacted me regarding the need for piano service in the Southern part of OH and parts of KY and WV. We can talk about it more at the next meeting, but I thought I'd share her email with you all in case there was any interest or if anyone knows of anyone interested in heading down that way. - Kim

It's been a long time since we spoke on the phone about the service needs of pianos around Huntington WV, Ashland KY, and Ironton OH.

Although I have two people actively started in pursuing a tuning career in that area, there are still some more immediate piano needs not being addressed. Four WV tuners who would serve that area have recently stopped tuning, and the most reputable local rebuilder has sold his shop due to health issues.

There is one RPT working in the region but, for whatever reason, there is a demand for service from other sources.

I'm wondering if your chapter has technicians who would make trips to the Ironton area occasionally, if we could get a group of appointments together. I live two hundred miles from the area but, at the request of Dan Ferguson Music on the OH/WV/KY border, tune in the area about a week a month, and that customer base continues to grow. I'm not equipped or skilled to do case work or major repairs, and choose to not do much service at all with my shop being so far away. Also, my Roanoke PTG Chapter has some wonderfully skilled rebuilders and concert level regulators. I generally refer my high-end work to them, making both the customer and technician happy, while not increasing my personal skills. The Roanoke guys are even farther from Ironton than I, and will not travel that far.

I would welcome learning what OH technicians might venture into this underserved market around Ashland. Thank you for any help and hope! For starters, we have two underperforming Steinways... one D has a two digit C&A serial number. Plan B is to take the pianos 350 miles to Roanoke's good rebuilders... would love to have a Plan A through service that's a little more local.

All the best,

Carolyn Macneal 540-626-7202

Thank you, Kim, for filling in as Secretary at the meeting ! - Dave

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A Few Personal Observations on the RPT Tuning Exam

by David Stang

Since Doug spoke about the RPT exam at the last meeting, I thought I would share a little about my experience in taking them.

First, don't panic! I am living proof that you will survive the exams, and if you do not pass, they can be taken again. When I did not pass my first attempt at the tuning exam, I made the mistake of getting emotional and angry at myself. Luckily my examiners helped me get over myself, and once I calmed down we worked together pointing out how I could do better the next time. Please understand that the exam is a learning experience for the examinee and examiners alike, and any help and advice given should not be taken as condescension or criticism, but as positive encouragement.

I was extremely disappointed with myself that I didn't pass the unison tuning part of the exam the first time I took it. I had been tuning unisons aurally for a couple of years, and I thought I was doing ok. In fact I was convinced that no human being could possibly tune unisons well enough to pass, so there must be a secret handshake or code or something that was the "real" way people passed the exam. In reality, it just took more practice listening closely to two strings at time. A slow beat reveals itself as a change in harmonic quality during the first couple of seconds of sound. Unisons need to be wonderfully beatless and "plain". I like to play a game where the left and center "compete" with the center and right strings for which pair is more in unison.

Temperament tuning and midrange were also a great challenge to me. There are many articles in the PTG journal where the respective author discusses his/her approach to tuning a temperament, and each one is different. I read these articles and talked with other tuners about their approach, then distilled it down into something that makes sense to me. Now I'm trying to get lots experience doing my own personal temperament procedure.

To me, the "intellectual" part (i.e. what the beating of each interval is supposed to sound like) is easy. The way toward passing the exam is having the experience to be able to "automatically" adjust each interval. In other words you can't spend too much time listening for the beat, then trying to remember if you need to expand or contract the interval, adjust which note which way, etc.

It has taken me a long time to be able to hear beats clearly. I think it has to do with "training" the brain to discern the harmonic content of a sound in order to make judgments about it. It may seem rather pointless at first to learn how to tune a temperament aurally when today's ETD's can do such a good job. But I have come to the conclusion that tuning aurally is a rich skill not only because you can tune a piano, but also because it enhances your overall ability to hear the subtleties of sound and therefore helps you become a good voicer and a better technician.

ON THE INTERNET

Have a look at the PTG Blog www.ptg.org/blog, there are a few good links there this month, including:

A gallery of pictures from the Grand Rapids Convention
www.ptg.org/conv/2009/webgallery

An article about the late Owen Jorgensen
statenews.com/index.php/article/2009/09/msu_professor_dies_from_heart_failure



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www.ptgcolumbus.org

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

President Kim Hoessly, RPT
Vice-President Chris Altenburg, RPT
Treasurer Ron Kenreich
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 Events

Chapter Meetings

October 20, 2009, 7:30pm
Bryan Hartzler's House/Shop
1179 S. Galena Rd.
Technical Topic: Bryan's rebuild projects

Check ptgcolumbus.org for maps and directions

November 17, 2009, 7:30pm
Rick Miller's House/Shop
799 Colony Ct.
Technical Topic: String Replacement

"I am a general. My soldiers are the keys and I have to command them."

"My future is in my past and my past is my present. I must now make the present my future."

- Vladimir Horowitz

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

Disclaimer:

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Articles and illustrations may be re-printed by other PTG newsletters with proper acknowledgment, unless otherwise indicated in the article.

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

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