

IN TUNE!

Newsletter of the Piano Technicians Guild, San Francisco Chapter

September 2010

Calendar of Events

Next Chapter Meeting 7:00pm Tuesday, Sept 7
Please note that we will be continuing with 7pm start times to our meetings.

Sherman Clay, 647 Mission Street between 3rd and New Montgomery.

There's a City Park garage directly behind the store at 147 Minna Street. Or take BART to Montgomery Station.

Business Meeting Agenda:

1. Member advertising on chapter website. During the June meeting – after a spirited discussion – it was decided that Rob Mitchell should monitor website traffic for 3 months and report on the results, before a decision is made whether and how chapter members might advertise services or items for sale on the website in addition to their membership listing. The results are in, and are printed on page 4 in this newsletter. The chapter membership will be asked to vote whether things should be left as they are or changed, and if so, how.

2. David Ilvedson Memorial. The committee will make a preliminary report of several possibilities for the purpose of ascertaining members' preferences.

Technical program: Zhiwei Huang and Larry Lobel will present a slide show and talk about their recent trip to China. They visited four piano factories, a rebuilding shop, several piano dealerships, and gave classes to factory workers and to independent technicians. There will be many interesting and unique photos and videos.

As a member of the PTG International Relations Committee, Larry took advantage of opportunities made possible by Zhiwei's relationships with leaders of the piano industry in China to meet with them and discuss ways to promote contact with the PTG. He'll bring the chapter up to date on the results of these meetings. Since China is now the world's second largest economy, and the Chinese are already among the major players in the piano

industry, it's important for U.S. piano technicians to be aware of how this will affect us and how we can have an influence on the future of the piano industry.

You won't want to miss this opportunity to get an inside look at piano making in China, a perspective on the industry, its workers and leaders, and how all this affects you and your work.

Project Piano 10:00am Saturday, Sept 11
St. Anne's Church – 850 Judah at Funston – enter from Funston St.

The Project Piano group will *usually* meet on the second Saturday of each month.

Associate Tuning Class 7:00 to 8:30pm Monday, Sept 13
San Francisco State University, room CA-161 in the Creative Arts Building. Details on page 6

Reminder:
Estimated taxes #3 due to IRS Sept 15

Associate Tuning Class 7:00 to 8:30pm Monday, Sept 27
San Francisco State University, room CA-161 in the Creative Arts Building. Details on page 6

PTG members from other chapters are always welcome to attend our meetings.



**PIANO
TECHNICIANS
GUILD**

San Francisco Chapter

President's Message

Israel Stein



A NEW ERA?

This month the PTG San Francisco Chapter inaugurates a new cycle of classes for Associates seeking the RPT professional credential. We will begin with a series of hands-on tuning classes taught by Zhi Wey Huang, meeting twice per month. Details are on page 6 in this Newsletter. We hope to follow up with a series of intensive Repairs and Regulation hands-on classes, probably in early 2011 – and top it all off with a review of the theory behind the procedures that we do and some general piano information which should come useful for the PTG Written Exam. In case you think this is reversed order – think again. You'll learn at least half the information you will need for the Written Exam in the course of learning how to tune, repair and regulate – so why try and learn it first in the abstract, without any practical references, just to regurgitate the information on an exam – and then worry about exam deadlines while trying to actually learn the skills for real? You'll do a lot better on the Written Exam when the knowledge is in your ears and in your hands rather than just in your brain, and spend less time – overall – getting ready for the tests...

In case you thought that the headline for this column is a bit grandiose for the subject matter so far – well, you are right. But the headline refers not to the classes described above, but to the reason why Associate Members should be making it their business to get into these classes. The PTG has entered a new era of actively – and apparently rather successfully – promoting the RPT credential to the public. Google and Yahoo ads make the PTG Website link highly visible on web searches for “piano tuner”, “piano service” and other such search terms – and direct traffic to the “Find a Registered Technician” feature on it. RPTs have reported a noticeable number of callers who understand what an RPT is – and are looking for one to service their piano. There are also advertising trade deals with the “Pianoworld” website and Larry Fine’s publications/ web ventures that direct additional traffic to the PTG website, and prominently feature the RPT credential. For the first time in PTG history, there are immediate financial returns for being reclassified to RPT. A new era indeed...

This new policy of actively promoting the RPT credential developed out of the growing realization that the PTG’s traditional marketing posture – that of promoting the PTG to the public, and trying to convince the public to hire its members – is ineffective, and can

never be effective. The overwhelming majority of the piano-owning and piano-playing public simply does not care whether or not the person servicing their instrument belongs to an organization of some sort. It isn’t a significant factor in their hiring decision – and several marketing professionals interviewed by the PTG for possible consulting contracts confirmed this. They wouldn’t even consider taking on the assignment of marketing the PTG to the public – it cannot be done successfully, according to them. What can be successfully promoted is a professional credential – such as the RPT. The public readily responds to the idea that passing rigorous examinations to demonstrate one’s skills is a factor worth considering when hiring someone to work on their piano, when this is effectively promoted. My personal experience (and that of many other PTG members, by the way) confirms this. In my 22-year career as a piano technician, I had perhaps 3 or 4 potential clients inquire as to whether or not I am a member of the PTG. Since the inauguration of the PTG’s new marketing initiative, I am asked at least monthly whether or not I am an RPT by potential new clients... Other organizations follow this path in their promotions - watch your TV for ads by the National Realty Association. They are promoting not the organization – but the Realtor, as the trained and knowledgeable professional who can make you more money on and save you a lot of trouble with your real-estate transaction. The PTG does not have the resources for TV ad campaigns, but what resources it does have are being used in the most effective way possible – to promote the piano technician who has tangible proof of having attained a degree of competence that is readily understood and accepted by the public. And the results confirm this.

There are many reasons for Associates to maintain their PTG membership. The educational and networking opportunities provided by the organization can and will have a significant positive effect on your bottom line if you take advantage of them. But the PTG’s own experience and that of marketing professionals has shown that mere membership will not. The PTG cannot effectively direct business your way if you do not make the effort to demonstrate to the public that you have a degree of professional competence by earning the RPT credential. And the San Francisco Chapter will do all it can to help you earn it. So I hope to see as many of you as possible at Zhi Wey’s tuning classes, and at the classes that will follow it. And in future issues of this newsletter I will try to demystify the RPT exam process to the greatest possible extent, to demonstrate that the exams are not as scary and difficult as some people make them out to be, and to suggest effective and efficient preparation techniques.

Israel Stein, RPT ♪

Chapter Meeting Minutes

Rob Mitchell
Chapter Secretary



August 3, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Israel opened the meeting with a reflection on the recent loss of David Ilvedson. Longtime members of our chapter have many memories of David - and were encouraged to write these the memorial journal.

We started the meeting lacking a quorum, but with many guests / potential new members from the Golden Gate chapter. In a move made possible by the internet age, an email message was sent to Sandy Roady stating the intent for Randy Chastain, Michael Silva, Tom Belmessieri and Jim Woffinden to join the SF chapter. With that, we had a quorum of 8 RPTs and 6 Associates in attendance. Further introductions all around to the (former) Golden Gate chapter members. David Abdalian said he is trying to locate the chapter library, action models and class notes. [As of] August 10, anyone who had not objected would automatically be transferred to the San Francisco chapter.

A new member application has been received for Carl Park. He is new to the trade.

A warning passed along from our RVP, Larry Messerly regarding unsanctioned advertising by members who don't follow the PTG guidelines. The Graphics Standards are available on the PTG website and all members should be sure they are in compliance.

The minutes of the June meeting were previously distributed and accepted at this meeting.

The treasurer reported that we have \$16,634 on account.

A proposal was made to amend the Standing Rules in regards to the per diem paid to delegates attending the national convention. Currently the amount is \$35/day. The proposal will change this to the IRS expenses rate that changes each year and varies by city. A motion made to accept this passed unanimously. [The updated By Laws are located on our chapters archive at the PTG website at [http://www.ptg.org/newsletters/941/2010/08\[1\].pdf](http://www.ptg.org/newsletters/941/2010/08[1].pdf)]

Sid Stone is a Chapter Sustaining Member at the Golden Gate Chapter. For this, the chapter pays half of the member's dues. A motion made and passed to

continue this for Sid at the San Francisco Chapter.

A committee of Douglas Braak, Margie Williams and Mark Schechter will work to propose ideas for a suitable memorial in David Ilvedson's honor.

Classes will begin in September to help Associates build the skills needed for the RPT exam. This will start with Zhiwei giving a series of tuning classes. Possible locations include SF State and Randy Chastain's house (San Leandro). Discussion during the meeting showed a preference for having the classes frequently (2-4 times a month). Possible fees will be \$15/class or \$30 for three if paid in advance. 5-6 members in attendance expressed interest in the classes. See separate email for more details.

Larry mentioned that he is working on getting Don Manino in town to do a future technical session for us.

Many thanks to the Callahan shop for the use of their facilities.



WESTPAC

Join Us in San Francisco!

March 3-6, 2011

The West Coast's PREMIER Piano Technician Conference

WESTPAC's power and potential lies in its consolidation of the Western and Pacific Northwest regions. This partnership has created WESTPAC, a conference which will be held each year in the Western US and Canada, serving piano technicians everywhere.

WESTPAC draws on the accumulated experience, knowledge and ideas of the best minds in our profession.

Start budgeting your education dollars now for the new 2011 conference!

<http://www.westpac-ptg.org/>

Website Statistics

By Rob Mitchell

So, you've had your website up and running for a few months. But you're wondering, "gee, was all that time and money worth it?" Most everyone wants to know how their site is doing, aside from someone saying, "hey, I found you on your website".

Gone are the days of simple hit counters showing:
You are visitor **#000023**

Far more complete tools are available to 'data mine' your site for information. One of the tools available is called Analytics, from Google. By applying this tool to our own SF PTG website, I'll show some of the power of these types of analysis.

To get started, you'll need the ability to edit the HTML code of your website. Don't worry, it's not as hard as it sounds. Once you sign up with Google Analytics, they will provide you with a 'tracking code', or a short piece of HTML software. You'll need to cut-and-paste this fragment on to every one of the web pages that you're interested in (usually, all of them). After that, sit back and watch the data come in. Note that your site doesn't have to be hosted by Google, you just need access to the HTML code.

On entering Google Analytics, you'll see a 'dashboard' summary of recent traffic. The real power of the tool is its interactive nature -- if you see something interesting, you just click on the field for more detail. What I'll show here are just some of the charts and data available to a user. This is just a summary -- the interactive experience is much more rewarding.

The first item is probably the most relevant: a chart showing visits per day. Obviously, we're not "FaceBook" so our daily traffic is fairly low at less than 2 visits/day on average. Some days we get none and on a few, we got as many as 7 or 8 hits.

Dashboard

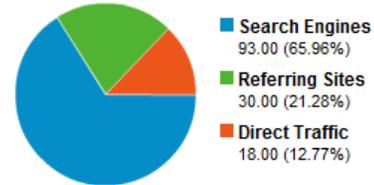


Perhaps more interesting than the 141 total visits our site got for this period, is that this encompassed 68 "absolute unique visitors" (obviously, some folks came back for multiple visits).

Other info from the Dashboard page:

- There were 2.84 "Average Pageviews". On average, a person looked at roughly 3 pages.
- They spent on average almost 2 minutes looking around our site.
- The "Bounce Rate" was 42.5%. This reports the percentage of visitors who saw where they had landed and left immediately.

To me, the next interesting thing to wonder is, how did the visitors find us? Google Analytics can answer that:



That is, 66% used a search engine (e.g. Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc), 21% came from a Referring Site (almost all of these were from the PTG website) and the balance had our site bookmarked and came "direct". One of the things I've often wondered about our site is: do we serve the SF technicians or do we serve the general public? Certainly the broad answer is "both", but one conclusion I can start to extract is that we get more visits from the general public (I would expect most technicians to have the site bookmarked).

One of things I like to understand for my personal website is: when using a search engine, what keywords did visitors use to find me? Here are the top 5 for SF PTG:

| | | Visits | Pages /Visit | Avg. Time on Site |
|----|--|--------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. | site:www.ptg.org westpac -pipermail | 7 | 1.57 | 00:00:03 |
| 2. | san francisco piano technicians guild | 5 | 5.60 | 00:04:34 |
| 3. | piano technicians guild san francisco | 4 | 3.25 | 00:00:29 |
| 4. | ptg san francisco | 4 | 9.00 | 00:08:46 |
| 5. | ptg sf chapter | 3 | 3.67 | 00:09:48 |

The first item indicates that visitors found our site looking for "Westpac" from the PTG search box. Okay, so not all the data's always that useful. But visitors looking for Westpac apparently didn't find what they were looking for and didn't stay long. The next 4 are interesting to me since they all reference "guild" or "ptg". Visitors weren't just looking for a technician -- they were specifically interested in the PTG.

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The final item I'll highlight is: what pages on our site were visitors looking at?

| | Page | Pageviews | Unique Pageviews | Avg. Time on Page |
|-----|----------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | home page | 92 | 80 | 00:00:30 |
| 2. | find a tech | 64 | 44 | 00:01:03 |
| 3. | library | 57 | 46 | 00:03:06 |
| 4. | meeting minutes | 30 | 26 | 00:01:41 |
| 5. | index (same as home) | 25 | 21 | 00:00:15 |
| 6. | membership | 24 | 21 | 00:00:18 |
| 7. | classified | 19 | 17 | 00:01:44 |
| 8. | links | 18 | 11 | 00:00:39 |
| 9. | business cards | 17 | 16 | 00:01:13 |
| 10. | purpose | 14 | 11 | 00:01:33 |

From this, you would observe that our homepage was the most viewed (not surprising). But after this, most visitors came looking for a technician. We've started offering a new page on our site that displays our member's business cards (if they elect to do so). Of the 64 visits looking for a technician, only 17 went on to look at the business cards page.

For this presentation, I've really only scratched the surface of what Google Analytics can do. Want to know what browser your visitors were using? It's there. Were they using dial up or DSL? It's there. And it really does the tool an injustice as I've presented this summary in a textual form. The power comes from interacting with the data, sorting it in unique ways, and using it to discover information about the folks who are interested in you.

I'll close by quoting Benjamin Disraeli via Mark Twain:

"Figures often beguile me, particularly when I have the arranging of them myself; in which case the remark attributed to Disraeli would often apply with justice and force: 'There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.' "

Take all of this with a large grain of salt...

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David Ilvedson Memorial

David's memorial on August 15 in Pacifica was a celebratory, not a somber event (as were his wishes). The PTG was well represented with many local members attending, as well as his family and musician associates. The afternoon was marked by performances, words of remembrance, and plenty of food and drink.



David's older brothers reflect on his life



Chapter Mentor Program

Many of the more experienced members and RPTs are happy to avail themselves to associates working towards their RPT status. You can ask around at a chapter meeting, or ask any of the chapter officers to put you in touch with a mentor.

Tuning Classes for SF PTG Associates

The long-awaited series of Tuning Classes to be given by Zhiwei Huang RPT will be starting soon. All members of the San Francisco chapter of the PTG are welcome to attend.

Mr. Huang has taught tuning to individuals, to groups of technicians in Chinese piano factories, and has given tuning classes in several PTG chapters. He is an excellent aural tuner (he does not use an ETD) and is an excellent teacher. This is a great opportunity for Associates working toward taking the RPT exams to improve skills and gain confidence. He will give both group and individual instruction at the classes. Larry Lobel, RPT will serve as assistant instructor.

Classes will meet at San Francisco State University, room CA-161 in the Creative Arts Building. They will be held twice a month, on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of September and October. The SFSU website has excellent instructions for getting there by all modes of transportation, parking, and finding the right building:

How to get there -

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~parking/directions/>

Where and how to park -

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~parking/text/parking.html>

Campus map -

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~sfsuemap/southeast.htm>

The Creative Arts Building is in the Southeast corner of the campus, bounded by 19th and Holloway Avenues. The main entrance is on Holloway. Signs in the building will help you find the room.

The first session will be on Monday, September 13th from 7 to 8:30 pm. Fees are \$15 per session, but if you pay in advance for 4 sessions the cost is \$40 total, or \$10 per session. Please DO NOT bring payment to class -- we can't take payment on campus because we would lose the free use of the room if money changes hands on site. Please send your payment (best to do it NOW so you don't forget!) to the Tuning Classes CFO:

David Gordon
117A Bartlett Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

Any questions please contact Larry Lobel at hayforker@comcast.net or (707) 762-5800. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Stay Up To Date With *In Tune!*

E-mail addresses have a way of changing frequently. When such changes occur, please send them to us at <mailto:custos3@comcast.net> so we can update your information. It is important that we be able to reach you. Thanks!

Exam Fee Assistance

Are you taking the RPT exams and feeling a bit "strapped"? The San Francisco chapter offers assistance to its members in cases where paying the examination fee constitutes a real obstacle to taking the exams.

For full details and an application form, scroll to the bottom of the Membership page on our website:

www.ptg.org/chapters/sanfrancisco/membership.htm

Note that the application for assistance may be filed as soon as you have a proof-of-payment receipt for an exam, but no later than 30 days after taking the test.



CALL FOR 2011 CLASS PROPOSALS

We are striving to have the 2011 Institute filled with **completely new classes!** Piano technicians as a whole are tinkerers and like to experiment with new ideas, whether they work out or not, so we are willing to give this idea a try in the same vein. There is no particular focus or theme for this year, but we hope to offer classes that have had very little exposure, or have never been seen before. So, whatever your ideas may be, don't be afraid to submit them.

We are seeking your ideas now and will require a full class description by **August 15** in time for the September Institute planning meeting.

Please forward your proposals to <mailto:class-ideas@ptg.org>

*Marc Poulin, RPT
Institute Director 2011
Kansas City!!!!!!*

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IN TUNE! is a monthly publication of the Piano Technicians Guild - San Francisco Chapter. It is distributed free of charge via e-mail or in paper for \$15/year to non-members without e-mail.

E-mail addresses have a way of changing frequently. When such changes occur, please send them to us at <mailto:hayforker@comcast.net> so we can stay up to date. It is important that we be able to reach you. Thanks!

Deadline for newsletter submissions is **12 DAYS** before the first Tuesday of the month. The newsletter will usually be distributed 10 days before the upcoming Chapter Meeting.

Classified ad listings are available to chapter members for free. The following schedule is available to anyone wishing to run a separate ad in the newsletter (prices are for 12 months):

- 1/8 page ad - \$60
- 1/4 page ad - \$108
- 1/2 page ad - \$204

Chapter website: www.ptg.org/chapters/sanfrancisco

Send suggestions, literary contributions, or advertisements to the secretary or webmaster.

Disclaimer: All expressions of opinion and all statements of supposed fact are published on the authority of the author as listed, and are not to be regarded as expressing the view of the Chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc., unless such statements or opinions have been adopted by the Chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.

Classified Ads

Contact the newsletter editor to add or remove listings

Jim Christopher has the following pianos for sale:

1935 Steinway M
1969 Steinway B
1998 Steinway B

he can be reached at: JimChris88@aol.com



From Piedmont Piano Company
Jim Callahan, RPT, owner

For over 28 years offering the finest new and used pianos. New Yamaha, Fazioli, and Bechstein pianos. Fine used pianos from the world's great makers, specializing in vintage Steinways. We stock the largest selection of fine used grand pianos in Northern California

As many SF chapter members know, we have worked for years with PTG members and their customers to provide the finest instruments at the most reasonable prices.

Current used inventory includes:
Hamburg Steinway B 1908 - We have just completed an exhaustive restoration including polished ebony finish, Stanwood system action and brand new ivory keys. This piano is in perfect condition. It has the beautiful clear sound which is unique to the German built Steinways and the perfectly balanced action makes it a joy to play.

Steinway M French Provincial 1926 - Purchased new in San Francisco and owned by just one family. In very fine original condition. Walnut finish, ivory keys. Fine tone.

Used Yamaha grands: currently have second hand GH1, C1, C3, and C7 models in stock. Recent models, at very reasonable prices. Not gray market!

Plus dozens more including Steinway, Baldwin, Chickering, Knabe, Bechstein, Yamaha, Kawai, and others.

For more information please visit our website www.piedmontpiano.com or e mail: music@piedmontpiano.com



A recording from Shawn Skylark: "**Still Life - 10 Pieces For Solo Piano**". Finished last year, this is a collection of 10 original piano pieces, which are released on CD. (Available at CD Baby, iTunes, and shawnskylark.com).

It was recorded on a Bösendorfer 225. Last month Bösendorfer informed Shawn that they have added it to their online Music Library which is part of their web site at Boesendorfer.com.



J.S. Bach, "**The Well-Tempered Clavier 48 Preludes and Fugues**" played in Thomas Young's Well-Temperament of 1799 by Frank French.

For the first time the Well-Tempered Clavier can be heard in the explicitly-stated, 18th Century well temperament that allows the characteristic of each major and minor key to emerge as intended
continued on last page

during the time of the composer. A subtle but certain difference is apparent when this music is played in this authentic tuning.

This four-CD set contains more than four hours of music with liner notes on the history and development of tuning keyboard instruments by Owen Jorgensen with French, Spanish and German language texts. This production, more than two years in the making, was expertly recorded using a Bösendorfer 225 concert piano.

Price \$49.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling. Order your copy of this historic recording by check or money order from

Frank French
562 Noriega
San Francisco CA, 94122

or by Master or Visa Card by calling 415-731-8611. Available on-line at www.cdbaby.com or www.frankfrench.info

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

If you received this by US Mail and have an e-mail address, you can save your PTG Chapter's money by electing e-mail delivery instead. Please contact Rob Mitchell to make this change (contact information listed inside)