

PHOENIX

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Newsletter of the Phoenix Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

April 2009

President's Message



Scott Helms, RPT

Something interesting happened to me this week when I was tuning. At my first appointment for the day, my customer's daughter, about 10 years old, came in and wanted to watch me tune. No problem, I said, and I showed her a few things in the piano – hammers, dampers, strings. The next question she asked was, "Do you like your job?" With no hesitation, I answered, "Yes, I love it!"

kids had asked. First, I realized that a big part of my job satisfaction comes from how much I enjoy talking with my customers, and teaching their kids about the instrument they're learning to play. I guess my former career in education really isn't my "former" career, because I am still drawn to teaching – I am just teaching a different topic in a different environment. Secondly, I thought about the fact that those kids are really the key to my job security. Most of my customers whose kids are taking lessons know absolutely nothing about the piano. My REAL customers are the kids who are taking lessons. They are the ones who reap the benefits of a well-serviced instrument, and they are the ones who are in the best position to alert their parents when something isn't right.

I finished the tuning and moved on to my next job thinking about the girl's question. I thought about the perks of self employment, the opportunities I have every day to see beautiful houses, meet great people, and take a shot at making great pianos sound greater and junk pianos sound somewhat more like a musical instrument. I arrived at my second appointment, where I met another young girl, this one probably 8. It was almost a repeat of the first conversation – I showed her the parts of the piano and how it worked, and amazingly enough, her first question was "Do you like your job?" I thought I was in an episode of "The Twilight Zone"! My answer, again, was that I loved my work. How weird it was to be asked the same question by two different kids in the same day! My guess was that these kids had overheard their parents saying that they hated their job, or maybe that they were worried about their job security.

Two things occurred to me as a result of the question these

I have met technicians who complain about kids who "get in the way" and want to watch them work. How short-sighted! If you take the time to make a connection with them, show them something interesting about the piano, and *show them what out-of-tuneness sounds like*, they will bug their parents to death the minute they hear the unisons whine. What's more, they *like you*, and will want YOU to come back. If you really want to seal the deal, learn the kids' names, write them in your notes, and the next time you go to service the piano greet them by name. Now the kids AND the parents are impressed. Even if you don't like kids, treat them as your customers and they will guarantee that you are never forced into a career change!

OUR NEXT MEETING: REGULATION with GLENN BROWN, RPT

Glenn will be offering the Technical Session on Grand Regulation on Monday, April 6th at 7:30 PM.

This meeting will be held at Glenn's shop. (See back page for map and address.) *Glenn is also inviting us to bring our significant others to this meeting at his home.*



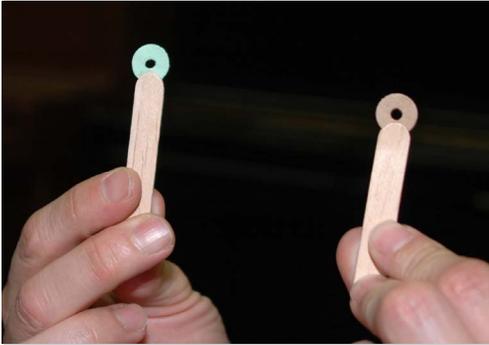
PHOENIX, ARIZONA CHAPTER

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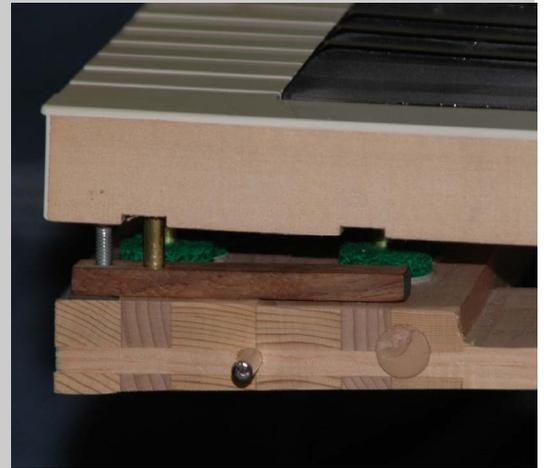
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Wendell Smock

Secretary & Editor:
Mark Purney, RPT



Our Previous Meeting

David Brown, RPT provided an excellent lesson on key leveling. Through his experience maintaining pianos in a university environment, David has assembled quite an arsenal of techniques and tools that are incredibly effective and efficient. Thanks, David!



For the National Council meeting, the Chapter voted to split reimbursement funds between the delegate and the alternate (\$300 each), with the idea that both should attend the session. In subsequent voting, Scott Helms was chosen as the delegate, and Mark Purney as alternate.



Troubleshooting “Clicks” in Grand Pianos



Mark Purney, RPT

A noisy action is fine for an AK-47, but bad in an RX-3. When we find such a piano, there are three options: Fix it, ignore it, or put on hearing protection. My clients prefer the first option. The most important part of the job is diagnosing quickly so we can get to the “fixing” part. A logical approach can rule out multiple suspects in one step. Below is a guide that I use when trying to hunt down the origin of an offending click. *Thanks to Jim Coleman Sr. for his additions to the list. Do you have more to share? Do you have methods for troubleshooting clicks in vertical pianos? If so, please send them to me so we can work on printing a guide for uprights.*

Grand Piano Click Troubleshooting Guide:

1. Check keyframe bedding (knock), and remove any foreign objects.
2. Check and tighten key stop rail.
3. Reach in and play the note by pushing up on the wippen to see if the actual key is making the click, or something in the action.
4. Pull out the action and tighten hammer rail screws.
5. If it is not the rail, does the clicking go away when action out? If so, it's likely damper-related.
 - Check damper lever support flanges for loose screws or pinning.
 - Check damper underlevers for loose pinning or loose leads.
 - Check damper guide rail for missing or worn cloth.
 - Check damper upstop rail for missing or worn felt.
 - Check for loose screws holding the upstop rail.
 - Check key-end felt for excessive wear or if missing.
 - Check if upstop rail is too high, causing individual damper mechanisms to contact wood: Depress damper pedal and lift dampers manually.
6. Check the hammer butt and wippen flange screws.
7. Check for loose hammer heads and hammer butt flange pinning. (Loose hammer head may need to be removed and re-glued.)
8. Check if the sound is from hammers catching on worn backchecks.
9. Check the repetition springs.
10. Check if hammer shanks are hitting the rep. lever height screw.
11. Verify that the jack center pin did not work itself out, touching neighboring wippen.
12. Verify jack is not contacting side of rep lever window.
13. Check for hard or loose knuckles.
14. Check for hard or missing felt on jack regulating button where wippen spoon makes contact. Press on the jack and let it snap back against the spoon to listen for click. Needle or replace felt.
15. Check the wippen cushion (capstan noise from hard felt)

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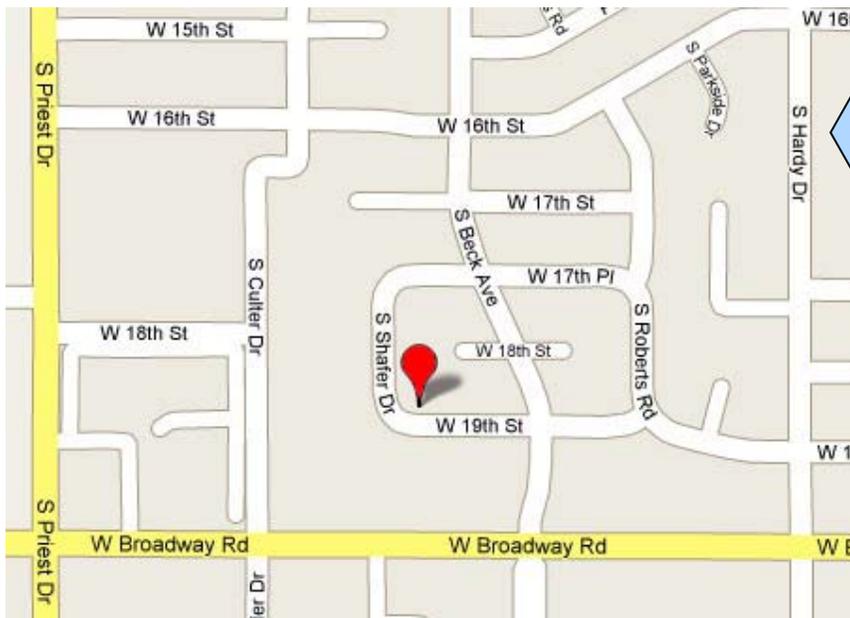
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Our Next Meeting:

Monday, April 6th at 7:30 PM

Glenn Brown Piano Rebuilding
1108 W. 19th St.
Tempe, AZ 85281



**PIANO
TECHNICIANS
GUILD**

PHOENIX, ARIZONA CHAPTER

All expressions of opinion and all statements of supposed facts in this letter are published on the authority of the authors listed and are not to be regarded as expressing the views of the Phoenix Chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild unless such statements or opinions have been adopted by the Phoenix Chapter or the Guild.

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