

# News & Notes



Newsletter of the Boston Chapter  
of the Piano Technicians Guild

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

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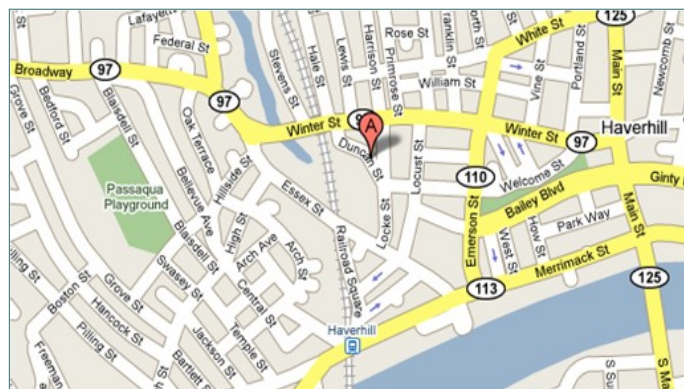
September 16, 2008

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

**6:30 PM** Doors open (several floors up -- 3rd or 4th, look for a sign), refreshments available, time to meet and greet

**7:00 PM** Chapter business meeting, please be prompt

**7:30 PM *Backcheck Installation:*** technical presentation by **Bruce Clark** of Mason & Hamlin featuring their new Wessell, Nichol & Gross tools and parts



**From I-495 North:** take Exit 49 onto Rt110E/Rt113E (this becomes River St), go about 2 miles, turn left at Essex St, then right at Locke St, and finally a slight left at Duncan St.

**From I-495 South:** take Exit 51A onto Rt125/Main St toward Haverhill, go 2 miles, turn right and follow Rt110/ White St, then a right at Orchard St, and left onto Duncan St.

## TECHNICAL TIP

### Easy Removal of Tuning Pin Bushings

**Description:** This procedure is efficient for the removal of tuning pin bushings in vertical pianos in preparation for re-stringing with oversized tuning pins.

During the past 15 years, I have frequently found the need to restring vertical pianos. Those with plate bushings presented a challenge. Breaking them out was too time consuming. Drilling them out left occasional bits in the plate hole requiring pick-

ing out, and then there were those that "stayed with" the drill bit...annoying. Also, I discovered that holding the drill and drilling out 220+ bushings had the residual effect of aches and pains! I wanted a simple

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## THE SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION SPOT!



Absolute Piano Restoration, LLC is offering commissions on all referrals for sales, restoration, and player piano retrofit installations. Please feel free to call us for a private shop tour and discover how we can augment your business. Here is a brief listing of some of our specialties:

Sitka spruce soundboard panels made for the trade. Get the real deal species as found on your vintage piano, now provided locally. Also available as a pre-crowned and ribbed board with capped bridges

ready to be glued in and notched starting at \$2,500.

Key proportion jobs, as taught by Bruce Clark and performed on the highest caliber rebuilds at the Falcone shop in its heyday. This procedure essentially redesigns an action from the strikeline to the keyboard and is the most comprehensive method of controlling touchweight. The half-stroke line is calculated for a given set of parts, regulation specs and geometric parameters, drafted on a CAD program, and modeled. Fi-

nally, a new keyboard is designed or the original keyboard is modified as necessary to include a new balance rail.

Certified in QRS Piano-mation and PianoDisc Player Piano Sytems and MIDI sensors. Your piano can be easily and painlessly adapted to interface with the PC for music notation and educational programs as well as sound modules. This is the future, even for the traditionalist!

Jude Reveley

## TECH TIP (CONT.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

and fast system.

Tools required: one or more old plate screws or equivalent approximately 1.5" long, a claw hammer, diagonal cutters, a screwdriver.

### Proceed as follows:

1. Insert screw into bushing 2.5 - 3 turns or until it just grabs.
2. Extract the screw with a claw hammer as you would a nail. The bushing will pull out with the screw.
3. Using the diagonal cutters "snip" the bushing and it will fall off of the screw.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 for every bushing.

I prefer using a dozen screws.

In this manner there is less switching of tools in and out of my hands and thus it is more efficient. I balance efficiency with operational fatigue by not exceeding the repetition of a single task more than a dozen times in a row. So, in this manner:

Screw in a dozen screws.

Pull a dozen screws, with bushings attached, and leave in a pile.

Using the diagonals, clip all bushings off the screws.

Repeat steps 1 - 3.

**Added notes:** When I remove the bushings, the piano is down on a tilter.

I sit on a low stool and



"scoot along" as needed.

With no bending over, arm lifting, or heavy tools to handle, this is an easy job.

While technical skill in re-stringing is obviously the primary factor along with any necessary repairs, aesthetics are also important. Masking off, cleaning, filling, respraying the plate, and relettering should also be part of the job.

Debra Legg

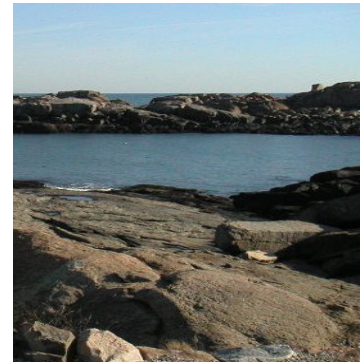
Please submit a technical tip. A picture or two helps. Debra's set the bar high, but we're a large chapter with a lot of experience between us. So show off!

## THANK YOU, NANCY PARRY

Dear Nancy,

Thank you once again for your gracious hospitality. The food was fabulous—those responsible made a great effort under your influence and inspiration. For seventeen years, now, you've shared a piece of your Cape Neddick summer with us. We did talk some shop. But as always, it was summer vacation at your house. The sun shone and there were only two mosquitos! It was perfect.

CB on behalf of the Chapter attendees.



## THE POEM PLACE?

"You've had years  
now of suffering for  
the lack of this  
feature. Here in  
one dense offering,  
fill that gap. And if  
this doesn't put you  
off for good, we'll  
get along fine."

Chris

P.S. I warned you  
about gap fillers  
in this first issue.  
Wither my space to  
indulge such  
additions with  
submissions!

### ODE TO A MUSE

A QUINTAINED ARRANGEMENT OF HEXAMETERED "ROSES"

Cyranose me rose-eloquent, O mistress of the poem place,  
that I may have both growth enough of heart-smartness  
to find the mindful words to bind your tomorrows to me  
and of nose to scent the sense of just those far-flowered words  
that reach beyond the prose proboscis of mere sentiment.

And couple these with word-sword skill enough to duel  
any doubt that grows when snows of lesser dreams fall down.  
Distract the taut, distraught thoughts of mundane provenance  
with whimsy. Yea, sweep all sorrows out to a sea  
of somewhere else, while I climb with happy truthes your trellis.

Song arrows, so sing about the softness of your skin,  
so slightly wound the defenses of your diffidence,  
that real perspective burrows into your briary redoubt,  
redolent of its own wild-sown aromas, refulgent  
as it emerges from throws of deep and dull disguise.

Here I plant these exotic phrases at your feet:  
as each borrows both from your sun and of your shade  
to grow, it will capture your gestures of nod and glance  
to out-dance all rival heart-gardeners with word-barrows  
brimming, laughing and singing up pretensions for attentions.

Under this august balcony goes no fear-frozen poet.  
And as persistent resistance steels me to my subject,  
let my nose for this sport be an imposing beak as I speak:  
it crows no weak, pretty, wishy-washy sort of crooning,  
but seeks to express, nay, effervesce you into swooning!

Christopher Brown

## NBSS (NO. BENNET ST. SCHOOL) CORNER

### Stats for 2008:

This past spring we graduated 23 students, and 10 of them graduated as RPTs! You'll be pleased to know that only 2 are residents of Mass. The others have all returned home to NH, CO, CT, NJ, VA, CA, NY, KS, PA, NY, MI, RI, and TX.

And, another school year has started up. We have 15 new students in the first year, and 8 in

the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In this group of 23, 5 are from Mass, 1 from WA, 1 from PA, 2 from CA, 2 from MI, 1 from WV, 1 from NY, 1 from VA, 2 from VT, 2 from ME, 1 from DC, 1 from TX, 2 from NH and 1 from Denmark. 6 are female, 17 are male.

Hopefully you will get to meet them at the various upcoming PTG meetings. Please don't hesitate to introduce yourselves!

### First Year Student Bio:

Brandy Hecht is an 18 year old 2008 graduate of Frankenmuth High School in Saginaw, Michigan. She is studying piano technology, following in her sister Jade's footsteps. (Jade Hecht, RPT is presently a 2nd year student). Both girls are planning to return to Saginaw after school to



Jade and Brandy Hecht

take over the large clientele of a pre-established business for piano tuning and repair.

Debbie Cyr, RPT

## BOSTON CHAPTER DELEGATE'S REPORT JUNE 2008

Hello to all my fellow Boston Chapter members! This Spring then Chapter President Paul Panek solicited volunteers to serve as our chapter's Delegate and Alternate(s) at PTG's annual Council session (Anaheim, CA June 16-17, 2008). I offered to go (as I have done many times in the past), and since no other RPT volunteered, I was appointed our chapter delegate (and we had no backup alternates).

Late in the evening on Sunday June 15, I flew in to LAX, arriving at the convention hotel around 2 AM. A delegate (from another New England state) gave me a "wake up call" ~ 6 AM asking me if I had enough copies for all the delegates of a very last minute rewrite of Bylaws Proposal 6!! W-e-l-l-l-l, I had thought that was his responsibility, but as I was also the Chair of the Bylaws Committee, I proceeded to do some last minute editing and running around in my sleep-deprived state, doing my best to get it printed in time for the opening of Council at 8 AM.

After I got that taken care of, the session had already started, but I arrived in time to vote on Proposal 1 (restricting past or present officers' referring to their office in advertising). The motion carried and such restriction has now been clarified.

As the Bylaws Committee Chair, it was my duty to bring the remaining proposals to the Council Floor (so I went up to speak very frequently).

Proposal 2 (spousal dues reduction) was defeated. While this could have saved a bit of money for the technician-couples in our midst (my brother Bob and sister-in-law Liz, for example), setting a precedent for reduced dues for reduced services was one of several arguments against the proposal.

Proposal 3 (revision of PTG exam bylaws & regulations) was very long (8 pages), and the ETSC's supporting arguments were

not well distributed to the delegates, so there was a fair amount of misunderstanding that had to be clarified during the session.

The vast majority of the changes in Proposal 3 were rewriting for consistency and moving text from one section to a more appropriate section (bylaws to regulations, as necessary; regulations to ETSC rules, as necessary). The main change that has financial consequence is to *Associate members* planning on taking exams to upgrade their membership to Registered Piano Technician: *the exam fees are doubled* in the proposal (as of January 1, 2009). The rationale was that the current exam fees do not cover the true costs of administering exams in an equitable manner. A small percentage of chapters and test centers (mostly high density populations on the East and West coasts) can offer exams in a timely manner, and may even appear to generate a "paper profit" (if one ignores the numerous hours of volunteered, unpaid, labor by the highly qualified examiners), while many other areas have few qualified examiners, great distances that must be traveled by examiners and examinees, and other difficulties that must be overcome.

During discussion of Prop 3 at Boston Chapter meetings, there was a consensus the proposed increase (from \$90 to \$180 for the tuning and technical exams, each) was too high, from the perspective of the potential examinee. The NBSS Piano Technology faculty are very proactive in encouraging their students toward joining PTG at the Associate level, and taking the exams toward becoming RPTs, and they have observed that increased fees (such as the recent doubling of the application fee) are a real impediment for their students. It is indisputable that NBSS has been a real "membership engine" for our chapter and our entire organization. In view of this I was planning on amending the proposal for a more modest increase.

Allan Crane (Wichita, KS) beat me to the microphone, and he moved that the proposed exam fee be changed from \$180 to \$150; I

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## CLASSIFIED ADVERTIZING

- Jobs Offered:** *Christopher Brown, RPT* of Concord Piano LLC needs more hours in the shop, seeks talented technician to help with tuning/repair clientele.  
**Contact:** Chris at 978-486-0610 or [christopherbrown@mail.com](mailto:christopherbrown@mail.com).
- 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).
- 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 ([thepianorebuilders.com](http://thepianorebuilders.com)). The action was displayed at NEECSO.  
*1912 Steinway M* playable or rebuildable. No cracks in soundboard!  
**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.  
*1909 Steinway model A* all orig except for 20-30 yr old ebony finish. Tulip legs, matching lyre and desk. Needs rebuild. \$8000 or best offer, in Woods Hole, MA  
**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".  
**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.  
*Numerous small uprights* in good condition for reasonable prices (most 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).

Create the category you need. The more extensively this column gets used the more valuable a resource it becomes. Please submit succinct entries in the format here used by the first Tuesday of the month! These are currently listed alphabetically by category. Other methods might not seem to favor me so much—please suggest...

(Continued from page 4)

seconded the motion. While there were some speakers on behalf of our proposed reduction, there was further discussion that the exam fees shouldn't be a barrier for a qualified, working candidate; that the exams are a great educational value; and that increased fees will help support implementation of the exams throughout the US & Canada. The reduction amendment failed, and the main motion passed after further vigorous debate.

Proposal 4 (Changing RVP Election Procedures) was quickly defeated.

Proposal 5 (Allied Trades Member, Franchised) came from our southern neighbor Connecticut. After considerable debate on this initiative, it was sent to the PTG Board for further development.

Proposal 6 (Disciplinary Code Changes) had several aspects which seemed flawed to the Board and PTG's lawyers, and seemed likely

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## 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

Robin Flint has recommended a "rooky" question – "expert" advice venue and also an ethics column. Doug Tybor has suggested that we ask newest members first for their bios.

Comments are welcome...

CB



*(Continued from page 5)*

to be defeated. A heavily edited version was offered by Ed Hilbert (VT) as a substitute amendment and despite the very-last-minute changes, it was generally well received. Still, none of these changes to the proposal had been considered by either the Bylaws Committee or the Board, and changes to our Disciplinary Code are not trivial. Therefore I moved that this friendly amendment to Proposal 6 proposal be sent back to the Bylaws Committee. This was agreed to by the Council.

Having taken care of the above business, we proceeded to the election of officers. The current slate of top officers (Dale Probst, President; Allan Gilreath, Vice President; Jim Coleman Jr., Secretary-Treasurer) was re-elected.

We then proceeded to the Regional Caucuses, where we re-elected Chris Solliday as the Northeast Regional Vice President and made nominations for several committees.

I think I've covered the most important business at the 2008 PTG Council session. I'm happy to clarify any of this to you if you have further questions. Greater detail is also available by logging in at the PTG website and going to the Member's "Resources" section, where you can find the full minutes of the Council's (and the Board's) proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Patrick Draine RPT,  
 Boston Chapter Delegate

## SEPTEMBER'S TECHNICAL

### Bruce Clark of Mason & Hamlin:

"Back check installation is a mystical wonder in the world of piano technology. If you look at old pianos, you will find that it is not uncommon for piano makers to botch the installation of back checks.

Imagine a botched piano for a moment. Some number of years later, a piano technician comes along and replaces the hammers on this piano. Does a splendid job, better quality hammers more accurately hung. Inevitably, the new hammers have a tail of a different length and thickness. And, the squaring arc this technician uses implies a different angle for checking.

Since the "leathers" are worn he recovers

the existing back check. Or perhaps, desiring a quality job, he pulls out the old checks and puts new and somewhat different checks into the old holes. For back check height this technician uses the old height of the old checks.

What are the odds that good checking will result?

For optimal results, the checks, the treatment of the hammer tails, and the installation must work together. Unfortunately, in real life, the location of the back check under the hammer tail is almost never adequately addressed. After regulation, the wires look more like spaghetti than back check wires.

To achieve good checking, location as well as the design of the check determines the outcome.

The Technical will address this problem. The WNG Back Check System includes a detailed procedure and the tools required to install back checks for a very high performance piano. This class will be hands on so participants will be able to use the jigs and perform the various tasks involved in back check installation.

