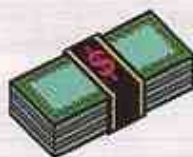


# "THE SOONER TUNER"



Official Newsletter, Oklahoma Chapter 731  
The Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.  
March '98

## NEXT MEETING

DATE: March 12th  
TIME: 8:30AM  
LOCATION: Northwest Baptist Church  
3030 NW 23rd, OKC  
405-942-5557

DIRECTIONS: From I-44 & 23rd go east to Drexel,  
then south one block, then east one block, go to east parking lot

### • • • TECHNICAL • • •

#### **Teflon Bushings - Friend or Foe?**

by Keith McGavern, RPT

Explore the reality of teflon bushings  
introduced in Steinway pianos from 1962 through approximately 1982.  
This represents about 35,000 pianos.


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### LAST MEETING

Big turnout at the last meeting held at Ross Trawick's place. Lots of doings with business items, social activities, and a superb technical on hanging hammers in a vertical plane. Ross created some ingenious jigs for this job on a very unique Chickering small upright. It even had brass damper heads that Ross individually polished. Pretty impressive!

### 1998 SCHEDULED MEETINGS

April 16th		All meeting times 8:30AM except July & December
May 21st		
June 18th		
July (no meeting)		
August 20th		
September 17th		
October 22nd		
November 19th		
December (undecided)		

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March is a really interesting month. It is made interesting by the fact that it follows February. In fact, it follows so closely to February, because February decided to be a short month, it allows March to sneak up on you almost completely by surprise. Sure you know in your hearts that March is coming, but February fools you. Every four years it pulls this little Leap Year trick that disguises it into feeling a little more like a regular month with 29 days and all. But the rest of the time it just hangs out making you believe that you have all the time in the world, when in fact, it's March, and you haven't even changed the date on your watch yet. This explains why I forgot to send Keith this article until today. I accept total responsibility, but I still say that February is a sneaky little month.

I have been reliving some of my high school days. In fact, I have finally figured out just why I had to take Algebra in school. You see I have a son who is currently taking Algebra, and the only reason I can see for learning it in high school was so that I would be equipped to help him with his homework.

It is amazing all of the things we learned in school, or in life which we have shelved just waiting for some opportunity to use them. I am sure I have forgotten many things in regard to piano work which I have shelved, just waiting for the right instrument to cross my path, so I can retrieve the information and rescue the day. It is amazing what the human mind can store. Of course you have to put something in, in order to store it.

That is one of the nice things about PTG. Our participation allows us to gather tips and ideas which we may not put immediately into practice, but if we pay attention to them and store them properly, they may prove very beneficial.

I hope all of you can make this month's meeting. It is scheduled for the 12th to allow you to participate fully in spring break. It will be held at Northwest Baptist Church in OKC. There was a terrific turnout at last month's meeting, and I hope for a similar gathering in March. Don't let it sneak up on you!

Norman Cantrell, RPT

## **PIANOTECH (Internet) STUFF**

*"...a little history of the development  
of the Kawai EX piano..."*

by Don Mannino RPT, Manager, Kawai Piano Technical Support

Date: Thu, 24 Apr 1997

Around 1980 Kawai opened it's modern grand piano factory near Hamamatsu. This is one of those super modern piano factories you've heard about in Japan, where everything is geared towards efficiency and precision. Alongside the factory and office buildings is a little lake with another building alongside, which is the Kawai R&D laboratory. This has the anechoic chamber and all the computerized measurement and analysis equipment, and has a large workshop area, so that they can build things and roll them right into the lab and test them. This whole department is referred to as the "Laboratory" by Kawai employees. It is a place where most piano technicians would give anything to work, at least long enough to learn 10% of what they know.

Besides doing research, the Kawai R&D lab makes pianos. Each piano is a little different from the next because each one is testing some new small design change. These are the EX pianos. The laboratory can only produce 30 or so EX pianos in this way per year, and these are the instruments that are Kawai's premier concert instruments. Since the early '80s this facility has made only about 400 EX pianos.

The laboratory also makes the RX-A piano. That model piano is finished off (regulation and voicing) in the production factory, but the instrument is made in the R&D laboratory.

At Kawai America we currently have 4 EX pianos in the showroom or out on local loan. The oldest is #36, and the youngest (a super powerful instrument) is #376. #36 was on loan to a University for many years (I believe the University decided to buy one finally - I'm not sure though), and just had a new set of hammers and shanks installed. This piano doesn't have the power of the new EX pianos, but has a similar full, round tone quality that sings nicely. I was interested to see that it has all single-tied treble strings - the new ones are more traditionally strung.

(1 of 3)

I have played and tuned many fine concert pianos over the years, and I have picked my favorites out - I can remember a very fine Mason & Hamlin; 3 or 4 really wonderful Steinway Ds (mostly New York, as I've only seen a couple of Hamburg Ds up close), and one big mama Fazioli that I thought had great potential and power (but was voiced a bit thin and bright for me). The new EX pianos that we have here are in the same category in my humble (and unavoidably biased) opinion.

They do vary. One will be a little less powerful but will sing beautifully. The next will blow the windows out and sound similar to one of those huge, fat toned New York Ds'. But even with the variability the quality of sound and action are consistently up there with the best instruments.

We name some of the pianos after Greek gods after they have been used a little and establish a personality.

We have one here now (Aphrodite) which has the widest dynamic range of any piano I have played - when it first came it had been affected by excess humidity (it was pouring rain when they wrapped the action and sealed the piano, and the silica gel couldn't handle it all) so was terribly soft and mushy sounding - I thought we had a real dog. One of the head voicers from Japan (Mr. Otake, for those who have met him) was coming, so he voiced the piano up, then evened things out, and this piano has become everyone's favorite. It is incredibly warm and rich when played softly, has a clean and pure tone, and could be played comfortably in any living room. When you dig into it roars, and will fill any concert hall. Really an amazing piano.

Prof. Merzhanov (from the Moscow Conservatory and the Rachmaninov competition) performed on it here in L.A. last fall, and he asked if we could ship it to Moscow for the next competition!



We have another EX (as yet unnamed) which I thought was our least gifted of the new instruments, but which was loaned to Awadagin Pratt for some concerts and master classes last week. It had been a bit weak in tone (he was playing the Brahms first concerto, I think) so I spent a day bringing the tone up a little and increasing the power in the mid-treble a bit. He has now requested that this same instrument be used for some of his future concerts. In light of the comparison between this and the other EXs we have on hand I was very surprised that he liked it so much - but this helped give me perspective on how a concert pianist would rank it compared to all the pianos he sees.

Well, enough. Sorry this is so long, but I can't help that it is a favorite subject, and I usually bite my tongue (maybe sit on my hands is a better description) and try not to spout off too much. I am very fortunate to be able to work on (and practice on at lunch time!) these instruments.

I'll refrain from further gushing now.

By the way, a rumor was circulated by someone from another piano company last summer regarding the pianists' overwhelming choice of the EX at the William Kapell competition in 1996. This rumor accused Kawai of paying money (the rumor was even specific! \$2,000!) to competitors if they used the Kawai. This is ridiculous and, of course, untrue. First of all, what a hollow success that would be once word got out! Second, anyone who knows Kawai's spending policy in marketing knows that the idea is pretty absurd. The pianists had their choice of pianos, and most of them just liked the Kawai better.

I mentioned this rumor to Sing Hsi Su, the second prize winner, when I tuned for her in January. She laughed and said, "I wish that were true! I could use the money!"

Don Mannino RPT, Manager  
Kawai Piano Technical Support, U.S. and Canada  
DonMannino@worldnet.att.net or DMannino@kawaius.com

## **≈ CLASS NOTES ≈**

*(Taken by Keith McGavern, RPT, from a seminar long ago)*

### ***Grand Reconditioning"***

by Susan Graham, RPT

- 1) Never pick up anything you can break.
- 2) Quote price spread \$500-\$800, not around \$600
- 3) Working on location allows customer to see actual performance time.
- 4) Gentleman's agreement (one day's work)  
Contract (more than one day, 1/3 down)
- 5) Make certain the person requesting the work is the paying party.
- 6) Time & experience is what I have to sell, can't take niceness to the bank.

### ***"The Art of Voicing"***

by Lou Tasciotti, RPT

- 1) Every hammer is different.
- 2) What works for one does not necessarily work for another.
- 3) Before voicing: tuning, regulation, touch weight
- 4) Hammers are what they are (you have to learn to work with them at face value)
- 5) Tone is on the surface. Volume is underneath. They work hand-in-hand.
- 6) Surface needling does not last. So what, neither does a tuning.
- 7) Voicing changes from day-to-day with usage, temperature, and humidity.
- 8) Pianists compensate for voicing discrepancies.
- 9) Only go for the obvious. Odd man out.
- 10) Have a point of reference so you won't over voice.
- 11) If possible, have the customer establish a point of reference as to how they want their piano to sound.
- 12) Use white chalk to mark, felt to erase.
- 13) Proper voicing does not shorten the life of the hammer.  
Exceptions: grooves from playing, or voicing back & forth between bright & dull constantly.
- 14) Qualities of voicing: sustain, timbre, tone, volume
- 15) Hardening hammers penetrates and works best the first time around. Lacquer will drift to inner core.
- 16) Pound in your voicing.

## Recommended Reading

### *"Three vs. Four"*

by Yat-Lam Hong, Western Michigan Chapter  
(Piano Technicians Journal, February 1998, page 24)  
This article might surprise you. Pretty interesting!

### The "Kick" Zone

(closely related to after touch)  
from  
Keith McGavern, RPT

"You will never have a greater or lesser dominion than that over yourself."  
(Leonardo da Vinci)

.....

"Everyone has a photographic memory. Some just don't have film."  
(author unknown)

.....

"By using your intelligence,  
you can sometimes make your problems twice as complicated."  
(Ashleigh Brilliant)

.....

"If it can't be done the way it should be done,  
it should be done the way it can be done."  
(from an old Netherland carpenter)

.....

Law of Unintended Consequence:  
where solving one problem will cause at least one new one.  
(author unknown)

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"All expressions of opinion and all statements of supposed facts are  
published on the authority of the author as listed and are not to be regarded  
as expressing the views of this Chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild."