

# News & Notes



Newsletter of the Boston Chapter  
of the Piano Technicians Guild

## OCTOBER MEETING

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Self-Promotion Spot	2
A Tech's Tip	2
Thank You	3
The Poem Place?	3
NBSS Corner	4
Chapter Business	4
Classified Advertizing	5
Henry Z Steinway Dies	5
October's Technical	6

October 14, 2008

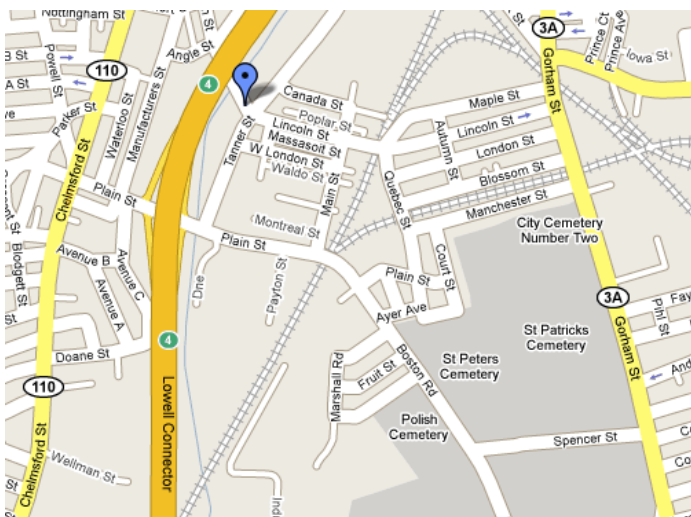
**Absolute Piano** (Jude's shop)  
171 Lincoln Street, 2nd floor-  
Lowell, MA

**6:30 pm:** doors open, refresh-  
ments, coffee, conversation

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

**7:30 pm:** Technical Presenta-  
tion, Steve Brady on Concert  
Preparation

**Directions:** Head to Lowell  
northwest of Boston, where  
Rt 3 and I-495 intersect: I-90,  
I-290, Rt 2, north on I-495 or  
I-95, I-93 south on I-495. At the  
juncture with Rt 3 follow signs  
to the Lowell Connector to-



ward Lowell. Take Exit 4, turn-  
ing right at the bottom onto  
Plain Street. Take an immedi-

ate left onto Tanner and an-  
other left onto Lincoln. Park  
along Tanner, 171 is on the left.

## TECHNICAL TIP



**Mini Hygro:** This link shows a great  
small, affordable mini Hygro: [http://  
www.cyberguys.com/templates/  
SearchDetail.asp?productID=14525](http://www.cyberguys.com/templates/SearchDetail.asp?productID=14525) .

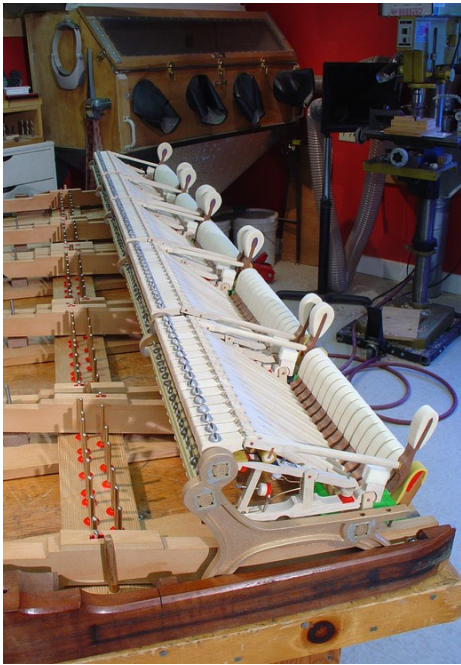
This is a great place to buy stuff like  
this.

Joe Morocco

*The tiny battery-operated Mini Hygro-Thermometer precisely  
measures temperature and relative humidity, allowing you to  
monitor conditions in any room, cabinet, cellar or other environ-  
ment. Use the min/max feature to display the highest and low-  
est values since the unit was last reset. Includes double-stick and  
magnetic tape for mounting. Requires 1 LR44 battery, included.*

- 14-140 degrees Fahrenheit temperature range
- 10% - 99% relative humidity range
- 1 oz. weight
- Folding stand [www.cyberguys.com](http://www.cyberguys.com)

## THE SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION SPOT!



Running samples to confirm calculations.

The Piano Rebuilders Consortium ([thepianorebuilders.com](http://thepianorebuilders.com)) has linked the talents of George Crawford, Steve Kilroy, Mike Morvan, Jeff Archambault, Rob Bushell, Chris Brown (me), and others who work with us. Our group has rebuilt a series of pianos, the latest of which is the rosewood Steinway A2 listed under my name in the classifieds on page 5.

This month, we are featured for our collaborative business concept in the *Piano Technicians Journal* (pages 18-21), an article with glossy photos and all!

Calling ourselves a consortium is really just formalizing a set of relationships most piano technicians develop to get their work done. Sharing the work allows the advantages of specialization and frees up the flow our most valuable resource: time. There are only so many hours in a day and wearing too many hats at once challenges that number.

Three years ago I moved from Concord to Littleton, doubling my shop space, adding a "showroom", a large office, storage space, and a well-insulated spot for my compressor and dust-collector.

I decided to limit shop activities to restoring and fitting actions. Equipment upgrades were part of it, of course—a Bridgeport milling machine is to be the newest addition! And now Jim Ialeggio helping me two days a week also steps things forward.

We are initiating a new service to the trade, with Mike Morvan's key work as the centerpiece. And here is the pitch:

You send us keys, keyframe, and top action. We return to you an action ready to fine fit. The restoration menu of your choice is taken care of, including weigh off. We are fussy about each step, carefully attending to pinning friction, geometry, and craftsmanlike presentation. Meticulous spacing, squaring,

*(Continued on page 6)*

## TECH'S TIP

Please submit a tip for your fellow technicians. Techniques and tools aren't the only resources we need to succeed in this business (in these times!). If you have a useful idea, share it!

I spent five minutes on the phone and made \$35.00!

In today's mail, my commercial insurance policy from Safeco Insurance arrived. A quick glance told me three things. First, that the price of insurance has gone up again, along with everything else. Second, that I needed to make sure my policy was accurate and tailored to my particular business needs. And third, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to interpret insurance policies without knowledgeable help. Looking over the policy, my eyes fell immediately on a line item called "Employment Practices Liability" with a \$35.00 premium. What in the world is that? Another item, "Miscellaneous Articles" for \$25.00, also made me wonder.

A quick phone call and our PTG affiliated

insurance agent, PLC Insurance LLC told me that "Employment Practices Liability" is for businesses that have employees. It is being included on *all* renewals this year. But I do not have employees and I'll bet many of you don't either. If you don't have employees, you don't need this coverage. "Miscellaneous Articles", the agent explained, is for items in my office like my desk, lamps, etc. That coverage I opted to keep.

It will be worth your time to look over your policy, then call your agent. Review the policy with them, ask for clarification of items you don't understand and may not need, and perhaps put money back in your pocket -- where it belongs!

Robin Flint

## THANK YOU, BRUCE CLARK!

At our last PTG meeting, we gathered on the fourth floor of the **Mason & Hamlin factory** to hear **Bruce Clark** address an important part of the action restoration process: *backcheck replacement*. Because all backchecks are different sizes, shapes, and weights, Mason & Hamlin has come up with a system to universalize the process for any kind of backcheck. Parts, jigs, and instructions will be available through their website.

The procedure can be broken down into a few basic steps:

- 1.) *Removal of old backchecks* can be done with a pair of offset pliers and a piece of sturdy wood used to brace the key. Cut a slit in the wood large enough for the back check wire to fit in. Clamp the wood to a table with the slit facing outward. Slide the backcheck wire into the slit so that the key is protected beneath, and use your offset pliers to pull out the old backcheck. This will protect the backcheck block from tear-out as you extract the swedged backcheck wire.
- 2.) *Plug the old backcheck wire hole*. Chase the hole with a #30 (.128") drill bit. Using an 1/8" dowel and Titebond, plug the hole. (Since you are such a fine piano technician, I am *sure* that you will dry fit first to be certain of the utmost in crafts-

manship.) When glue is dry, sand off the remaining stub.

- 3.) *Custom Bore Hammers*. Since backchecking relates directly to how the hammers are hung, Wessel, Nickel and Gross recommend that the hammers be custom bored to account for variations in string height. Proper backchecking requires a proper hammer-to-string relationship.
- 4.) The *WNG Hammer Tailing Jig* can be used with a belt sander or vertical disc sander, and can accommodate different bore sizes. Clamp the jig to the sanding table. Position the Adjusting Panel to be 4mm (5/32") from the sandpaper.
- 5.) *Cut your hammer tails* to the correct length, that is, with 1" from the center of the hole to the end of the tail. Be sure to test it out first on a spare hammer and adjust the jig as necessary.
- 6.) Using the *Hammer Arcing* portion of the jig, place the hammer on the swivel, and arc your hammers for effective backchecking. Bruce Clark recommends that the specific backchecking surface of the hammer tail be 3/8". If too much of the hammer is buried into the backcheck, the pianist will not be able to produce the piano's complete range of dynamics.
- 7.) Once the hammers are undercut,

tapered, and glued on, it is time to *mark the backcheck line*. With all the keys on the frame, held level by long blocks from beneath, and the topstack securely in place, use the Backcheck Line Marking Jig by referencing the strike line on notes 1 and 88. Mark backcheck position and connect with a long straight edge.

8.) After marking the new backcheck location with a spring loaded punch, *drill for the new backchecks* using the Backcheck Angle Drilling Block and a #31 (.120") drill bit. Backchecks are traditionally drilled at 22 degrees from the bottom of the key. The drill stop should be set to stop about 1/16" above the Backcheck Drilling Block.

9.) Once finished, insert the Backcheck Inserter into your drill press, and (without turning it on) *press in your new backchecks*. Before installing all of your backchecks, set a few well regulated samples to be sure that you can achieve the proper backchecking distance.

As always, we enjoyed the opportunity to use the Mason & Hamlin facilities and learn about M & H processes and tools from Mr. Clark.

Elizabeth Snow  
Secretary

"Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. . . . Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do." Mark Twain,  
*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*  
"Choose a job in which you can play."

CB

## THE POEM PLACE?

AND ALL GOOD THINGS WILL COME

Like a cat poised between breeze rhythms in the field grass  
And tree leaves shifting lightly around the presence of a bird,  
may you live opened and filled, content to notice each minute  
the minute amongst the myriad until the moment is ripe.

Christopher Brown



## NBSS CORNER

### First Year Student Bio:

A few words about myself.....Before attending 1st year piano technology at NBSS, I spent 15 years working as a carpenter. I built my own house and barn on 15 acres in southwestern Vermont, where I kept horses and raised vegetables. I hope to return home after completing school to start up the farm again and begin a career as a piano technician.

Michael Lynam



### Bass Strings a Basket Case?

Here is a music wire basket that was on display at the Western Mass chapter picnic in August. This was made from a set of bass strings by Rob Loomis's wife Karen.

So next time you have a set of bass strings that you just can't part with..... You should do something with the "pointy" wire ends though - maybe coil tuning pins on them?

Debbie Cyr, RPT

## CHAPTER BUSINESS

During the **May 2008 chapter business meeting**, chapter elections were held. The results were: President, Patrick Draine (me); Vice-President, Gary Ford; Treasurer, Joe Morocco; and Secretary, Elizabeth Snow. Volunteers for several important committee chairs stepped forward: Technical Programs, Larry Buck; Newsletter Editor, Chris Brown; Testing Committees, Christine Lovgren (volunteered in absentia). While these folks are the "chairs" that doesn't mean they should be doing *all* the work -- please contact them and volunteer to help.

In addition to the elected chapter officers, **two additional chapter members should be elected** by the chapter to serve on our chapter's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee meets periodically to discuss and plan chapter events and policies in greater depth than is practical during the regular chapter business meetings (7 pm, just before the technical presentation).

During the **last Executive Committee meeting**, and during the **September chapter business meeting**, the subject of *volunteerism* was brought up, i.e. why aren't more of us *involved* in the workings of our organization? Our V.P. Gary Ford suggested that perhaps every member should be pressed into serving on a committee! Fortunately, New & Notes has been revived. Make use of this great platform for intra-chapter communication and let us know what you think.

One of the "less glorious" committees is the Hospitality Committee. We've come to take for granted an impressive spread of appetizers set up for the enjoyment of our membership and guests. Ria Kittay chaired this committee for a number of years and our last President Paul Panek continued the tradition (aka multi-tasking beyond the call of duty). Chapter Secretary Elizabeth Snow indicated her willingness to contribute some time and effort to this. Can *you* help out with a potluck appetizer?

**Path to Registered Piano Technician:** Last month I asked the Associate membership to contact me if they were interested in having a local Exam Prep program. So far I've had two positive

responses. It looks like we'll start this program at the beginning of 2009. Do you want to join in or help? This needs to be a chapter effort. In its June session, Council voted to make the following **changes in RPT exam fees, effective January 1, 2009:**

1. The fee amounts: Complete exams - tuning or technical - will cost \$180. A Part 1 partial tuning exam retake will cost \$90. Technical exam retakes will cost \$60 per part. [Regulations & Codes V.C.1]
2. To whom the fees are to be remitted: Fees must be sent by the examinee to the PTG Home Office before the exam can be given. The Home Office will issue a payment voucher to the examinee which will be accepted by examiners as proof of payment. Provisions have been made for last-minute exams, when there is no time to issue vouchers. Full details will be distributed to all certified examiners - CTEs and TECs. [Regulations & Codes V.C.3]
3. Distribution of exam income: The Home Office will remit to exam sponsors (those Chapters, Exam Boards and State/Regional Conferences that offer exams) one-half of the exam fee after a completed exam fee voucher signed by both examiner and examinee along with completed exam score forms are received from the examiner. [Bylaws III.B.6, Regulations & Codes V.B.1 & 2, V.C.4-6] Exams scheduled and paid for by December 31, 2008 may be administered through February 28, 2009 under the old fee system, on the condition that the appropriate exam coordinator on ETSC is notified by telephone or email at the time the exam is scheduled and paid for.

Before I sign off, I'd like to express special thanks to Bruce Clark and the folks at Mason & Hamlin for their superb presentation on "perfect" backcheck installation, and also to Larry Buck for running our chapter's Technical Program.

Patrick Draine, RPT  
President

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTIZING

**Jobs Offered:** *Chris Pleim:* Looking for tuning, repair and rebuilding help. Please see my website for what kind of work we do and give me a call.

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

*Christopher Brown, RPT* of Concord Piano LLC seeks talented technician.

**Contact:** Chris at 978-486-0610 or [christopherbrown@mail.com](mailto:christopherbrown@mail.com).

**Jointer for Sale:** Harvard has a *Delta 6" Jointer*, model DJ-15, bought in 1990. It has gotten very little use and is now in the way. With mobile base, around \$350.

**Contact:** Lew Surdam at 617-698-8285 or [surdam@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:surdam@fas.harvard.edu).

**Pianos for Sale:** *Rosewood Steinway A2* completely rebuilt by the Piano Rebuilders Consortium. *1912 Steinway M*, no cracks in the soundboard, solid block. Sounds great!

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

*1964 Mason Hamlin CC, 9'* concert grand, 5/0 tuning pins, still tuneable/playable, but needs complete rebuilding to be used as a concert instrument. Case ebony, lots lots of wear. \$10k or best offer. Easy move from present location.

**Contact:** Debbie Cyr at 508-202-2862.

*NBSS* has two grands for sale--last Spring's student projects. One is a *5'7" Baldwin* with mahogany case. The other is a *Hazelton*, approx 5 1/2'. Also brown mahogany case. New pinblocks, strings, tuning pins, repaired soundboards, new hammers. Fully redone keyboards. As realtors say, "motivated seller". Also, a "plea" for upright actions, and upright or spinet keyboards that students might practice on. We'll pick them up.

**Contact:** Chris Lovgren at 617-227-2357 (NBSS shop) for details and photos

*Steinway Rosewood A*, completely rebuilt and refinished. Top in performance and beauty. Please see my website for info.

*Yamaha GA1*, four years old. Perfect condition. Around 8K.

*Steinert 5'10.5" Grand* Rebuilt with new pinblock, strings, soundboard refinished and repaired. 8K as is. 10K with new hammers and shanks. A great musician's piano; copy of Steinway O.

*Many already worked on small uprights* for under \$1000

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

*Steinway B 69933* Victorian Case in Ebony \$60,000 Completely rebuilt.

*Mason & Hamlin A 27219* Ebony \$45,000 As partially seen at NEECSO. Redesigned and rebuilt.

**Contact:** Jude Reveley at 978-323-4545 or [info@absolute-piano.com](mailto:info@absolute-piano.com).

Adds will run until the space is needed, but do let me know when your ad can be removed.

We are 131 network hubs! And just think of our collective data base of piano-interested people. This is a powerful vehicle, but it runs on your input.

Submit.

And get your submissions in two weeks before each meeting to be guaranteed a place in the race.



## HENRY Z. STEINWAY, DIES AT 93

Henry Ziegler Steinway was the last member of the Steinway family to run the family firm, Steinway & Sons, founded in 1853. The New York Times published an informative article by James Barron to honor him, his family, and their famous piano manufacturing company. The company lives on under its current owners, of course, still one of the most successful players in the piano industry. But it also lives on in concert halls, living rooms, and rebuilding workshops, of which we personally know many. Check out this article at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/19/arts/music/19steinway.html>.

Thanks to Jude Reveley for this link.

## News & Notes

Email: [news.notes@verizon.net](mailto:news.notes@verizon.net)  
[www.bostonptg.org](http://www.bostonptg.org)

### Boston Chapter PTG Officers

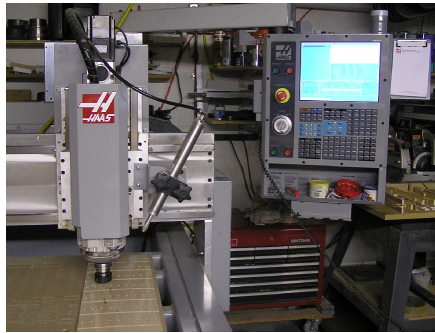
Patrick Draine, President  
 Gary Ford, Vice President  
 Joe Morocco, Treasurer  
 Elizabeth Snow, Secretary

### Chapter Committees

Christopher Brown, Newsletter Editor  
 Larry Buck, Programming Director  
 Jude Reveley, Librarian  
 David Nadworny, Tech Exam  
 Christine Lovgren, Tuning Exam

\*\* Please note that October's meeting is  
*this coming Tuesday evening,*  
 the second Tuesday of the  
 month, not the third!

All parties to this  
 publication  
 were thus  
 late...  
 Apologies,  
 CB



Cutting key buttons with the CNC router.

(Continued from page 2)

and traveling means excellent hammer to string fit, improving both performance and tone.

We provide the leg up, you're the face on the job. And we are happy to customize the prep to your specs, including choice of new parts.

We now have CNC technology with the capacity to make custom parts, a new keyboard, or modifications from your hand drawn or CAD drawn plans.

Mike's assistant Jeff Archambault has come to us from a career as a mechanical engineer. With his programming skills and the Haas CNC router, case parts, soundboard cauls, and other custom work is welcome.

So, let us help you if we can. Put our good resources to work. In the larger sense, our consortium includes every technician we do business with!

Christopher Brown, RPT  
 Concord Piano LLC  
 The Piano Rebuilders Consortium

## OCTOBER'S TECHNICAL

**Steve Brady** has been a piano technician since 1973, and served as head piano technician at the University of Washington from 1978 till 2003. During those 25 years he tuned and prepared pianos for approximately 5,000 concerts and recitals and worked with most of the leading pianists of our time, including Murray Perahia, Alfred Brendel, Andras Schiff, Garrick Ohlsson, Emanuel Ax, Peter Serkin, Richard Goode, Claudio Arrau, Alicia de Larrocha, Andre Watts, Vladimir Feltsman, Lang Lang, and Evgeny Kissin.

Steve served as editor of the *Piano Technicians Journal* for six years (1995-2000). In 1996 he received the PTG "Member of Note" award, and in 1999 PTG published his book, *A Piano Technician's Guide to*

*Field Repairs*. His second book *Under the Lid: The Art and Craft of the Concert Piano Technician* was published in March of this year. It is a systematic presentation of the skills and techniques the "good technician" needs to develop further in order to satisfy that ultimate customer, the concert pianist.

In his spare time Steve enjoys cooking, tending his wine cellar, and dancing Argentine tango. He lives in Seattle with his wife, the concert pianist Judith Cohen.

### Between Artist and Technician

In this class, an experienced concert technician and a concert pianist team up to discuss the interaction between artist and technician before, during, and after a

piano concert. Topics covered include communication, priorities, and the psychology of the pianist versus that of the technician, as well as specific tips and techniques for concert work, all illustrated with examples drawn from Steve's and Judith's respective careers.

Copies of Steve's new book will be available for purchase.

Larry Buck  
 Program Director

