

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 42 Issue 5 October 2017



The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Chapter Meeting Minutes September 26, 2017

The meeting was held at Columbus Piano Leasing.

Attendance:

Mitch Staples, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, David Stang, David Chadwick, Kim Hoessly, guests Carl Taylor, Zayne Harshaw, Gwen Harshaw, and host Mahlon Ray.

Treasurer's Report:

\$1850.29

Old Business:

Annual ads for AGO and OMTA were approved.

Future technicals were discussed:

October - Mitch Staples, Yamaha Concert Prep, at Solich Piano.

November - TBA. Possibilities include: Another attempt for Tröndlin Fortepiano at Orange House; or bass bridge repair on a local church piano; or spinet action servicing.

New Business:

Post-Holiday Dinner plans were discussed, and it is tentatively 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 (obit below) and Kim Hoessly suggested the Chapter make a donation to the PTG Foundation. The Chapter voted to donate \$100 to the fund.

What Goes Down... Must Come Up?



<https://youtu.be/VBbRTRBY4D4>

Submitted by Doug Brandt

Butts & Flanges

Last month, Kim Hoessly shared a tip to secure the wooden stickers before removal of Baldwin Acrosnic drop-actions with the wooded sticker guide rail. This month, David Stang shared why that is such a useful tip. David had to remove such an action and, while he had it out of the piano, the guide rail came loose and all of the stickers fell out. While trying to reinstall the rail, he saw where one sticker was detached from the action. At first he thought it might have been broken, but realized that they snap into place via a slot at the bottom of the sticker. He was able to detach all the remaining stickers, pin them through the rail at the top, then reattach each sticker at the bottom to each whippen assembly. Though time consuming, this can work. Other people added their own Acrosnic guide rail war stories. It was also suggested to lay the stickers flat on the floor or workbench and gently ease the rail back on that way, as another method. Sometimes it is necessary to replace a bass damper felt that came off during removal of the action. A brief discussion followed about how common this is, and some people even remove the damper blocks immediately next to the nosebolts. If anything, just try to be mindful of the dampers when removing these actions. It can be tricky because you're usually trying to watch several things at once while doing it. If a damper felt does come off, and it isn't too damaged, Mitch Staples suggests that it can be glued back into place after the action has been reinstalled and secured into place. Simply put glue on the backing and slip it onto the damper block and let the strings guide it to the proper place. The pressure from the damper lever will keep it place as the glue sets.

Mitch shared an experience where such a rail had come off and some of the bushing felts had folded up in the holes. He fashioned a tool resembling the "umbrella tool" many techs use for stringing work. He cut a triangular piece out of a sodapop can, twisted it, then glued it to a piece of wood and used that to work the felt into place. Thus, the "Mitch Staples Acrosnic Guide Rail Burnishing Tool" was born... on sale for \$85.00 + tax... just kidding!

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

John Spangler

April 1, 1931 - August 30, 2017

For those of you who may not get the Dispatch: Even though John had not been a PTG member for several years, he was a Chapter member for many years and taught piano tuning at the Ohio State School for the Blind. - Kim Hoessly

Spangler, John

John Roger Spangler, age 86, of Columbus, Ohio died peacefully on the morning of August 30, 2017. John was born on April 1, 1931 in Columbus to the late John Harley and Ruth (Battels) Spangler. He graduated from Columbus North High School - Class of 1949, and the Ohio State University School of Music - Class of 1953. John was a member of the Ohio State University Marching Band, playing the baritone horn, and marched in the infamous 1950 "Snow Bowl." He was a U.S. Army veteran of the post-Korean War era, serving in the 25th Division Army Band in Hawaii. John was the long-time band director at the Ohio State School for the Blind in Columbus. His long career, in which he influenced the lives of generations of students, evokes fond memories of him playing his bass trombone and leading the band in concert performances at the school's annual Christmas and Spring Celebrations. John is preceded in death by his parents and sister Ellen, and is survived by his wife of 33 years, Genevieve; children, David Spangler, Ron (Patty) Spangler, and Diane Eplin; grandchildren, Nathan (Ellie) and Jonathan Spangler, Kelly and Lindsey Spangler, and Ryan Moore and Alana Gerlach; two great-grandchildren; and nephews, Tim and John Lloyd. The family will receive friends 4-7 p.m. on Monday, September 4 and Tuesday, September 5 from 10-11 a.m. at the SCHOEDINGER NORTHWEST CHAPEL, 1740 Zollinger Rd., Columbus, where a funeral service will be held on Tuesday, September 5 at 11 a.m. with Greg Tidwell officiating, followed by interment at Union Cemetery, Columbus. Donations in memory of John may be made to the Ohio State School for the Blind Music Fund, 5220 N. High St, Columbus, OH 43214. The family is grateful to Danbury Senior Living and Capital City Hospice for the excellent care they provided to John. Condolences may be shared with the family at www.Schoedinger.com

Published in The Columbus Dispatch from Sept. 2 to Sept. 4, 2017

The Chapter has also made a donation of \$100 in John's name to the Piano Technicians Guild Foundation.

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Unison Tuning

Thanks to Columbus Piano Leasing for once again hosting the September meeting and providing food and beverages. And thanks to Kim Hoessly for giving the technical presentation on unison tuning in lieu of Joe Swenson, of Samick, not being able to come to Columbus to give his presentation.

"You could tune the best temperament in the world, but no one is going to know that if the unisons are bad!" Kim declared. Often a tuning will be considered acceptable to a lot of people if the unisons are clean, even though the temperament is slightly off. Kim went on to say that much tuning is just like, or somewhat related to, unison tuning. When tuning an interval like an octave, you are listening to coincident partials and you are either tuning them pure or controlling their beat rates. If nothing else, being able to tune clean unisons will inform, and make easier, the process of tuning intervals.

She then went on to describe a typical scenario where clients say they do not play and cannot tell the piano is out of tune, but their kids do play and tell them it needs tuning. Kim will then use her phone to record some playing of chords, melodies, arpeggios, etc, before the tuning then compare the recording to the tuned piano at the end. "Oh yeah, I can hear that now!" So there's another use for your cell phone.

Kim then showed us her preferred mutes. She uses a temperament strip fashioned from action rail felt. She feels that it mutes better and lasts longer than what most suppliers offer as temperament strips. The top twelve inches, or so, of the strip has a slit cut down the middle effectively creating two narrower strips that facilitate easier placement in the upper sections of verticals. She also uses felt wedge mutes in the upper two sections in grands. Some of the mutes have magnets embedded in them so they can be mounted on struts, or next to C8. "The trick is to not forget and leave them in the piano!" she quipped. She also reminded of the importance of lifting all the dampers when inserting and removing the strip so as to not damage the damper felts.

Typically, Kim tunes the middle two thirds of the piano then will go through the whole scale after that. "The piano needs to 'be in tune' before you can tune it!" In other words, it is better that the final pass requires less movement of the pins for stability's sake. She advises doing the first pass quickly since it those sections will be revisited. Accuracy will improve with experience, and eventually, the second pass may only require slight adjustments, provided the piano(s) are good enough. After tuning the middle up to the treble strut, or up into the fifth octave depending on where struts are located, she'll start bringing in the unisons going downward back through the temperament. She'll pull out part of the strip while leaving an octave below, and lower, stripped so she can use the octaves as needed during her unison tuning. She then uses a wedge mute and goes downward, all the while listening to them as individual notes and as part of the octaves. The coincident partials of the octave can expose unisons that are slightly off. Other intervals can be used this way as well. Kim then does the bass next, then goes and tunes the top two sections after that.

Bass strings, especially on shorter pianos, have a lot of "junk" in their sound, as she described it, and can be tricky to tune good unisons on. If the strings are tubby, or slightly mismatched, or have some other issues, then it



The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild



could be hard to navigate through all the noise. One technique she uses is to compare each individual string to the minor 3rd above, and match the beat rates of each string. This will often place the string in its cleanest position, or get you very close. Other people chimed in with similar methods, including using the 12th above, or even the minor 3rd above, with both strings open. Ghosting and listening to coincident partials can help too.

Next, Kim moves into the higher treble, usually starting with the first note right after the first treble strut. She uses a wedge mute and tunes the left string to her octave below, then the middle string to the left, and finally the right to the other two. She'll use this order on up through the scale unless she comes to a particularly wild string, in which case, she may switch her order up as needed. This led to a brief discussion about false beats and wild strings and how to deal with them. Usually, Kim just tries to ignore them, if possible. It seems that the notion of tapping the strings down to the bridges should only be done judiciously is becoming more and more of a prevailing opinion, and Kim tries to avoid doing this. Several people shared other methods for addressing the issue, including: massaging the string(s) with hammer shanks; or brushing across the strings with a wedge mute in the direction that the bridge pins are leaning, so as to help them settle a bit; or muting the rear duplex section with felt or painter's tape. Sometimes, as in the bass, strings can be tuned individually to a reference note and that will often get them very close. Also, she continually checks the unisons with octaves and also listens for the unison quality on lower notes since they may periodically shift a bit. Hammer mating and string timing was also briefly mentioned.

As far as hammer technique goes, she generally tries to keep the lever parallel to the strings on grands, though sometimes she may have the hammer somewhere between one and three o'clock depending on how the tuning pins and strings are feeling and rendering. She spoke briefly about the traditional method of bringing the pitch slightly over then relaxing the pin back down into place and into pitch. This is still, very often, appropriate on many pianos. However, there are more and more techs saying that they often like to have a very slight upward pull as their last motion, because this leaves the upper string segment above termination with an ever slightly higher tension than the speaking length, and that can actually make the string, as a whole, more stable. Other members also stated that they do similar things, and that on some pianos with very tight pins that tend to flagpole, maybe even going slightly down past pure then letting the pin spring back up will often achieve the same results. It was also stated that all of these may work better on some pianos than others. Also, Kim said that using frequent keystrokes while tuning is often better for stability than using fewer sustaining ones while manipulating the pins.

As a matter of course, Kim likes to make at least two passes through the instrument, as it will be more stable. "If you tune the piano, and by the next day it sounds bad, then what's the point?" This is barring climate issues and very poor quality instruments, of course. Kim finalized by saying that, "If you work hard to master unisons, then the rest of your tuning will be much easier, as it is much easier to control beats than it is to eliminate them completely!"



The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

www.ptgcolumbus.org

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, October 17
7:00pm**

Solich Piano Columbus
6370 Proprietors Rd
Worthington, OH 43085
(614) 888-3441
solichpianocolumbus.com

Topic: Yamaha Concert
Grand Prep, Mitch Staples

Map Link:
goo.gl/maps/GmHTGm1Gnc12

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

Disclaimer:

All expressions of opinion and all statements of supposed facts are published on the authority of the author as listed and are not to be regarded as expressing the views of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild unless such statements or opinions have been adopted by the chapter or the guild.

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:

Chris Burget, 1706 Pin Oak Dr., Columbus, OH 43229 cjburget@gmail.com