

Quality reigns at Allegro Pianos

By JEREMY SOULLIERE
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STAMFORD — At 1068 Long Ridge Road, those in the market for a piano can browse through a variety of high-end brands, like Blüthner and Bösendorfer, and those interested in taking lessons can have the opportunity to play instruments crafted with the same attention to detail.

For it is at this address, home of Allegro Pianos and the accompanying Long Ridge Music Center, where owner Ori Bukai believes the music learning process can be hindered or fostered by the quality of an instrument.

“People say ‘Are you crazy? Why do you put one of those (a Blüthner) in (your rehearsal room)?,’” said Bukai. “A good piano will encourage them to play. If you go play golf with plastic clubs, the likelihood of them coming back is not good.”

With a showroom filled with more than 50 high-end pianos to choose from, finding a good piano to play at Allegro is as easy as walking to the nearest piano bench. But beyond the showroom, Allegro’s ability to work with manufacturers helps the North Stamford business make its customers happy, said Bukai.

“If you want a piano



Photo by Alex von Kleydorff
Piano instructor Benjamin Steinhardt teaches 7-year-old Ethan Stuart at the Long Ridge Music Center.

with yellow polka dots, you got it,” he said.

Allegro is the exclusive, authorized dealer for such piano brands as Blüthner — once played by the Beatles — Bösendorfer and Steingraeber in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts and much of the Northeast, said Bukai.

“People come in from all over the country,” said Bukai, who is also planning to open a second location on 58th Street in Manhattan in January 2011. “(We have) a very unique selection of pianos that are very hard to find.”

The showroom and music school began as a “blank slate,” said Bukai.

“I started from zero,” said the Stamford resident, who, prior to opening his new showroom in June of 2009, had operated his

piano dealership out of another North Stamford location.

From scratch, a 10,000 square-foot facility was built with the “highest standard of acoustical transmission” in mind, said Bukai. The facility boasts sound-proof doors, windows and walls throughout, and its 10 individual rehearsal spaces and large recital space currently serve roughly 200 children and adult students learning a number of instruments, including piano, guitar, violin, cello and saxophone, he said.

“Teachers that don’t dream of teaching anywhere want to teach here — we don’t have to bribe them with money, we bribe them with conditions,” Bukai quipped.

Benjamin Steinhardt, a teacher at Long Ridge

Music Center who specializes in piano and voice, said the school is a welcoming one that has received a “very positive” reaction from the community. He also said the school offers students a high-quality, low-pressure learning environment.

“I think the caliber of the faculty and the facility is very high, (and it’s an) environment without the extreme pressure of the conservatory setting,” said Steinhardt, who has been teaching piano and voice for about 10 years.

Danielle Wearing, who has two sons and a daughter learning piano at Long Ridge Music Center, said the teachers at the school are engaging and genuine, and they bring an excitement to learning music.

“That excitement is contagious, and I feel that is a big part of the reason why my kids are excited,” she said. “I think they have the right recipe.”

Also, getting the chance to play high-quality pianos in the school’s rehearsal rooms has added to her children’s learning experience, Wearing said.

“I think they feel very important — like ‘this is a big deal,’” she said.

For further information about Allegro Pianos and the Long Ridge Music Center, visit www.allegropianos.com and www.longridgemusic.com.