

GOOD Vibrations

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND CHAPTER OF THE PIANO TECHNICIAN'S GUILD, INC.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ruth Van Dine, RPT

We were just eight members meeting at Wade Johnson's home in Gloucester. After a prolonged illness It was wonderful to see John Harris. Tom Roy arrived in his classic Corvette. Now if he would only give rides! Unusually heavy traffic in the Providence area turned some folks back from attending.

As you will see in David's last report as our chapter Secretary – Wade, our outgoing President, was presented with a commemorative stein from the whole chapter for his many years of filling multiple positions in our chapter.

I gave a presentation of the class which I will be teaching along with Laura Olsen of MI and Ashley Turner of DC at the upcoming National Convention. The class entitled Business Basics is about managing a busy piano technician's office.

Hoping to see you-all at the Harpsichord Clearing House in Rehoboth, MA on June 18!

Ruth

JUNE MEETING

Harpsichord Clearing House - Dale Munsch

Dale will be outlining some of the steps taken in evaluating and restoring a harpsichord. He will review some of the instruments slated for restoration and their historical significance. Here there are about a dozen currently in the restoration pipeline and there will definitely be at least one instrument undergoing repairs/restoration. The gallery will be chock full of harpsichords, clavichords, chamber organs, and a couple of 18th century fortepianos, all in playing condition. Come and see this historical collection.

JUNE 2009

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Business Mtg

&

Technical

June 18, 2009

7:00 pm

Meeting at

Harpsichord Clearing House

9 Chestnut Street

Rehoboth, MA

Phone: 508-252-4304

Remember to join us for dinner
5:30 @

Gregg's Rest., 1940 Pawtucket
Ave, E Providence 401-438-5700

Directions for June 18th meeting:

7pm - Harpsichord Clearing House 9 Chestnut St, Rehoboth, MA phone 508-252-4304

5:30pm - Gregg's Restaurant 1940 Pawtucket Ave, East Providence phone 401-438-5700

Directions to Harpsichord Clearing House

From 95 Providence

Take 195 East

Take Broadway Exit (Exit #6)

Turn left at the end of exit ramp onto Warren Avenue, go .4 miles

At first traffic light, turn left onto Pawtucket Avenue

· **Gregg's Restuarant ahead on right .8 miles**

Tune Right onto ROUTE 44 East going 6.5 miles - This takes you thru East Providence, Seekonk and into Rehoboth

At the intersection of Route 118 (traffic light) take a right

Go 1.2 miles and take a right onto CHESTNUT STREET

Our driveway is immediately on the left

(If you get to the green mailbox #9, you have passed the entrance to our parking lot)

From the South 195:

Take exit 3 for US-6 toward Swansea

Turn left at Rte-6 - 0.5 mi

Turn left at Rte-118 - 6.5 mi

Turn left at Chestnut St

Our driveway is immediately on the left

(If you get to the green mailbox #9, you have passed the entrance to our parking lot)

Tid Bits.....

“Progress is always the difference between what is being done and what is being undone.”

- Gunnar I. Baldwin

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COMMENTS ON THE COUNCIL AGENDA FOR GRAND RAPIDS, by Wade Johnson:

We have received the agenda book for the meeting of PTG Council July 13-14 in Grand Rapids. I've spent some time with it, and members will be able to access it at our Chapter meeting June 18 (or sooner if you so request). The following comments are strictly my own and do not reflect any input from our Delegate (Ruth VanDine) or anyone else.

Bylaws Proposals: There are 12 of these in the book, and they were also sent to all members as a supplement to the *May PTJournal*. Most of these are of a "housekeeping" nature and not a cause for concern. Two of them deserve comment. **Proposal 6**, Creation of Allied Trades Member Category, proposed by the Washington DC Chapter, is a watered-down version of the amendment Wally Brooks and I tried so hard to accomplish in 2007-8. It was when I learned that most of the Regional Vice Presidents on the Board were firmly opposed to granting voting privileges to anyone who doesn't tune, that I gave up on the whole thing, as I think Wally also did. This new proposal doesn't even ask for voting rights, and even so it has been disapproved by the Bylaws Committee and the Board. **Proposal 7**, on the other hand which has been approved by the Board (although not the Bylaws Committee) is interesting because it may be a wave of the future. The CAUT (College And University Technicians) Committee has proposed that there be a new category of super-approval called "CAUT-Endorsement" which would be available to RPTs who are college or university technicians and who pass an additional examination. This is an approach which could eventually be used to credential rebuilders and maybe other specialists within the RPT pool. It will be interesting to see whether this proposal survives Council.

Other Issues: Reports of the PTG officers, RVPs, and Executive Director Barbara Cassaday reflect an organization striving to save money while dealing with the recession and improving the marketing of the RPT, access to the RPT exams, continuing education, and other member benefits. The annual convention is increasingly a money-loser, and membership and other non-dues income has dropped some. The Board, noting that our national dues have been on the low side compared to similar organizations and seeking to continue the improvements that are in the works, has proposed a \$20 (9 ½ percent) dues increase for 2010.

A Little About Harpsichords

Shared from another PTG Chapter Newsletter's Tech Presentation, unfortunately I can't find the source again to give credit.

Harpsichords, I admit, are not for everybody. Sir Thomas Beecham famously once said they sound like "skel-etons ... on a tin roof during a thunderstorm". (I'll leave it to your imagination to fill in the word I omitted.) Others, though, find them to be unique and sparkingly beautiful.

They were largely ignored during the 19th Century because they were thought of as obsolete because of the "superior" piano. In the early 20th century there was a revival of interest in them and in playing music of the pre-piano era. Some of the first 20th century harpsichords were built by piano companies in France and Germany and were built similarly to pianos. They had piano-like keyboards, soundboards and structure. In the mid-20th century, William Dowd and others studied instruments from the peak of harpsichord building around 1750, and began to make historical reproductions. These reproductions were lighter and simpler than the so-called "revival" instruments, and more true to the sound of historical harpsichords. There are many different kinds of harpsichords in use today, with various degrees of historical accuracy.

Some builders insist upon pure reproduction of 18th century instruments, including real quill plectra. Others make use of available technology, such as plastic jacks and plectra. Plastic parts are more durable than wood and are much easier to regulate. "Revival" style instruments are still around, too. The harpsichord built by Ben Bechtel is a beautiful example of a Dowd-influenced 20th century instrument designed to have the sound and

feel of a historical instrument. It is a French double-manual and has 2 8' sets of strings and 1 4' set. (The "foot" nomenclature designating the octave is taken from pipe organs.) It has a palette of sounds that result from the ability to play the sets of strings in any combination. The two manuals play two respective sets of jacks, where the set that plucks the string closer to the string termination produces a more "nasal" tone with more harmonics. There is also a "buff stop" which places a set of felts against the strings, giving a lute-like sound.

Tuning a harpsichord is similar to tuning a piano, but there are differences. Since the string tension is so light, there are generally no problems with residual tension in non-speaking parts of the strings, and no problems with pins being too loose. The tuning can be quite unstable with climate, but a harpsichord that is a little bit out of tune is not as obvious to the listener as a piano equivalently out of tune. There is more attack as less sustain than pianos. If you are asked to tune a harpsichord don't forget to ask whether concert pitch should be A440, or A415. Many harpsichords have a movable keyboard which can be shifted by a half-step. Historical (non-equal) temperaments are rarely requested, and usually players who want a historical tuning know how to do it themselves.

Harpsichord References - Books

The Harpsichord Owner's Guide: A Manual for Buyers and Owners by Edward R. Kottick. University of North Carolina Press, 1992

Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making by Frank Hubbard, Harvard University Press, 1965

A Guide to the Harpsichord by Ann Bond Amadeus Press, 2001

Ruckers: A Harpsichord and Virginal Building Tradition by Grant O'Brien, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Harpsichord - Web Sites

Claviers Baroques: www.claviersbaroques.com

Dolmetsch Online: www.dolmetsch.com/musictheory27.htm

The Harpsichord Clearing House: www.harpsichord.com

The Harpsichordist to the Internet: www.sankei.ws/harpsichord.html

Hubbard Harpsichords: www.hubharp.com

Expanding Brackets—Grand Piano Action Bracket Replacement

From June '09 **The Action**, *Newsletter of the Nebraska Chapter*
& **The Wippenpost**, *Newsletter of the Chicago Chapter*,
Piano Technicians Guild

YOUNG CHANG ACTION BRACKETS

During the early to mid-90's Young Chang Korea manufactured grand pianos for Wurlitzer, Weber and Pianodisk, as well as a few other stencils for large dealers. They all have the possibility of "growing action brackets". The metal brackets that the action rails are connected to actually expand over time. Blocking hammers, wide action spread or unstable regulation are sure signs. Only Young Chang brand pianos or stencil pianos sold by Young Chang America are covered by our warranty. The brackets are gray and die-cast from an aluminum alloy. The vendor mixed the alloys incorrectly so that the metal becomes unstable. To our customers I compare it to putting too much yeast in a bread dough mix. It generally takes from 2 to 5 years to start showing up. Do not judge the bad parts by appearance, because they may not show any signs of a problem. Remove them all and throw them away... far away.

This is a far-reaching situation so we must monitor the cost, keeping in mind that the piano owners needs are important to us and we want them to be happy with the results. The job should take no more that a few hours, one to replace the brackets and two or three to regulate. The new brackets have thicker, taller feet; so longer keyframe screws may be needed. Accordingly, you may also need to spend some time positioning the action on the keyframe and drilling new screw holes to attach the stack to the keyframe. Young Chang does not pay for a complete "concert" regulation because these pianos are several years old, and they would need some adjustment, in the best of circumstances. Bed the keyframe



This is the damage as the brackets expand and disintegrate.

and adjust the let-off. It may possibly need jack or drop adjustment, but keys and dampers are not affected. Be careful getting involved with hammer alignment as filing, voicing and normal wear are not covered by the warranty. You have to choose what is needed to get the piano playing well in just half a day.

The pianos that take the longest are usually the instruments that previous technicians misdiagnosed and tried to fix merely by regulation. They only recognized the symptoms, not the cause, so you will often find that the let-off dowels are adjusted too far down and are barely holding on to the screw stem by a thread. The average billing for this job in the U.S.A. is less than \$250. Any invoice for more than \$300 US must be pre-approved. However, if you're in the home and you run into unexpected problems that will bring the cost over \$300 and you can't reach us, then finish the job.

Please, carefully itemize your invoice so that we understand the reason for the extra time and there will be no delays in payment.

Problem: Metal action rail connecting brackets expand over time. This was due to an improper mixture of aluminum alloys during manufacturing, from 1990-1994.

Symptoms: Blocking hammers, unstable regulation, excessive spread measurement, loose let-off dowels (over adjusted), checking problems, slow soft shift. A bracket may not show any sign of defect, but cracks in its finish are common.

Parts: 4 to 5 replacement brackets (Two ends and two or three middle brackets, by model). Most common middle brackets have shorter 5 1/16" base measurement from toe to toe. Occasionally longer (6 5/8") middle brackets are used. Call Parts Dept. for new parts. Longer screws to attach action stack to keyframe may be needed, (#8 – 11/4" Round Head)

Tools needed:

- Phillips and flat head screwdrivers.
- 6" Metric ruler with millimeter graduations.
- Grand piano regulating tools.
- Drill with bit, wooden dowels and glue for plugs (if necessary).
- Service manual or specification sheet.

Time needed: About four to six hours, including regulation.

Procedure:

1. Remove action from piano and place on workbench or suitable area.
2. Remove action stack from keyframe.
3. Remove one end bracket, replace with new and set action spread to proper measurement. *Each bracket is connected with two screws through the hammer rail and one screw through the whippen rail. Adjust spread with whippen rail screw.*
4. *Action spread should be set to 112.5mm. (Models newer than 1992=113.5. Let-off buttons are at 90-degree angle to hammer rail) Measure spread from center pin of whippen flange to center pin of hammer flange*
5. Repeat process, in order, for each remaining bracket and double check spread measurements. *Replace all brackets! Do not judge by appearance. Immediately dispose of all old brackets.*
6. Replace stack onto keyframe: Check that original screw holes in the keyframe align properly with the screw holes in the brackets. It may be necessary to plug a hole in the keyframe with a wooden dowel and drill a new hole. (Pay close attention to the middle brackets with tile angled holes in front.)
 - *The action stack should attach firmly to the keyframe without twisting or deforming the keyframe.*
 - *The whippens and key capstans should be properly centered and aligned.*
7. Return the action to the piano and check strike point, alignment and bedding. Adjust keyblock adjusters, stop-block or dag screws and bedding screws as necessary.
8. Check the regulation and after-touch by: White key dip, jack position, repetition lever height, hammer height and level, Let-off, black key dip, drop, back check height and repetition lever springs. *(Adjust for proper function. However, all adjustments may not be necessary.)*




YC Inner Brackets (old behind new) showing the dimensional instability and degree of change.

Thank you for your support.

Phil Glenn, RPT - National Service Manager, Young Chang Acoustic Pianos - April 03

(Note...the latest contact information for Young Chang is **John Chang** [honest!], reached at **866-798-6979, ext 144** or by e-mail at jchang@ycapiano.com Word has it that he has been very responsive.)

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Rhode Island Chapter



Upcoming Meeting Dates:

June 18th – Harpsicord Clearing House Tour, Rehoboth MA

Summer Party - TBA

July & August – No meetings or newsletters
until September



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