

# News & Notes



Newsletter of the Boston Chapter  
of the Piano Technicians Guild

## MAY MEETING

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May 19, 2009

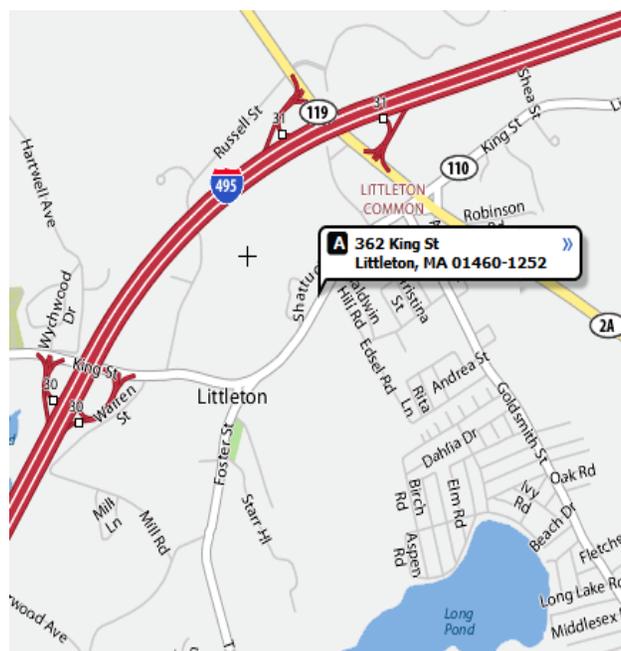
**Concord Piano LLC**  
362 King Street,  
Littleton, MA, 01460

**Gather:** from 6:00pm, food by  
Evan Ewing.

**Business Meeting:** 6:45pm,  
the election of officers.

**Technical presentation:**  
**Christopher Brown, RPT**  
Salients of action installation/  
regulation as implemented  
using the Regulation Station,  
Virtual Keybed, and Hammer  
Square (see pix on page 7).

**Directions:** Exit 30 or 31 off I-  
495, turn right at end of ramp,  
approximately 1/2 mile on  
119/2A (King Street) by the  
Do Not Pass sign.



## TECH TIP

### The Palm Key Striker by Charles Faulk

<http://www.faulkpiano.com/SpecialtyTools/>

This key striking tool is designed to fit in the palm of your hand. With your fingers extended over the narrow stem at the base, you can strike the keys in a natural position without actually hitting the keys with your fingertips. With your fingers close to the keys you can also feel the positioning of the leather striking pad therefore improving your aim. This newly designed key striker is made with solid grey PVC. It's more durable and heavier than wood; and, as an added bonus, it can be made less expensively. Cost: \$21.

Patrick Draine, RPT



## DAVID ANDERSEN: THE CALIFORNIAN CUSTOM ARTISAN

May 5th, **David Andersen** spent a day and a night at North Bennet Street School discussing the fine art of what he likes to call “custom tuning”. His method of tuning for the last fifteen years of his career has required only a few felt mutes, a tuning lever and a tuning fork. But don’t be fooled: tuning for David is much more than a job, or a task – for him, it’s more a time of meditation, a time of perfecting his art.

Since every piano is different – as much as any dog is different – he believes that aural tuning is a must. But it’s not just that. Every piano requires a “custom” job, because every piano is different than all the rest. Just like you and me, pianos have their quirks, their strengths, their weaknesses, their time to shine, and their time to die... or to be rebuilt. Therefore, not all pianos of the same make and model like to be stretched exactly the same amount in exactly the same places. He admonished us that pianos are an intimate part of people’s lives.

As in all of David’s classes, a good portion was spent on his philosophies of life. If I could summarize all of it, I would say: chill out, love life, relax, and be yourself. But he also had practical advice for piano technicians. He recommended regularly stretching to maintain a productive level of comfort during your tuning and to avoid injuries. Many technicians put a lot of strain on their upper back, shoulders, lower back, and arms. He also recommended using a felt mute for a test blows to preserve the fragile bones of your hands and fingertips. Another good piece of advice he gave was to try and break any habit of self-criticism or self-doubt. These can hinder your focus and ability to tune. He asked a number of technicians in the class, “How many pianos have you tuned?” The answers came back, ranging from the hundreds to tens of thousands. Whether you’ve tuned a few hundred pianos, or a few thousand pianos, one thing is true – your body knows how to do the work.

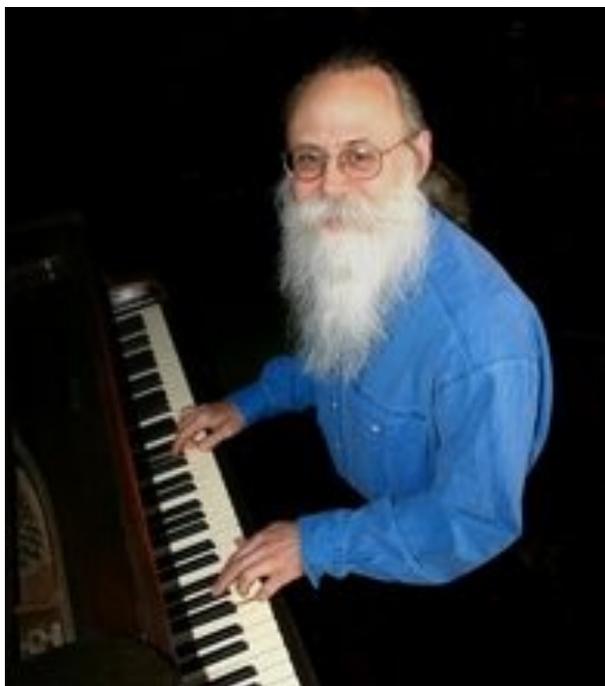
Part of David’s philosophy is that “whole tone tuning” – that is, tuning each unison as you progress through the temperament and beyond – allows the tuner to create a psycho-



acoustic illusion of beatless-ness in octaves, and more aurally pleasing fourths and fifths. He also subscribes to the theory that when using a temperament strip, by the time you return to tune the unisons, the single strings that you’d set will have moved to some degree. So what is the difference between his two-mute “whole tone” tuning and the traditional temperament strip method? David believes there is quite a difference in the final product and that a “whole tone” methodology allows you to tune with precision, certain that what you have already tuned hasn’t moved. My best suggestion is to come to Grand Rapids and find out for yourself! Also, check out David’s website, complete with recordings, at [www.davidandersenpianos.com](http://www.davidandersenpianos.com).

Elizabeth Snow, Secretary

## *BILL CALHOUN: TUNING FOR THE NEWPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL*



### **The Newport Jazz Festival**

Every year I look forward to tuning pianos at the Newport Jazz Festival. The folks who run it have had a tendency to keep the same staff year after year, so for years I've been seeing the same people, meeting their spouses, watching their kids grow up, and seeing pictures of their grandchildren. Working at the Festival is like a big family reunion.

I got the gig right after piano tech school (New England Conservatory), 23 years ago. I wrote them a letter out of the blue and they called me and asked for a quote. I've been with them ever since.

A few years ago the founder of the Newport Festivals George Wein sold his company, Festival Productions. The company had grown over the years and ran several festivals throughout the world. Many of the jazz festivals were sponsored by JVC, the Japanese electronics company. All of us working at Newport realized that things might change under the new company, Festival Network, and the familiar "see you next year" came to be followed by "with any luck."

Last year the production team was replaced, but the field and stage operations stayed mostly the same. The Festival seemed to go well in spite of the sour economy, although I could see that nothing had been done to rein in costs. This was not a good sign. So I guess I wasn't entirely surprised to learn that there might not be a festival in

Newport this year. Festival Network had lost a ton of money, the State of Rhode Island had not been paid, and permits had been revoked. Then, JVC pulled its sponsorship of all festivals worldwide.

Not wanting to lose his first babies, the Newport Jazz and Folk Festivals, George Wein decided to disentangle himself from Festival Network and produce these two festivals himself. This year will be the 50th anniversary of the Folk Festival and the 55th anniversary of the Jazz Festival. I'm assuming that George will keep most of the old staff in place, but one never knows, so cross your fingers for me!

Here are two of my favorite stories from the Newport Jazz Festival:

### **How I Met Herbie Hancock Underneath a Piano**

The Festival hires me to come in very early in the morning to tune the pianos, which have been sitting on outdoor stages all night. Then I remain in attendance all day, touching up the tunings amidst the chaos between sets. There are two wings of the main stage. One wing is for the stage crew and all the musical equipment; the other wing is for the stage sound crew and their sound equipment. I usually hang out in this wing and listen to what the sound engineer is listening to.

One year, during Herbie Hancock's performance, there was a terrific bang in the middle of a piece. It sounded the way a significant electrical disconnection sounds, amplified through a gigantic sound system. The music kept going, but the sound guys were wide-eyed, calling each other on walkie-talkies, checking the million dials and knobs. Nobody could find the cause, everything seemed OK, shoulders were shrugged, and then Herbie, having ended his piece, got up off the piano bench, and climbed under the piano.

"Bill, Bill, get out there!" all the guys yelled, and I ran out onto the stage, as did Herbie's road manager from the other wing. We had a breathless meeting under the piano. "Are you the piano guy?" asked the manager. I nodded. "Good." Then he pointed at Herbie; "Herbie, get out of here!"

The piano's lyre had disconnected from the piano and dropped straight down onto the stage floor. I guess Herbie was going to try to fix it himself. The manager helped me put the lyre back on, and then we scurried to our respective wings, leaving Herbie to introduce his next piece.

### **I Tuned a Piano So a Guy Could Hit It With Sticks**

When I touch-up a tuning between sets, I have to be very focused. It's loud on stage, as the previous set is broken

*(Continued on page 7)*

## *THE PREZ SAYS*

Fellow Boston Chapter Members,

Please join us for our **May Chapter Meeting, on Tuesday May 19** at Chris Brown's shop in Littleton. Our Associate Member Evan Ewing (his primary career has been in catering, currently at Whole Foods) will be providing a tasty spread, so skip supper with the family, get there early, and enjoy a nice meal, socialize with your colleagues, talk shop, and settle in for a great meeting.

A couple months ago everyone was sent a copy of our Chapter Bylaws, which reminded us all that another chapter election cycle was on the horizon. A nominating committee (Joe Morocco and George Crawford) was elected at the March meeting, and volunteers for office were solicited. The suggested slate of officers for next year is: Doshie Powers for President, Gary Ford for Vice-President (incumbent), Joe Morocco for Treasurer (incumbent), and Elizabeth Snow for Secretary (incumbent).

This looks like a very good selection of volunteers willing to *serve you*, the piano technicians of eastern Massachusetts! Nominations (self or other) are still welcome, now (call Joe) or at the meeting.

Volunteerism is what runs PTG, and your help in any form will be most appreciated. Several other positions (and associated committees) are still available.

In the past week the **May Journal Supplement** was mailed out to all members, and a copy of the PTG Council Agenda Book was sent out to Council Delegates. Please

take the time to read through the Supplement. During the May Business Meeting, we will discuss the proposed by-law amendments. And we will continue our discussions at the June meeting. In the meantime, please email me (your Delegate) or Doshie (your Alternate Delegate) with comments or questions. If you are interested in sampling the opinions of members from other chapters, you might consider signing up for the email list PTG-L, where Guild politics is the main topic (sometimes in a rather hyperbolic fashion). The full Council Agenda (all 137 pages of it) is available at the PTG website ([www.ptg.org](http://www.ptg.org)).

I continue to serve you as Chapter President through the end of the June meeting, where **I will pass the gavel on**. I am deeply grateful to everyone who has done their part in keeping our chapter functioning: great technical presentations arranged by Larry Buck (assisted in several instances by Jude Reveley and myself); our newsletter editor Chris Brown; Jude Reveley, chapter librarian (he's got a lot of great stuff for us to read!); chapter secretary Elizabeth Snow; treasurer Joe Morocco; vice-president Gary Ford; refreshments by Evan Ewing; and others who I can't recall as I type this past deadline! I'll have a more complete list of acknowledgements next month. And of course this list includes those of you who have attended meetings and participated in discussions during chapter business meetings and technical presentations.

See you on May 19th, and June 16<sup>th</sup>!

Patrick Draine, RPT

## *UPCOMING EVENTS*

### **May Meeting:** May 19, 2009

Technical Presentation: Chris Brown  
 Topic: Action Prep/New Jigs  
 Location: Concord Piano LLC  
 362 King Street  
 Littleton, MA

### **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

### **52 Annual PTG Convention & Technical Institute**

Location: Amway Grand Plaza  
 187 Monroe Avenue NW  
 Grand Rapids, MI

Reserve online (promo code: **PNOTEC**) at  
[www.ptg.org/conv/2009/lodging](http://www.ptg.org/conv/2009/lodging)  
 or call 800-253-3590 (phone code: **1000LT**)

#### To Register:

Online: [www.ptg.org/2009](http://www.ptg.org/2009)  
 Fax: 912-432-9986  
 Phone: 913-432-9975  
 Mail: Piano Technicians Guild  
 4444 Forest Avenue  
 Kansas City, KS 66106

## TOM KAUFMANN'S ART

"At Tinkertunes Music Studios our goal is to share the joy of making music and to provide opportunities for a musically enriching experience that will begin a lifetime of appreciation!

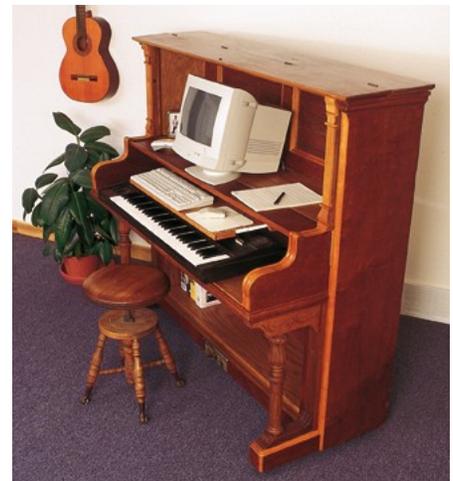
Our studio, located at Logan's Landing in Traverse City, Michigan is a music teaching facility which has provided private lessons in piano and Educational Music Programs since 1995.

Tinkertunes, owned by Tom Kaufmann, is also the home for the Musician's Referral Service, the Upright Furniture Company, and 'Your Name Rings a Bell' – musical wire sculpture."

[www.tinkertunes.com/](http://www.tinkertunes.com/)

Or check out *Wire Sculpture by Tom Kaufmann* on UTube, set to his own composition!

Ruth Van Dine, RPT



## THE POEM PLACE?



### FIRST MORNING

As though the winter before this life, blank  
as the snow of an empty page, could somehow blink  
new whites of sunlight into revealing the black  
seriffed lettering on a child's block,

meaning appeared—plucked from the rack  
where it hung for previous abstract autumns, a rake  
to now restrain the physical leaves over rock  
as did in pre-history's weathers wreck

with soil and sand into path for this life's trek,  
a pre-worn, pre-traveled track  
with a pre-established, pre-branched tree  
for self-notion to seed from and try

mystery, winter-spring-like, into truth.  
The words of it and the landscapes stand aloof;  
and in the pink of a flower's petals no proof  
these fractal-sprung thoughts can ever pry.

Christopher Brown

## *CLASSIFIED ADVERTIZING*

**For Sale:** *Rosewood Hamburg Steinway* According to a well-known Steinway wholesaler, this piano should sell for at least \$27,000, but I am asking for much less, 20 K, for quick sale. Check my website for an American Rosewood A from 1878 for around \$37 K.  
**Contact:** Chris Pleim at 617-783-1030 or through [www.chrispleimpiano.com](http://www.chrispleimpiano.com).



The beautiful rosewood case has been refinished. It has a new pinblock, strings, damper felt, Renner hammers and shanks. It has been fine regulated including the wippen helper springs which come on German pianos, allowing a faster repetition and adjustable touch. The keytops have been replaced with a very fine grade of covering. The soundboard is original and very lively. The sound is powerful from base to treble. It especially has a bell like treble. When I showed it to Doriot Anthony Dwyer, well known flutist for the BSO, she said "This piano is a lesson in sound! This ringing-out tone is what I try to teach my flute students to get." Recording jazz artist, Yoko Miwa, loved the tone and touch.

**Wanted:** *Interlochen Center for the Arts* is looking for a Resident Piano Technician (non-seasonal, 12 month position)

**Contact:** [employment@interlochen.org](mailto:employment@interlochen.org) subject: Piano Technician  
 Human Resources  
 Piano Technician Search  
 Interlochen Center for the Arts  
 PO Box 199  
 Interlochen, Michigan 49643

Interlochen Center for the Arts, one of the world's most vibrant and inspiring arts communities, seeks a Resident Piano Technician. The position will begin during the summer of 2009. The exact start date is negotiable.

Interlochen is a unique institution that includes: the first and foremost summer arts camp, the nation's premier fine arts boarding high school, a year-round arts festival that presents more than 600 events, two public radio services (news and classical music), and a series of arts education programs for adults. Interlochen alumni comprise some of the most distinguished names in the arts and education. More information about Interlochen is available at [www.interlochen.org](http://www.interlochen.org).

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

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*(Continued from page 3)*

down and the new one wheeled into place, and the emcee makes announcements, and the sound crew checks things. I stand and lean way down over the Steinway grand, straining to hear the unisons. I stop to help with repositioning the piano, and then start in again, checking and retuning for as long as needed or as long as I can until the stage manager calls everyone off stage. Sometimes I have 30 or 40 minutes, sometimes 10. I check the schedule ahead of time so I can mentally prepare.

One year, Bobby McFerrin was to perform. The schedule said he was using a piano, which I thought was odd, so I consulted the tech rider and stage plot, and there it was - "a grand piano tuned to A440". All right, fine. The piano was going to get heavy use in the prior set, and since there would be little to break down and nothing but the piano to set up for Bobby, I was going to have ten minutes at the

most to touch up the piano. I was already sweating.

When my moment came, I ran out and got to work. It was mercifully quiet, but much too soon the stage manager put his hand on my shoulder, and I put my tools away and walked to my wing. Out came Bobby McFerrin, who greeted the cheering crowd and then turned to introduce his accompanist, a big burly guy. Bobby started singing, and I watched the big guy, who just stood there looking like he'd wandered, lost, onto the stage. Then he pulled two mallets out of his pocket and began drumming on the piano. He drummed on the case, on the plate and the soundboard, and depressed the damper pedal and drummed on the strings. He sometimes used the handle end of the mallet. He moved all around the piano, drumming and tapping. That was it. I turned to a fellow crew member and said, "Wow, I just got paid to tune a piano so someone could hit it with sticks."

Bill Calhoun

## CHRIS BROWN: NEW JIGS FOR THE TRADE



A Regulation Station ready with a sectionally-cut generic template to regulate a Francis Bacon action in Blackstone Valley Piano's shop—4/16/09.



A Hammer Square employed on a Virtual Keybed to test a hammer's squareness at "strike".