

# News & Notes

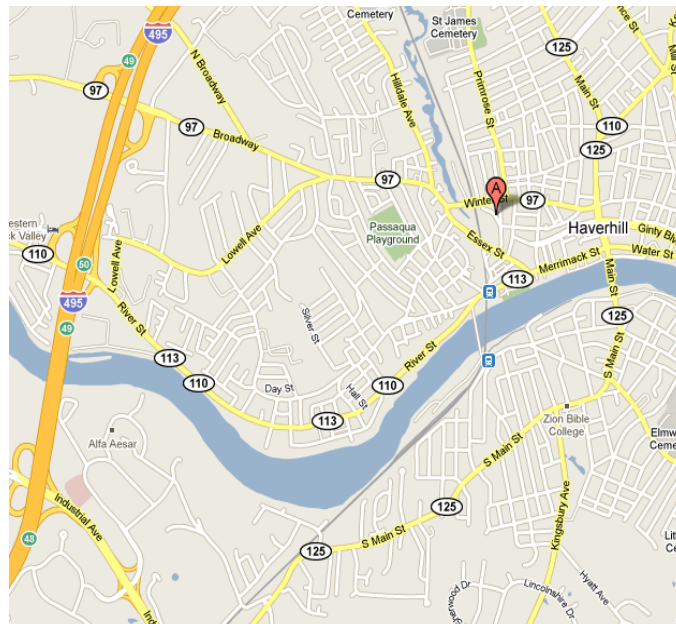


Newsletter of the Boston Chapter  
of the Piano Technicians Guild

## NOVEMBER MEETING

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**November 17, 2009**

**Mason & Hamlin**  
35 Duncan Street  
Haverhill, MA

**6:30 pm:** doors open, refreshments by Evan Ewing

**7:00 pm:** Chapter Business Meeting

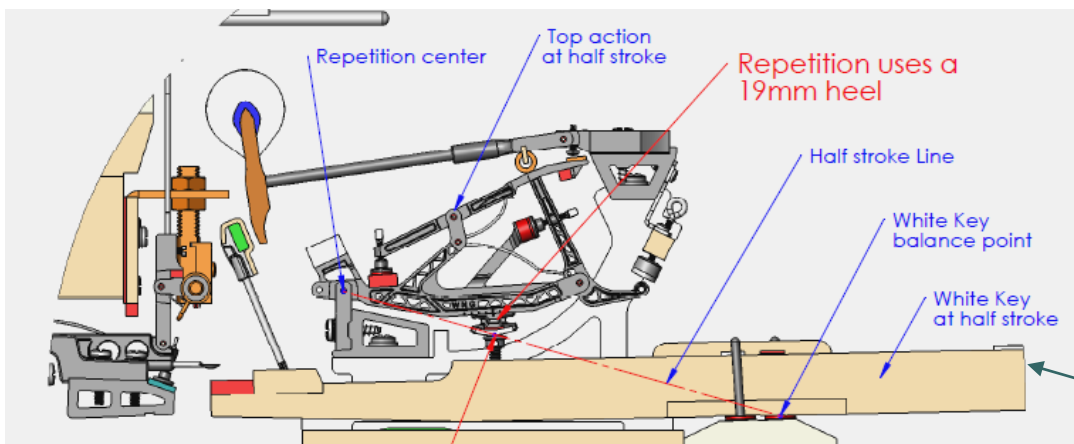
**7:30 pm:** Technical Presentation: "Installing WNG Composite Parts". **Bruce Clark** will give us a complete overview of parts selection, installation, etc. Also premiering the new WNG action stack for retrofitting a multitude of grand piano actions.

Our friends at Mason & Hamlin assure us it will be another of their fine presentations showing rebuilders high-level factory techniques that can be applied in our own shops.

Take a look at the Wessel, Nichol & Gross's website, [www.wesselnickelandgross.com](http://www.wesselnickelandgross.com) that features the many parts, kits, tools, and documentation now available for the technician community.

Patrick Draine, Programming

New Mason & Hamlin composite parts at "half-stroke".



## THANK YOU, NICK GRAVAGNE!

### Nick Gravagne's The Complete Technician: Knowing the Entire Piano

#### Part I – The Belly

On a rainy Saturday afternoon in October, a group of us gathered for an all day session with Nick Gravagne. The three subjects that he covered – piano belly construction and tension, action geometry, and sound analysis – comprise subject matter we need to continually study and further understand to be more complete piano technicians. Each piano will react differently based upon these variables.

During the first portion of Nick's talk, we heard about the relationship of scale to belly systems. Pianos with longer, heavier strings need a longer, heavier belly system. In order to accomplish the proper balance, string tension and weight need to compliment soundboard thickness, crown, tension, and size, and vice versa. Extending that thought, hammers need to be likewise compatible with the system.

Impedance, plainly put, refers to the **opposition** to the flow of energy. Too much opposition leaves a piano having a lot of initial attack, but no sustain. A comparable affect would be knocking on someone's door – a loud, sharp rapping sound with no carry over. The stiffness of the wood in this case resists the vibrations needed to sustain a sound over time. Any material that has no give has no capability for sustain. The opposite situation would be that of a metal bowl which rings for a lengthy amount of time and never seems to stop. In that case, the material freely moves, allowing the vibration to remain until hindered by an outside force. Pianos with not enough impedance have a muffled attack and lots of sustain.

Most materials have a resident frequency in them. (Often as a child, I'd practice the piano only to discover that the piano lamp enjoyed singing along in certain keys.) As rebuilders, we must keep in mind that soundboards can reflect too much or too little of the sound we're aiming for. If a soundboard is too flexible at the fundamental frequency, the fundamental tone can be sucked away too quickly. Since sound is produced by vibrations being transmitted from materials into the air, this case allows for the fundamental tone to leak out of the soundboard too quickly. Remember: a soundboard is a **transducer**; that is, from the Latin, *transducere*, meaning "to lead across". If the soundboard has too much flexibility for certain fundamental frequencies, the vibration will "lead across" the board and dissipate into the air too quickly. Much like a stone thrown into a small pond or a puddle, we need our initial attack to be clear and strong, and create ripples that are reflected throughout the soundboard



Nick has the soundboard out...

for an enduring amount of time. If our soundboard is too thick at the fundamental frequency, the higher partials will be too overpowering.

Along with the risks we take in producing a properly proportioned soundboard, we have to fight the battle of our work over time. The effects of lost crown include reduced downbearing, reduced soundboard stiffness, and reduced overall impedance. How can we battle these things (that will only appear over time) in our initial fabrication and installation? More to come in next month's *News & Notes*.

Elizabeth Snow, Secretary

## LEW SURDAM RETIRES FROM HARVARD

After a final tuning at Sanders Theater on Saturday, October 31st and 29 years of service, I surrendered my parking permit and ID and joined the private sector of the retired. Piano Technical Services at Harvard are now in the capable hands of Mariana Lincoln.

Many thanks to all of you who gave me technical advice and support over the years!

Lew

Photo by Stu Rosner



## THE POEM PLACE



Don't surrender your loneliness  
 So quickly.  
 Let it cut more deeply.  
 Let it ferment and season you  
 As few human  
 Or even divine ingredients can.  
 Hafez, poet (1315-1390)

### LEN'S TWELVE-YEAR WINTER

He sits virtually supine in his stuffed chair,  
 ankles crossed in front,  
 head back  
 as if asleep.  
 He does sleep:  
 in and out of a wash of dreams,  
 too dreary with regret in the sinking,  
 too fraught with present in the rising.  
 Half-floating, half-drowning  
 before the pictures on the mantle,  
 he reminisces.  
 What he misses  
 surrounds him in the half-light.  
 As evening deepens,  
 no lamp goes on, no fire is lit.  
 Why bother. Whether light or dark,  
 the dreams breathe, bright semblances  
 on blacknesses of remembering.  
 Always, too sad:  
 the past in etching-like detail,  
 the present,  
 without her.

Christopher Brown



### THE PRES SAYS

Howdy, fellow techs!

Fall season is upon us and we're still basking in the afterglow of Nick Gravagne's terrific all-day October seminar. The man's a genius and if you attended, you're nodding in agreement.

Once again, great huzza's to Larry Buck for setting this up for us and an equal mighty thank you to Paul Panek for helping to make the day go smoothly. Thank you and a tip of the hat to Pat Draine and Joe Morocco for signing folks in who staggered up the steps on that rainy day at such an early hour. Though frankly, I was so happy to be seeing everyone, it wasn't hard to make the trek from Quincy.

It has to be noted that Evan Ewing did a fantastic job with the food. He laid out a scrumptious buffet, which we waded into, leaving mere crumbs in

short order, with plenty of conversation, note-comparing, and quick tours of Larry's and Paul's latest projects. (Nice shop guys). Last time I was there to take the PTG bench test with Larry's dad, Ed. Bless him. He re-calibrated my tuning fork, too, helping solve an obstacle to passing the tuning test.

This month we meet at Mason & Hamlin, November 17th. Food at 6PM, business meeting at 7PM, technical presentation at 7:30PM. It will cover information on the new Wessel, Nickel and Gross action replacement parts.

AND one last item to put on your to-do list: **pay your dues now**, not later. The dough is coming in, so while the coffers are brimming, write the check. And you know, we have the newly instituted late fee, your Prez really doesn't want to have to get on the horn to dun folks to pay-up come February.



Then the home office will have to borrow money for operating costs....

Then we'll have another dues hike....

See what I'm sayin'?

Hope to see ya in a couple weeks,

Doshie

### CLASSIFIED ADVERTIZING

**Pianos for Sale:** *Fabulous Rosewood Steinway A2*, completely rebuilt, \$42K. 5% commission.

**Contact:** Chris Brown at 978-486-0610 or [concordpno@verizon.com](mailto:concordpno@verizon.com).

*Two Mason & Hamlin pianos:* 1912 A and 1933 AA. Both need work.

**Contact:** Mary Logue at [mlogue@pianologue.com](mailto:mlogue@pianologue.com).

*Steinert 6'11"*, from the 1920's, pretty much an copy of a Steinway B – rich warm mid-range and bass and bell-like treble. The only difference is the price is about half. It is rebuilt with a new pinblock, strings, soundboard refinishing, hammers and shanks, damper felt, full regulation with new key and action felt. Perfect downbearing. Ivory keytops restored. The wood is mahogany, stripped, sanded, and ready to do either a new mahogany finish or an ebony finish.

**Contact:** Chris Pleim at [www.chrispleimpiano.com](http://www.chrispleimpiano.com)

Get submissions in two weeks before each meeting to be guaranteed Inclusion.



**News & Notes**

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[www.bostonptg.org](http://www.bostonptg.org)

**Boston Chapter PTG Officers**

Doshie Powers, President  
Gary Ford, Vice President  
Joe Morocco, Treasurer  
Elizabeth Snow, Secretary

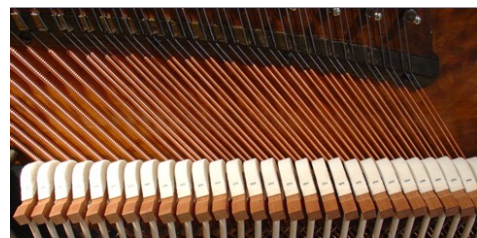
**Chapter Committees**

Chris Brown, Newsletter  
Pat Draine and Mike Morvan,  
Technical Programming  
Jude Reveley, Librarian  
David Nadworny, Tech Exam  
Chris Lovgren, Tuning Exam

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**PIANO  
TECHNICIANS  
GUILD**



***NBSS CORNER***

There are 11 new piano technology students at NBSS this fall, learning the ins and outs of tuning, regulation and basic repairs:

- 1 from Quebec
- 2 from Vermont
- 2 from Rhode Island
- 1 from Oregon
- 3 from Massachusetts
- 1 from California
- 1 from New York

Of the 11, 6 are left-handed!!!!

8 of last years' students have returned for the 2nd year program:

- 1 from Washington
- 1 from Florida
- 1 from Denmark
- 1 from Maine
- 1 from Vermont
- 3 from Massachusetts

3 of them RPT'd last spring.

They will be rebuilding a Steinway O, Steinway OR with player mechanism, Steinway M, and a HF Miller.

Look for them at upcoming PTG meetings, and introduce yourselves!!

Debbie Cyr, RPT

