November Chapter Meeting Notice

WHEN: Monday November 4th @ 6:30 PM
WHERE: Steinway Piano Gallery of Detroit
2700 E West Maple Rd, Commerce Charter Twp, MI 48390

• Movie night: “Claude Montal” by PTG foundation

Hosted by Tim Hoy, President, CEO at Steinway Piano Gallery of Detroit. Dinner will be served

Message from the President

Hello, fellow PTG’ers. It’s that time again, a meeting approaching, and a message from your president. I can hear the groans now....... Anyway, our next meeting will prove to be something different from the usual. It’s going to be MOVIE NIGHT!! Oh, yes, we will have a business meeting, and dinner, provided by our gracious host Tim Hoy at Steinway Piano Gallery of Detroit. But this time I wanted to take a break from the ordinary (to steal a phrase from a well-known TV advertisement), and do something totally different. So, we will be watching the video produced by the PTG Foundation about Claude Montal, who could be considered an important ancestor to our piano tuning profession. A truly remarkable person. This, from the Foundation:

‘A Glimpse into Montal’s Paris’ celebrates the life and work of Claude Montal, a self-taught piano tuner and technician, who became a piano builder, an inventor, and author of the standard text of piano technology for the 19th century, 'The Art of Tuning.' These accomplishments would be monumental for anyone, but are even more remarkable for an individual of humble origins and blind since childhood in the early 19th century.
The event documented in this video arose from the publication of the first English translation of 'The Art of Tuning' by Fred Sturm, RPT.

This was presented live at the convention in Denver in 2015 (which I missed) and should be very interesting. The meeting and viewing will be held on Monday, November 4, 2019 at 6:30 PM, and will START with the business meeting, followed by dinner, and then the show. Please come and share in the fellowship, and BYOP (bring your own popcorn). I hope to see you there!

Many thanks to Clem Fortuna, RPT, who hosted the October meeting at his shop in Grosse Pointe Park. He has some very interesting pianos there, and we also had a good technical presentation from Nevin Essex, RPT from Cincinnati. A good evening was had by all, and if you missed it, you really did miss some cool pianos. I have the venues for the February, March, and April meetings lined up (April in TOLEDO!), so please come and share with us. Clark

-CLARK SPRAGUE, RPT

Meeting minutes
- October 7th, 2019

MINUTES OF THE 07 OCT 2019 PTG CHAPTER
481 MEETING

The October 2019 meeting of PTG Chapter 481 convened at 6:30 pm at Fortuna Piano, Grosse Pointe Park, MI. The meeting was hosted by Clem Fortuna. A quorum of members was present.

Clem Fortuna introduced Nevin Essex, RPT, from Cincinnati, OH. Clem then went on to give an overview of his business at Fortuna Piano, saying that he had been in this particular Grosse Pointe Park location for about six years. Most of Clem’s business is field work, but there are approximately ten 'project' pianos on the floor of his store which are of special interest to him and about which he explained some of the more interesting aspects as

Richard’s Jokes

Q. What do you call someone who hangs around with musician?
A. A drummer.

Q. How many drummers does it take to change a light bulb?
A. None. They have machines to do that now.

Q. What did the timpanist get on his I.Q. test?
A. Drool.

Q. What's the definition of a quarter tone?
A. A harpist tuning his unison strings.

Q. Why are pianists fingers like lightning?
A. They rarely strike the same spot twice.

Q. How can you tell if a violin is out of tune?
A. The bow is moving.

Q. Why is a violinist like a Scud missile?
A. Both are offensive and inaccurate.

Q. How do you know if a viola section is at your front door?
A. No one knows when to come in.

Shared by Richard Bittner, RPT

Need a new car or a new piano?
Shared by Cal Champine.
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follows:

- Clem had sold a Danish, Stein-Neilsen piano that morning. The piano was 4’ long and built similar to a harpsichord.
- another piano on display, an Evestaff, English piano. The piano had 73 keys and was a sister to one in his home.
- a Hardman-Peck mini-piano circa 1950s. Clem pointed out that most of his pianos were locally acquired from around metro Detroit.
- a C.W. Haywood concert piano having no metal plate, very difficult to keep in tune.
- a Chickering metal action piano (very heavy action) circa 1880, having screw adjustable spoons.
- a Bosendorfer reverse action grand piano.

All these instruments had interesting idiosyncrasies which Clem demonstrated and explained.

The meeting broke at 7:00 pm for dinner, consisting of delivered pizza, salad, and soft drinks.

At 7:40 pm Clark Sprague called the meeting to order. Clark announced that Tim Hoy will be hosting the November meeting at the Steinway Piano Gallery in Commerce Township, MI. Meeting will take place Monday November 4th.

Treasurer’s report specified a current financial balance on hand of $12,230.00; report was accepted by voice vote.

Clark reviewed old business of cancellation of EPOR due to too few registrants. Clark is looking for other opportunities for non-RPT members to learn piano tuning and repair.

Clark introduced Jeanne Barrett to discuss new business. Jeanne had been investigating the possibility for PTG sponsoring a booth at the Michigan Music Conference (MMC) which in 2020 will be held in Grand Rapids, dates January 16-18, 2020. The 2018 MMC attendance was 9,000 people, so PTG exposure would be significant. Attendees are typically music teachers, students, and administrators. Jeanne provided a cost breakdown:

- booth $675;
- 5 attendants (2 from Detroit-Windsor + 3 from other chapters);
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- total cost $2,300;
- PTG home office to reimburse 50% of cost, $1,145.
- Western Michigan chapter to reimburse 1/2 remaining cost of attendee + booth;
- final outlay for Chapter 481 would be $575.

A motion was proposed to move forward with plans for a PTG booth at 2020 MMC, with Chapter 481 outlay at $575. This motion was seconded, and voice vote approved by quorum.

At 8:15 pm the meeting adjourned and Clark introduced Nevin Essex, RPT to make the technical presentation “Voicing and Concert Prep”. Nevin described his background in the piano business since the 1980s leading up to his current piano work with 4 orchestras and 2 universities. Nevin prepares orchestra pianos, but frequently the piano tuning is done by local technicians. His concert pianos are usually new, Steinway pianos.

Subjects Nevin chose to discuss:
- aftertouch (motion in the action after let-off);
  Should be approximately 1/16" let-off;
  Should be approximately 1/16" drop;
  Should be approximately 0.030" aftertouch.
- for good repetition, need close checking (1/2" to 5/8"; fast (tight) repetition springs.
  NOTE: there should be some friction in the hammer flange centers, to control hammer bounce.
- tone; good tone is affected by four factors:
  1) hammer mating (hammer to string);
  2) unison tuning;
  3) termination (agraffe or bridge pins);
  4) resiliency (needling of hammer felt).

Nevin went on to discuss these factors in detail, including:
Seating strings onto bridge, e.g. with brass or wooden rod or tool. Do this first, quickly, prior to other work.

String levelling, using bubble tool on the strings.

Hammer spacing, using unicorda pedal to shift hammers out from under left strings, and using a 1-1/2 mm shim to block action 1/2 of shift distance, to check 1/2 shift strike uniformity.
Then changing to a 2-1/2 mm or 3 mm shim to check non-strike uniformity.

Needling, stright thru strings into hammer crown.
NOTE: to avoid wasting time, these steps should be accomplished in correct order.

Nevin prefers shellac for voicing (hardening) hammers. He achieves better results with shellac than with lacquer.
- apply shellac (de-waxed shellac) to hammer using dropper bottle.
- wash hammer surface with denatured alcohol to remove surface brightness, but retaining interior body of the hammer.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm. Nevin’s and Jeanne’s presentations were well received and appreciated by all attendees. Many thanks to Clem Fortuna for hosting the meeting and arranging dinner. The Fortuna Piano store has many interesting, vintage pianos on display.

Notes as submitted by Larry Young, 12 October 2019.

-Peculiar and Perplexing Pianos - 10
“The Fluid Piano”

While some electronic keyboards enjoy the option of exploring Eastern tunings or historic temperaments easily, the acoustic piano is largely locked into one tuning system at a time. Composer and musician Geoffrey Smith attempted to change that with the Fluid Piano. His patented invention was built in the UK in 2009 by harp and harpsichord maker Christopher Barlow.

Every key on this instrument has its own pitch sliding mechanism, made of slippery acetal plastic. The sliders, acting as a front termination point for the string, are white or black to denote whether it corresponds to a natural or sharp. They are fitted with a bolt into a slot routed into the front of the pinblock. The pitch can be adjusted about a semitone up or down.

The tone is more like a fortepiano or hammer dulcimer than a modern piano, strung with plain wire bichords throughout with brass in the bass. The action mechanism is based on a rather obscure 18th Century instrument called the tangent piano. This means that the strings are struck by a wooden piece which travels straight up through a slot, similar to a harpsichord jack. There is an intermediate lever similar to a whippen, and a separate tangent to control the dampers.
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To date this instrument seems to have been used mostly for exploring eastern musical styles, utilizing the sliding function to emulate Indian ragas and such. It may have other musical potential, but whether others will commission the building of more Fluid Pianos remains to be seen.

-CLEM FORTUNA, RPT

Treasurer’s Report

-CAL CHAMPINE, RPT

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Editor’s Note

Thank you for all the contributors to this issue, Clark, Larry, Clem, Richard and Cal! I also continue to request any of you to submit me anything that you’d like to share in our newsletter. Please send it to me by email (k.nabeshima@gmail.com). Thank you!