

# News & Notes



Newsletter of the Boston Chapter  
of the *Piano Technicians Guild*

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### MARCH MEETING—WHAT'S IN THE BAG FEATURING **RUTH VAN DINE, RPT** (RI CHAPTER)

- Lessons from the field
- Easy and efficient mobile shop
- Streamlining the tool and supplies kits
- Consolidating appointments

When: **March 15, 2011**

Where: **Aardvark Piano Restorations**  
65 Sprague Street, Hyde Park, MA

Schedule: **6:00 p.m.** Gather, Dine, Converse

- Dinner by Evan Ewing
- Mini-technical by Gary Ford

**7:00 p.m.** Chapter Business Meeting

**7:30 p.m.** Technical - "What's in the Bag"

## "PREZ SEZ"

### Pianos Know: or, "if pianos could talk"



Greetings Technicians! As I drove to this morning's client, contemplating past fiascos and grapplings with possessed pianos, it occurred to me that balance in life and work is almost a trick, sometimes a mystery. I've been stripping screws, bending pins, and tweezering slivers for longer than I care to think, yet surprises still happen.

It happened the other morning when I arrived at my first appointment. I shut off the engine and observed an SUV whiz up to park nearly adjacent but across the street, making for an awkwardly narrow space for passing cars. Annoyed and muttering to myself, I moved my car to behind the SUV to avoid making an obstacle course for traffic. As we emerged from our vehicles I realized I knew this person from another place and time...the house manager from a prominent client on Beacon Hill, whose Steinway I tuned for years but haven't seen in years because the child grew up and left the home. It was OLIVE! the best damned house manager in Boston. My resentment evaporated. We had a noisy hug in the middle of the street and proceeded together to the same house, almost bumping biceps crossing the threshold. "Are you working here?" "Yes, Are YOU working here?!" "Yup!" Our mutual client of today sold the Steinway to our former clients on Beacon Hill many years ago, and Olive, now working for this client today, had no idea of the piano relationship, nor did our current client realize Olive's former employer was the purchaser of her old Steinway. Inside the house, we stood with the client, blinking at the coincidence. But the piano knew. Oh yeah, that piano definitely knew.

— Cheers, Doshie Powers, RPT; President, Boston PTG



## TECHNICAL TIPS

### METAL POLISH

Friction...the best way to minimize piano performance. Combat friction by making sure those critical action parts are smooth and polished.

Joe Morocco provides us the following web link to a metal polish that he prefers. This product, available at Restoration Hardware, will hang on vertical surfaces and is really good for treating balance pins.

[www.wenol.com](http://www.wenol.com)



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### STEINWAY MODEL D HAMMERS (and ONLY Model D hammers)

Here's a handy contribution from John von Rohr. He recently received a set of Steinway D hammers, and Steinway included this note with his order:

*Please be aware that these new Model D hammers are being delivered with no lacquer solution or "juice" having been applied. Fabrication improvements have significantly reduced the amount of reinforcing solution that may be required. For this reason, please apply any solution sparingly if tone building is required.*

And, here's John's note to all of us regarding the topic (emphasis added):

"As this is a considerable departure from past practices, I called David Kirkland at Steinway to ask about it. He explained to me that they are using the same presses and temperatures during pressing but have changed from 18.5 lb felt to 25 lb felt. They look beautiful but are heavier. This set has a hammerweight 1.5 grams plus over recent sets I have used and will have a considerable effect on balance weight. ***I suspect that swapping out a set of factory pre-hung hammers on a recently built piano will be problematic at best.***"

If anyone wants an excel sheet with the hammerweights on it, e-mail me at [jvonrohr@att.net](mailto:jvonrohr@att.net).

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**DAVID STANWOOD** *(submitted by David)*

I've always had a love for pianos. When I was 7 years old I wanted to take piano lessons but I was told I had to be 9 years old to start. I made my mother call the piano teacher and I played for her over the phone. She said I could take lessons.

In high school, I wanted to take machine shop as a major. I was told I couldn't do that because I wouldn't have enough credit to go to college. However, I figured I could attend summer school for credit. In the end, I was the first machine shop major to graduate from Wellesley High School to go to college.

I've spent many a summer sailing on Buzzards Bay and even sailed professionally for a time in the West Indies. I used to stop into Steinert's and talk sailing with Paul Murphy Jr. and try out the pianos. I asked him "How does one learn to tune pianos?" He said "Just walk up to the North End. The North Bennet St. School is the best in the country".

I took the walk and a whole new world opened up for me. The first question I asked the Director Bill Garlick was "If a piano doesn't feel good, how can you change it" he replied very honestly: "That isn't easy". I attended NBSS 1977-79. It was the first year of the two year program, with David Betts teaching the second year. Soon after graduated, I started teaching at NBSS, but I really wanted to get out on my own. I moved to Martha's Vineyard and opened a tuning/rebuilding business there in 1981.



By 1988, I had concluded that something was missing in the knowledge of pianos, and it had to do with key balancing. I was convinced that there was a way to associate static measurements with dynamic playing quality. The experts told me this couldn't be done so naturally I gave it a try. In 1990, I published the Balance Weight System which corrects for friction errors in weighing off with down weight. Around this time, I also pioneered the use of hard anodized aluminum capstans for reduced wear, low friction, and light weight.

Through the 1990's, I developed and was granted a patent for Precision Balancing of piano keys using digital scale techniques and came up with the Equation of Balance, which explains the weight/leverage relationships of the grand piano action. I also pioneered the use of hammer weight specifications and published the first ever hammer weight rating charts.

Recently, I invented the first practical Adjustable Leverage Action, which allows the pianist to turn two knobs and radically change the balance point of the keys and the dynamic playing quality of the piano. This is now the major focus of my work. In 2007 I received the North Bennet St.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 28—May 1, 2011:** MARC, Hotel Bethlehem, Historic Bethlehem, PA

**May 11, 2011, 7:30 p.m.:** Tone Regulating Seminar, M. Steinert & Sons, Boston, MA  
Presented by Kent Webb, Steinway & Sons, NY  
(Contact Liz Diamond at Steinert's, 617-426-1900 x223)

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FOR SALE




Vose baby grand

Christine Lovgren  
(508) 733-2935



1912 Steinway O  
Fully rebuilt with new soundboard and new action. Flame mahogany finish. Hear it being played by going to [www.aardvarkpiano.com](http://www.aardvarkpiano.com) and go to pianos for sale page.

\$33,000



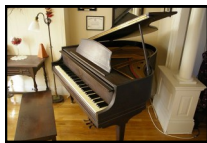
Steinway Model O

George Crawford  
[georgespikecrawford@yahoo.com](mailto:georgespikecrawford@yahoo.com)



Steinway Model K (2002)  
\$17,000

John Otis  
[john816@aol.com](mailto:john816@aol.com)



Brewster 4'9" grand (1930s)  
\$1,300  
Alcohol lamp  
\$10.00

Paul Piszczek  
(617) 241-0281  
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TIDBITS



Left: (front row, left to right) Xiaodan Liu, Mark Seemig (our newest RPT), Barry Rosenberg, Jim Ialeggio, and the diligent note-taker (who was not identified in time) get the low down from Tony McKenna regarding the ball peen hammer voicing technique discussed during the February 2011 Chapter meeting.

Below: Tony demonstrates the ball peen hammer voicing technique.



DID YOU KNOW...

...that in 1951, Mr. David Stanwood joined the world as an infant. Also in 1951, Charles Schultz introduced Schroeder, that yellow-haired virtuoso of the Peanuts gang...as an infant at the piano!

CHAPTER ADMINISTRATION

News & Notes  
[www.bostonptg.org](http://www.bostonptg.org)

Boston Chapter PTG Officers

- Doshie Powers, President
- Gary Ford, Vice President
- Joe Morocco, Treasurer
- Doshie Powers, Secretary (acting)

Chapter Committees

- Paul Piszczek, Newsletter
- Pat Draine, Tech Programming
- Jude Reveley, Librarian
- David Nadworny, Tech Exam
- Chris Lovgren, Tuning Exam

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