

News & Notes



Newsletter of the Boston Chapter
of the Piano Technicians Guild

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March 17, 2009

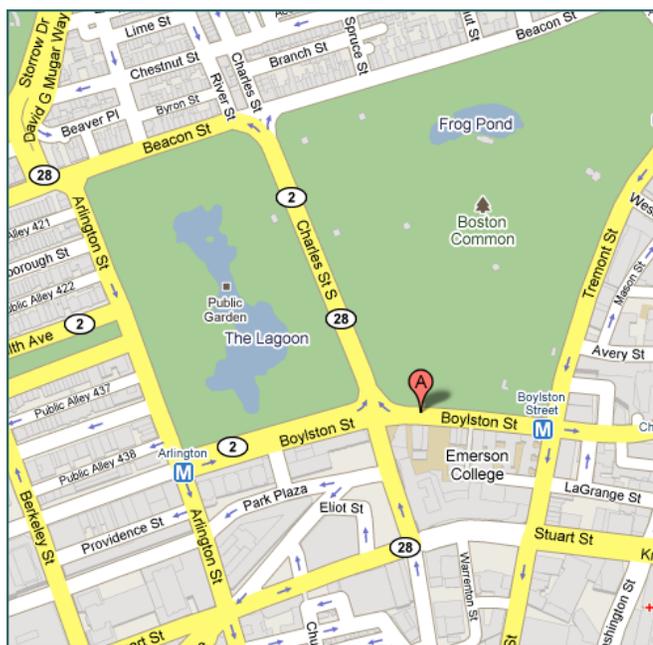
M. Steinerts & Sons
Steinert Hall
162 Boylston Street
Boston, MA, 02116

Meeting 7:30pm, but please do arrive early.

Technical presentation:
David Kirkland, RPT technical support and warranty administrator for Steinway & Sons. The talk will discuss Steinway history, patents, and decal progression (see last page for Larry Buck's write-up).

Refreshments are the kind hospitality of Steinert's and host Liz Diamond.

MARCH MEETING



PLANNING FOR OUR CHAPTER'S FUTURE

We are a month behind in preparing for a slate of officers for the next electoral year. We need 1) a Nominating Committee. Volunteers, anyone -- for the committee, or to serve/continue to serve? Elections should be held at the May meeting, with the officers to preside over the June meeting:

"C. Election procedures.

A nominating committee shall be elected at the January or first meeting of the calendar year.

The nominating committee shall present a slate of

officers at the February meeting.

The Nominating committee report shall be published with notification of the slate of officers at the March meeting.

Report of the nominating committee shall be voted on at the May meeting. Additional nominations may be made on the floor. Elected officers will assume duties at the close of the June meeting."

Chapter Bylaws (see pdf attachment)

Patrick Draine, President

CHRIS ROBINSON'S VOICING CLASS

For those who have been around awhile and had the opportunity to attend Chris Robinson's classes at the conventions and even at our own chapter meetings, well I probably don't need to say what an experience this was. For the uninitiated: Chris has for decades been one of the preeminent rebuilders and teachers and one of the most forward thinkers in our trade. This was an opportunity I had no intention of missing.

The workshop was Friday, Saturday, and half of Sunday. There were 9 students, from hither and yon, and all were at a good level to indulge in this. There were three pianos: a new Steinway O, a Yamaha G1, and the Pearl River made 6' Ritmuller that seems to have a permanent home at PTG headquarters in Kansas City where this class was held. The days were divided between classroom discussion and hands on work, as we would divide into two groups and practice our techniques, mostly on the Steinway and Yamaha, switching back and forth.

Naturally, one must know the enemy before planning the battle, so diagnostics was an early concern. Speaking of attack, we found a number of issues. Too dull, too harsh, bad sustain, duplex noise, lack of power - we found it all. Before leaping for the artillery, however, we first got the structural matters squared away. String seating (in some places I hadn't really thought about before); string leveling; hammer shaping, spacing and fitting to the strings all must be done first.

Now, on to the cure. Our first weapon of choice was a #3 glover's needle (John James brand only, thank you) fit in a weighted handle—a virtual Howitzer among needles. Note to self: remember to pack band-aids, tourniquets, and perhaps morphine. Our light infantry was comprised of #6 sharps - three astride and used at varying depths on shoulders and top. Learning what part of the hammer is responsible for the various tone components was always at the forefront. The front basically is the sustain side and the back is the power side. Surprisingly, the lackluster Steinway came so much more alive just from the prep work and didn't need much lacquer - but we did do some. For the truly screaming bright pianos we used a couple of softening techniques. For the worst case, we used a solution of Woolite and very hot water soaked in in just the right way and for less dra-



Gary watching Chris at work. (PTG Home Office)

matic needs, we used a dampened cloth with an iron.

In the end, we departed with a good understanding of hammer functioning and a strategy for approaching a variety of tone issues. As anybody who has been to conventions or reads the journal knows, there are countless systems for voicing, some diametrically opposed in concept. Yet they are all supposed to work. Isn't that amazing?! So here we have another approach and we all, with our own hands, saw the results we were after. As Chris, himself, said: we now know how to get from here to there and this is a system that works. There are other ways that may work well, too, but at least we now can get the job done.

Since I returned, virtually every piano I come to I pay attention to tonal issues in a new light, and often I take some extra time to seat strings and do what I can. It takes me about half an hour to seat strings and level them. A hands on workshop like this is probably the best way for some of us to move up a notch.

Gary Ford, RPT



UNCORKING THE SUBTLITIES OF STEINWAY TOUCH

Last month's Boston Chapter PTG meeting afforded us the pleasure of Boston Conservatory and Boston Symphony piano technician **John von Rohr**. It is with gratitude to him, as well as our host – **Steinert's Pianos of Natick** – that we can reflect on the importance of the nuances in grand regulation.

In an ideal world, all pianos can be regulated precisely according to the geometry for which they were designed. However, glancing around the nation, it is blatantly obvious that we live not in an ideal world, but rather in the real world. (Sorry to burst your bubble....) It is because of this that we must be fully equipped to regulate according to the "imperfections" or rather the human nuances of a piano. Each piano has its own unique personality and must be regulated as such. It is no secret that the key leverage of adjacent keys can vary quite remarkably. It is this factor that we must keep in mind during the regulation process – the key leverage is really the foundation of how the entire mechanism reacts to the pressure of a fingertip. Other factors affecting touch are as simple as proper cleaning, screw tightening, and lubrication. Moving parts can be lubricated with Teflon powder, Protek cream, and Protek liquid lubricant as the situation dictates. And cleanliness is vital to unobstructed movement.

Perhaps the most interesting factor which John touched upon was the possible compensation that can be made to improve overall feel of the instrument. Since key ratio and key leverage are rarely consistent from bass to treble, let alone consistent with the ideal, the overall touch can be uneven and unforgiving if regulated purely to numeric standards. Numeric standards are good – but what about

real life? What about the keys' response to the player's variety of touch? It is far better to compromise key travel slightly to obtain the proper feeling of aftertouch, whether key leverage be too high or too low. And what is more important, he asked us – a perfectly straight hammer line



or a consistently responding hammer line? All of these things ought to be taken into consideration when regulating the piano: we should regulate to the ideal touch, rather than the ideal numeric theory. Pianos are neither theoretically nor numerically perfect – they are quite human and function best when treated as such.

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RPT CERTIFICATION EXAMS

Along with the increase in exam fees to \$180, (written exams are still free), the process for paying for the exams has also changed. For the present time, if you are interested in taking either the tuning exam or the technical exam, you must call the PTG home office (913) 432-9975, tell them you'd like to pay for your exam, give them your credit card number, and they will mail you a voucher, which you will need to present to the examiners at your exam. No voucher, no exam.

Or you can mail in a check to the home office with your info, and they will then mail you your voucher. No voucher, no exam.

They are presently working on making the payment process available online. When this happens, you will need to sign into the member area with your member number and password, and it will be available under Certification exams.

If you are considering taking your RPT exams, don't forget to check out all the preparation materials available on the PTG.org website, in the member area under certification exams in the section called "Preparation for Exams".

Debbie Cyr, RPT

THE PREZ SAYS

Hey folks, what's new?

New members (and some new RPTs), that's what! For instance, our friends (and fellow members) at the North Bennett Street School Piano Technology Department have shown many of their students the way to our chapter, so say hello to some of our newer members. Among them are (in random non-order):

Erik Diehl, Leah-Damgaard-Hansen, Paul Piszcek, Matthew Pearson, Christopher Storch RPT, Elizabeth Harris, John Bernardini RPT, Shaun O'Connell, John Langston, Reed Cournoyer, Russell Reach, Rodney Yeh, Steven Nazlikian, and others! My apologies for my delay in acknowledging your joining our ranks.

"How's your phone," an old friend asked me during the refreshment period following Jon von Rohr's talk at Steinerts – Natick last month?. For a moment I wasn't sure

what he meant. Was he asking me what I thought of my iPhone? "The customers – are they calling ... ?" We compared notes, and we had to admit that the "economic doom & gloom" was affecting the eagerness of even our own fine clients to spend their money on our services.

Fortunately, our Guild provides us with many opportunities to expand our abilities in business management, improve our customer relations skills, and (of course) learn new technical skills and methods of tuning, repair, regulation, and rebuilding. This stuff occurs at our local chapter meetings, in the *Piano Technicians Journal*, PTG email lists, and especially through the classes offered at our regional conferences and annual convention and institute. If necessary, change and adapt!

See you at the next meeting (St. Patrick's Day)!

Patrick Draine, RPT

UPCOMING EVENTS

April Meeting: April 21, 2009

Technical Presentation: Christine Lovgren
Topic: Preparing for the RPT Tuning Exam
Location: NBSS
39 North Bennet Street
Boston, MA

Location: Concord Piano
362 King Street
Littleton, MA

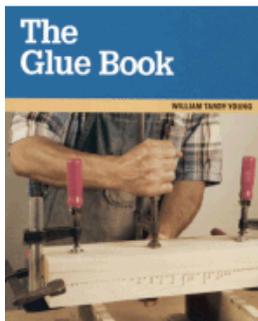
May Meeting: May 19, 2009

Technical Presentation: Chris Brown
Topic: Plug & Play Action Prep

June Meeting: June 16, 2009

Technical Presentation: Mike Morvan
Topic: Using the new Keybutton/Mortise Repair Kit
Location: Aardvark Piano Restorations
65 Sprague Street
Hyde Park, MA

INVITATION TO MEET WILLIAM TANDY YOUNG



Please join the Rhode Island Chapter and members of the Connecticut Chapter for a technical presentation by **William Tandy Young** on *Glue Properties for the Piano Technician*.

This event is sponsored by the Rhode Island Chapter and will be held at Mike Morvan's shop in Uxbridge, MA on Thursday, April 16th at 7:30pm.

Here is someone who can answer the ques-

tions you don't know you should be asking. The success of our work often depends on the success of the glue we choose. For some operations reversibility is important, for others permanence is essential. What are the appropriate glues for plastics, modern composite materials, disparate materials, the quick repair?

Consult the expert, William Tandy Young!

CB

NBSS CORNER

Jan McCloud is a first year Piano Tech student at NBSS (class of 2010). Prior to returning to school in 2008, she worked as a Project Manager in educational book publishing on textbooks for K-12.

Jan has had a lifelong affinity for music and plays several instruments, including the piano. She

lives in Waltham with her two cats, Ed and Odie, and hopes to finally finish the demo of a few of her original songs by the time she graduates from the PT program. Other interests include kayaking, mountain biking, and Yoga.

Debbie Cyr, RPT



THE POEM PLACE?



FROM THE SEASON OF LOSS

Grays of ashes. The brown dust sifts.
To a height of once-great trees, debris.
And out of the detritus,
stark shards of steel violate our being.

Once, enormous trees
reached across this island.
Before concrete ovens baked the air,
their canopy breathed a cooler breath.

Breezes spoke forest, ocean,
and meadow grasses to the city.
The world could be made and mended
with local wood.

But here, where hopes are ash
and dreams a most
profound and silent dust,
the air is acrid, nothing is bright.

The clear day's sky is grayed with grief
and we do not understand.
Too much is lost.
Too much is grief.

Please. Let new seeds
stir this strange and awful rubble,
and let the great trees rise again
in who we are.

Christopher Brown

NOTES FROM THE FEBRUARY LEADER LETTER

FAQ for Prospective Members •

Online application is the method of choice for most new PTG members and we are continually updating and adding to information to the "How to Join" area of our website. The latest addition is a list of answers to frequently asked questions. You can find it at www.ptg.org/aboutUs-FAQ.php.

Recent Editions of the *Piano Technicians Journal* •

The *Journal* is now available as downloadable PDF and mp3 files. Log in to the Member Area, and then click on Resources>Digital Resources. In addition, some *Journal* articles now reference audio and video files. These can be found in the public area of the PTG web site under Journal> Piano Technicians Journal Media files.

Don't Know Your Member Password? •

Each PTG member has an assigned password that is used to verify membership for PTG Store discounts and to log in to the Member Area. If you try to use your member number without a password to log in to the Member Area, an error screen comes up that directs you to enter your email address so that your password can be mailed to you. Call the Home Office at (913) 432-9975 or check your yearly dues invoice to find yours.



CLASSIFIED ADVERTIZING

For Sale: *Rosewood Steinway A2*, complete rebuild by The Piano Rebuilders (thepianorebuilders.com), \$42K. 5% commission.
Contact: Chris Brown at 978-486-0610 or concordpno@verizon.com.

1918 Hazelton Brothers grand piano, 5'4" mahogany, serial number 68682. Soundboard and ribs repaired, soundboard refinished, cast iron plate rebronzed, fallboard decal replaced, new pinblock, new tuning pins, new strings, new damper felt, damper and lyre system renovated, new Tokiwa hammer shanks, new Ronsen hammers, repetitions renovated, complete action and damper regulation, tuning and voicing, action touchweight improved, case refinished and hardware polished. \$7200.00



Contact: North Bennet St. School at 617-227-2357.

Please get submissions in two weeks before each meeting if you can. And please notify me when you no longer need the listing.

Thanks,

CB

News & Notes

Email:
news.notes@verizon.net

Boston Chapter PTG Officers

Patrick Draine, President
Gary Ford, Vice President
Joe Morocco, Treasurer
Elizabeth Snow, Secretary

Chapter Committees

Chris Brown, Newsletter
Larry Buck, Programming
Jude Reveley, Librarian
David Nadworny, Tech Exam
Chris Lovgren, Tuning Exam

All expressions of opinion and all statements of supposed fact are published on the authority of the author as listed, and are not to be regarded as expressing the view of this chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild Inc. unless such statements or opinions have been adopted by the chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild Inc.



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Another interesting aspect of regulation **John Von Rohr** brought up was the relationship between backchecking and repetition. Repetition springs cannot be properly regulated unless the backchecks have been regulated. A lower check yields more pressure on the spring, and causes a jerkier return; a higher check produces less pressure on the spring, and thus a gentler return. A higher check (5/8" or less) allows

the piano to repeat more quickly, and a firm but smooth hammer return allows for the best range of comfort and speed. The key ought not to kick back at the pianist, but the hammer needs to rise quickly and high enough to be effective. A proper backcheck – repetition spring relationship is of the utmost importance in utilizing the piano's full repetition potential.

Elizabeth Snow, Secretary

MARCH TECHNICAL PRESENTATION



The Steinway System / Gallery of Steinway Decals by David Kirkland, RPT

This presentation is essentially a Steinway patents and history class

with verbal elaborations on details in the patent drawings in terms of their import and bearing on worldwide piano-making past and present. Also presented will be a slide show of Steinway decals with explanations as to when and why the decals were changed over the years. David has been working closely with Steinway archivist Roy Kehl for several years, now, in order to help proofread Roy's lifelong research and transcribe it to computer format.

David grew up in Utah and Wyoming, maintains avid interests in piano, painting, and poetry, and is fluent in Castilian Spanish and

French. His career in the piano business began in 1981 as an apprentice with Kasimoff-Blüthner in Los Angeles. Since 2001, he has worked at Steinway & Sons in the capacities of technical support and warranty administration.

Anyone who is interested in thoroughly understanding the components and features of piano construction will enjoy this presentation, as well as anyone who would like to know the history and provenance of their Steinway decals.

Larry Buck, Program Director

