

Gazette Bryan Bullock

Bryan Hartzler works to restore a piano at his residence in Sunbury. When he's not repairing pianos for clients, Hartzler enjoys playing his. Becoming a piano technician has added another side to Hartzler's piano playing, he said.

Fine-tuning musician

By BRYAN BULLOCK
Staff Writer

Bryan Hartzler's life work is driven by the beauty of the piano. From concert halls to living rooms, countless people have heard the music he breathes life into. Hartzler isn't, however, a performer or a composer.

He's the invisible hand behind each strike of a black and white key.

At his Sunbury farmhouse, Hartzler tunes, restores and rejuvenates acoustic pianos. Ash and walnut race across the floors and walls of his pastoral childhood home and out to an

adjacent studio. A grand piano sits there, stripped open like it's on an operating table. It's a satin-black Steinway he is restoring for use in Ohio Wesleyan University's Jemison Auditorium, a 229-seat recital space in Sanborn Hall.

The 30-year-old piano was in terrible shape when it came in — chipped and dinged, the thing couldn't hold a tune. Hartzler tore the case down, filled the pores, applied a new finish and is in the process of rebuilding the piano from the inside out.

"Unlike some of the bigger shops, I am a one-man show. I control every part of the

process so I end up knowing everything about the piano," Hartzler said.

A complete piano restoration takes him three to four months to complete. Revitalizing pianos is a service that's in demand, he said. Restoring a piano is a third of the cost of buying a new one and many believe the sound quality is just as good if not better.

Hartzler, 37, didn't always want to be a piano technician though. He grew up playing the instrument, studied music at Ohio State University — where he met his wife Marlene — then taught piano

for five years. At the time, he knew little about how a piano functions under the hood.

"I'm the kind of person who needs to know how things work and I was always so fascinated by the piano so I guess it (the decision) was a matter of time," Hartzler said.

He went on to study piano craftsmanship in Boston, apprenticed in Aspen and started his Delaware County business, Hartzler Pianos, in 2002.

Hartzler, who still plays the piano every night, would never think about the instrument the same way again.

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Ashley library earns five star rating



By LIZ ROBERTSON
Staff Writer

There is something about a library — the smell of books which is a familiar friend to the bibliophile, wood floors creaking enticing the visitor to peer further into the stacks and, for the library in Ashley, its all of those and a five-star rating by the Library Journal.

The Wornstaff Memorial Library is one of only 33 Ohio

expenditures. The performance is measured in the areas of circulation, library visits, program attendance and public Internet use.

Admitting she was "quite surprised" to hear the news, Wornstaff Library Director Elizabeth Barker said, "we're trying to do a good job so it was great to hear."

Barker, who has been at the library for 15 years, said being a small community library allows

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HARTZLER

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"As a piano player you just sit down and it's all about emotion. You're not thinking about the adjustments. (As a technician) you have to feel and you have to analyze. The minute I sit down I analyze, but if you do it too much you lose the feel," he said.

He found the duality so frustrating that he briefly quit playing the piano early in his career. Through years of experience, Hartzler learned to put technical concerns aside — like one note being slightly out of tune — and just enjoy playing and listening to music.

While some technicians choose to use electronic tools to tune a piano, Hartzler prefers to tweak the strings by ear. Ultimately, the process of crafting a piano and honing its

sound is all subjective — and this is where technicians can leave their mark on the instrument, but also butt heads with the pianists they are working for. Concert piano work can be especially stressful and some technicians choose to avoid it all together, he said.

Hartzler enjoys it.

"Ultimately it's their (the pianist's) experience, not my experience so you have to work together. Tones are going to be a little different to every ear and it's very difficult to talk about what a piano sounds like because there really aren't words," he said, explaining the challenge.

Even among similar brands and models, every piano is different. Hartzler said he enjoys getting to know each one, comparing it to becoming acquainted with a new friend. After all his work is done, sitting in the audience and listen-

ing to a performance is the most gratifying part, he said.

He spends roughly half his time going out servicing pianos and the rest restoring them in his studio. Working from home makes it easy to watch his two young children.

A passion for music is shared by the entire Hartzler family. Wife Marlene teaches flute and is a music director at North Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Their oldest child, 5-year-old Prescott, recently complete his first piano recital. Rosie, 3, will also have several pianos in the house to choose from when she is ready.

Both kids enjoy watching dad work on and play pianos.

"We're just so lucky to love what we do and make a living off music. How many people can say that?" Marlene said.

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LIBRARY

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There is no money for materials, Barker said.

So Barker has been trying to secure funding from other areas.

A \$1,000 grant, for instance, from the Community Foundation of Delaware County will go toward staff and summer programs.

Grants help, Barker said, as do donations.

The library has never charged fines, but does have a "if you feel guilty jar" labeled that goes for books and DVDs.

Despite the budgetary problems, the library is also involved in inter-library loans.

Barker said some have the idea that just because they are in a small community, they are not able to get books the public needs. But they are now able to bring in books from other libraries.

"We are excited as it is the first time we can share our col-

lection with anyone else," Barker said, noting they received 24 items last week from other libraries and loaned out 55 items to other libraries last month.

The Wornstaff library building dates back to 1928. It was erected from private donations from the Wornstaffs as a memorial to their son, Albertus. Its patrons come from both Delaware and Morrow counties.

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TAXES

available and are "wildly popular" according to Peterson.

corn and other plants. In Congress, the energy debate has focused on finding cleaner coal and saving thousands of mining jobs from West Virginia to Wyoming.

Utilities in the U.S. aren't waiting for Washington to jump on the gas bandwagon. Looming climate legislation has altered the calculus that they use to determine the cheapest way to deliver power. Coal may still be cheaper, but natural gas emits half as much carbon when burned to generate the same amount electricity.

Today, about 27 percent of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions come from coal-fired power plants, which generate 44 percent of the electricity used in the U.S. Just under 25 percent of power comes from burning natural gas, more than double its share a decade ago but still with room to grow.

But the fuel has to be plentiful and its price stable — and that has not always been the case with natural gas. In the 1990s, factories that wanted to burn gas instead of coal had to install equipment

hookups were banned.

It's a different story today. Energy experts believe that the huge volume of supply now will ease price swings and supply worries.

Gas now trades on futures markets for about \$5.50 per 1,000 cubic feet. While that's up from a recent low of \$2.41 in September as the recession reduced demand and storage caverns filled to overflowing, it's less than half what it was in the summer of 2008 when oil prices surged close to \$150 a barrel.


Oil and gas prices trends have since diverged, due to the recession and the growing realization of just how much gas has been discovered in the last three years. That's thanks to the introduction of horizontal drilling technology that has unlocked stunning amounts of gas in what were before off-limits shale formations. Estimates of total gas reserves have jumped 58 percent from 2004 to 2008, giving the U.S. a 90-year supply at the current usage rate of about 23 trillion cubic feet of year.

company, EXXON MOBIL Corp., gave its answer last Monday when it announced a \$30 billion deal to acquire XTO Energy Inc. The move will make it the country's No. 1 producer of natural gas.

Exxon expects to be able to dramatically boost natural gas sales to electric utilities. In fact, CEO Rex Tillerson says that's why the deal is such a smart investment.

Tillerson says he sees demand for natural gas growing 50 percent by 2030, much of it for electricity generation and running factories. Decisions being made by executives at power companies lend credence to that forecast.

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