National Convention Class Highlights

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Joe attended a lot of interesting classes at the National Convention. How will he condense four day's-worth of classes into an hour? There were also classes he didn't attend that he has been at before. What he took away from this event was that there are many ways to accomplish each task, so find the way that works best for you. Different pianos require different approaches. A dealer's class may show you ways that work on their pianos, but that technique may not work on other brands. It is interesting to see how many different ways there are to do the same thing, and how many different people have different styles. For example, there are several ways to adjust grand let-off. Following are some tips.

Let-off

- The Steinway let-off screw requires two specific tools: the standard flat let-off tool, and the ratchet tool.
- Let-off can be done in the piano by looking, or out of the piano with a jig. With a jig, turn up the let-off until it blocks against the gauge, then turn it down until the tool falls over; this is for doing let-off one-at-a-time.
- For the dowel buttons, use a curved plier turn the dowel while looking at the hammer. The problem is that often the dowels are too close together so that there is not enough room to turn it, or the dowel is so smooth that the plier will slide and not grip. Gluing sandpaper on the plier helps.
- Gauges vary in diameter. Joe made one from a rubber mute handle, one from a brass rod,
- Bill Spurlock's jig is made for working on the bench. Set the samples. Set the gauge on the shank rest. Set the height so when the hammer lifts it clicks on the rail. The two sample shanks are set at the height of let-off and are clamped to the gauge. Then go through the set using a capstan wrench, a Steinway tool or a McHaffey let-off screwdriver. It is quite quick to do the set.
- Magnetic strips stick to the strings as a guide.

Drop

- For let-off, position two bolts on the rest rail. Rest a metal rod on the washers and adjust the nuts to the samples. This system presumes that the hammer bore distances are correct. For drop, lift up one of the washers so the hammers are one washer's thickness lower.
- Steve Brady adjusts the hammer until it blocks, and then back it off a bit.
- Dean uses a board placed behind the hammers with two horizontal lines drawn 2mm apart. Eyeball the hammer at let-off on the top line and adjust the drop to the lower line.

Capstan wrenches

- Standard capstan wrenches are often too fat.
- Use a narrow capstan stick.
- Capstan wrenches feel better and easier to use when they have handles.

Some classes dealt with getting as much done as possible in a limited amount of time.

Jim Busby has a lot of tricks for doing things quickly. For example, he will reshape a set of grand hammers in ten minutes. He does an electronic tuning in about a half an hour, using two single mutes with long handles– one for a grand and two for an upright. Jim installs balance-rail

punchings using reverse tweezers, available from medical supply places. If the upright let-off is too high, Jim uses the Yamaha key leveling stick to pry up the hammers so they block.

Gabe taught a piano triage class. He is very well organized. He has a kit with pedal parts to solve 95% of his pedal problems.

Using a single mute, **David Anderson** tunes by fourths, octaves and pure triple octaves; he doesn't use any fast-beating intervals.

Isaac Sadisgursky has a "rule of six."

- If there are more than six things to be done, he takes it home to his shop.
- Carry felt pads to stick on the bottom of bench legs so they don't scratch the floor.
- If the people leave the lid down but the front of the lid is folded back and the music desk has music on it, use a key cover pad. Joe bought 6' wide acrylic felt and cut it in four-foot lengths by two feet, so that one sheet makes three covers. Lay the cloth over the tuning pins and the front of the strings and underneath the music rack to keep the piano clean. The cloth is held secure with magnets on the plate.
- If your key slip is binding the front of the keys, one way to shim the key slip is to remove the screws and bend the screws so that the distance is adjustable by turning the screws. Of course, it is better to keep the screws straight and shim the slip.

Don Manino taught a one-day regulating class.

<u>Miscellaneous Tips</u>

Dampers: plexi-glass damper lift gauge for placing under the front of keys.

Tri-chords.

- If your damper tri-chords are leaking, if it is an outside string, instad of using damper pliers, insert a brass rod through the center of the damper to spread out the felt. The rod goes above the string and beneath the wedge of the damper.
- Another way to fix tri-chords is to take a tiny pliers and squeeze the strings slightly together.

Repetition Lever Height. Take a .007 pink front rail punching and feel.

Key Leveling. While dropping the straight edge stick on the front of the keys, watch the hammers to see if they wink.

Pedals

- Do a quick tuning, focus on the unisons, get the pedals to work and fix obvious friction problems.
- Model airplane fuel hose is the right diameter for damper upright pins.

Speed-Voicing. Mask everything off and make a couple passes with a clear lacquer spray on the hammers. Give it a half an hour and touch up with needles.

Tuning

- Tune the entire treble section left-handed, because often there is a wall in the way. Practice this on pitch raises.
- Dan Levitan's U-shaped tuning-hammer does not flag-pole or bend the pin. It's a little harder to feel the pin turn, but it is quite relaxing and easy to use. If the strings are muted every other one and you're tuning by whole steps, it works very quickly.
- Some people do all their upright tunings with an impact hammer. Upright tuning is an awkward body position, so Reyburn talked Joe into buying his fancy impact hammer.
- A ball on the end of the tuning lever is quite comfortable. The Faulk is light-weight.
- Use a tuning hammer handle without the shank for tapping an action back onto the bolts.

Turbo-Charging Your Service Calls

Jim Busby

Introduction

Why teach this class? Students and fellow technicians who watch me wok ask how I got so fast at what I do. I really don't think I'm fast, nor do I try to be! But I can usually do most of the following in about 1-1/2 to 2 hours:

- Pitch raise (12-15 minutes)
- Fine-tune the piano (30-35 minutes)
- Remove lost motion in uprights (10-20 minutes)
- Raise hammer-line in grand (4-6 minutes)
- Clean (everything but soundboard, 8-12 minutes)
- Basic improvement of regulation and voicing

Now that I do things more efficiently it has allowed me to give the client something free every time. I give them a pitch raise, a cleaning, minor regulation, etc. and I nearly always get a tip, o a handshake or hug at the local grocery store! And it really didn't cost me anything but a small bit of time. Oh, and I also charge well up front, so any time for "extras" has really been paid for.

What are some things that can help you become more efficient?

1. **Develop an acute awareness of time,** but in a relaxed way
    a. Inner game of Tennis story (relax)
    b. "Slow is fast" (guitar playing story)
    c. Watch someone who is really fast, but solid. It's "second nature."
    d. Every now and then, time everything you do.

2. **Eliminate (or reduce) "time robbers" and "slippery slopes"**
    a. Telephone (put on "message")
    b. Not having the right tool or materials exactly where they should be
    c. No-shows
        i. Call the day before. Most people appreciate a reminder.
        ii. It rarely happens, so don't get uptight about it and lose a good client.
        iii. If it happens twice, give the client to someone else!
    d. Doing work beyond the scope of the visit (slippery slopes)

3. **Cut down time with client without seeming like you're in a hurry**
    a. Make sure you're on time, be friendly, but get right to work
    b. You can do a lot while you're talking to the client:
        i. Open the piano, tighten the bench, adjust the pedals (multi-task)
        ii. Check out the piano with them there (The "2-minute interview")
        iii. Have them play and/or write the check while you're putting tools away.
    c. Until you achieve "turbocharge speed," don't chit-chat much. Later you can.

4. **Decrease your tuning time** (This is usually hard for beginners)
    a. Terry Niimi statement (20 minutes)
    b. Don't force it, but just relax and let it come naturally
    c. Find systems that work (Video on PTG)
    d. Things to consider:
        i. Single mute system. Find a system that works for you.
        ii. ETD's are like "Da Vinci's little marks."
        iii. Your tuning lever (Advantage of ball handle)
    e. If you can't decrease your tuning time, focus on the other "stuff"

5. **Learn to regulate quickly**
    a. Find the best tools that work the best for you.
    b. Have a routine, but know the principles of regulation so you don't linger on less important steps. Know how to prioritize. "The Art of Compromise"
    c. Learn to distinguish what is regulation and what isn't. Avoid "slippery slopes."
    d. Learn "speed skills" when regulating. (It takes years to go through all the classes.)
        i. Rolling knuckles
        ii. Feeling the knuckle rub for rep lever height
        iii. Feel the key for lost motion (along with rub back, and slow release)
        iv. Look at handout for "wholesale" methods on uprights
    e. Avoid time wasters in regulation
        i. Getting lost with glides
        ii. Removing lost motion one at a time
        iii. Painstakingly traveling upright hammers when they aren't too bad
    f. Set a realistic goal if it is the first visit. Realize that if a piano needs more work you may need to come back. In one or two visits you can nitpick more.

6. **Find your rhythm.**
    a. This is a big key to efficiency in repetitive jobs.

7. **Dangers to avoid while trying to become more efficient**
    a. Crappy work in general: never sacrifice quality for speed!
    b. Bad, unstable unisons. Always check everything. 20-second press
    c. "Putting off" the client
    d. Overworking

8. **Institutional work and shop work tips**
    a. Shauna is like my "dental assistant"
    b. "Dance" with your assistant
    c. Become machine-like

9. **Time-saving tools and tips**
    a. Classes are full of tips. Take Isaac Sadigursky's classes.
    b. Baggie of punchings
    c. Yamaha key leveling stick

d. Regulating pouch
e. My tuning lever
f. Bring extra damper felt
g. Keep tools with jobs

Turbocharge Tips Checklist

Main Points:

1. Becoming faster is more a matter of efficiency of time than of speed
2. Reduce time wasters
3. Les "chit-chat:" work while visiting with client, but be friendly
4. Develop efficient techniques and systems. Practice them.
5. Time yourself, but relax and let speed come. Don't force it.
6. Find your rhythm.
7. Hire a "shop monkey"
8. Keep tools and supplies grouped, and never "look for stuff" again!
9. Always remember the reasons for becoming more efficient:
    a. More time
    b. More money
    c. Less stress
    d. Better stability due to "practised" systems
10. Dangers to avoid:
    a. Inferior workmanship
    b. Unstable unisons
    c. "Putting off" the client
    d. Overloading your life

Techniques:

11. Tuning: muting systems (one mute)
12. ETD/Aural: using the best of both worlds
13. Movement of tuning lever
14. Listening fast
15. Position of tuning lever and your body
16. Combine impact method with smooth pull
17. Consider tuning bass last
18. Rolling knuckles
19. Feeling knuckle rub
20. Drop: the "bounce check"
21. Dip: the under the key tool
22. Glides: slight adjustments for seasonal changes
23. Capstans: after-touch adjustment screws (slight only)
24. Setting glides

Tools:

25. Ball end tuning levers
26. The Terry Otake string lifter
27. The Yamaha key leveling stick
28. “Hands-Free” gauge
29. Tool pouch
30. 8” tweezers, modified
31. Reverse tweezers
32. Clear ruler
33. Masking tape
34. Modified Hart spring tool
35. Groove in screwdrivers
36. Easing wedge
37. Hammer filing paddles (10 minutes)
38. See Jim’s tool box

Piano Triage

2015 PTG Convention
Denver, CO
Gabriel Granitz, RPT

TRIAGE:

…the assignment of degrees of urgency to wounds or illness to decide the order of treatment of a large number of patients or casualties.

YOU HAVE ONE SINGLE OBJECTIVE:

Make the most DIFFERENCE within a given period of time.

Tough Questions

- How efficiently do I work under pressure?
- How quickly can I create a plan of action?
- Can I remain focused in my work while someone is looking over my shoulder?
- Am I comfortable taking risks?
- How do I deal with frustration?
- Don I know when to say, "That's it!"

Keys to Success

- Know the expectations of the pianist.
- Know your skill sets.
- Know your times for certain procedures.
- Don't sweat the small stuff.
- Go for the big-ticket items.
- Don't freak out!

Three Major Focal Points

- Silent, effective, and reliable pedal and damper function
- Clear and focused tone/sound
- Friction

Common Problems Found on All Grands

- Loose tuning pins
- Loose, wobbly pedals
- Damper pedal travel set too short
- Dampers lifting too early with the key
- Damper up-stop rail set too high or low
- Excess friction
- Key frame knocking/bedding issues
- Hammers on rest cushions
- Part alignment, loose hammer heads, broken parts
- Unseated and unleveled strings