

The Sooner Tuner

January 2002

Oklahoma Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Bob Qualls RPT Honored

In October the Oklahoma Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild voted to send a donation to the PTG Foundation in honor of Bob Qualls RPT. Qualls is one of the founding members of the Piano Technicians Guild and has been servicing pianos longer than anyone else in Oklahoma. He still answers the phone, "Qualls Piano Service," tunes pianos occasionally, and attends PTG conventions when he can. He is currently working on refurbishing a 1904 piano. We are privileged to have Qualls as a member of our Oklahoma Chapter.

Christmas Party a Success

A big thanks to David and Barbara Bonham who hosted our 2001 PTG Christmas party in their newly-remodeled lakeside home. Our Oklahoma Chapter President liked the food so well that he suggested we have our party at the Bonham's every year. After dinner, David treated everyone to a cruise around the lake to see the Christmas lights. Thank you, Barbara and David, for the preparation you put into the delicious candlelight dinner and into hosting this event. The 2001 PTG Christmas Party added a special touch to our holiday celebrations.

Next Meeting

When

Thursday, January 17, 8:30 a.m.

Where

Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts in Edmond. The university is 1/2 mile east of Eastern on Memorial Road. Turn into the main entrance (pond). At stop sign, turn right into parking lot. Enter the main entrance of the Garvey Fine Arts Center and follow signs to the room where we are meeting.

Technical Presentation

Norman Cantrell, Certified Tuning Examiner, will oversee a group of RPTs in performing a master tuning on one of OCUSA's grand pianos. The RPTs will give input on the position of each note until the tuning is optimal. Measurements from this master tuning will be saved for comparison during the PTG Tuning Exam. Our meeting will begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. so that we can be finished by early afternoon.

A Great Pianist's Clues to Piano Technicians
By Valerie Crawford

When Misha Dichter came to Oklahoma City in September 1999, I thoroughly enjoyed hearing him in person for the first time. What was even better than hearing him play, though, was attending a master class he taught at the University of Oklahoma during the weekend.

Rumor had reached me that Dichter was a "damper freak." He supposedly nails any piano technician who doesn't have all the dampers lifting precisely together (even though 100% damper regulation is impossible, right?). During the master class, Dichter said that his teacher at Julliard taught him to use 10 different levels of pedal. No wonder he is picky about damper regulation. His pedal technique depends on it.

Another interesting practice Dichter employs is the almost constant use of the una corda to find what he calls the sweet spot in the hammers of the individual piano. He prefers not to play in the grooves and has his foot almost always moving the hammers back and forth for effect during a piece. This has become so natural for him that it requires little conscious effort.

One of the students at the class was having a hard time hitting a high D# leap in her piece. Dichter gave her some tips and then told about a pianist he knew who one time had all the strings in the vicinity of that note tuned to D# so that if he missed a key it would still be D#.

Dichter keeps his fingers close to the keys as he plays. He said this enables you to play faster than you thought possible because you eliminate lost motion. He said that your fingers should be close enough to the keys that they would almost begin a slight depression of the key.

Finally, Dichter has a very unusual habit of bracing himself against the piano with his left knee. He envies instrumentalists like violinists who can feel and play into each note because their instrument is almost an extension of themselves. He says the pianist is more detached from his instrument. The left knee on his performance and practice clothing wears out from this technique which incidentally also enables him to lean backward if he wants to without losing balance. "I'm a renegade in doing this, I know, but it works for me," he said.

Statements contained in this publication do not represent the opinion of the Piano Technicians Guild as a whole unless those statements have been adopted by the board of PTG, Inc.

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