

Steinway Grand piano coming to Kingswood Arts Center

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WOLFEBORO — The Kingswood Arts Center and its state of the art performance space excites the imagination. When Bill Heske and Don Holm, past and current presidents of the Wolfeboro Friends of Music (WFOM) organization, took a tour of the new facility with Governor Wentworth Regional School District Superintendent Jack Robertson, they spied a room offstage for storing a piano that could be rolled onto the stage for performances. “Oh, so you have a piano,” they said. “No, we don’t,” replied Robertson.

He explained that the architect designed a room that offers a climate-controlled space for a fine piano, but there was no money allotted in the building project for ancillary performance equipment. That would have to come in the indefinite future.

No need to say more. WFOM board members have recently finalized plans to purchase a Vintage 1919 fully-restored, nine-foot, Steinway Model D concert grand piano and will install it in the Arts Center as early as June. Once moved into its new home, the piano will belong to the school district. Jill Daley-Gibson, Curriculum Coordinator for the Arts and a board member of FOM, will oversee its care and use for student and professional performances.



COURTESY PHOTO

THE STEINWAY MODEL D concert grand piano that the Wolfeboro Friends of Music will be acquiring for the Kingswood Art Center. Built in 1919 it has been fully restored by Lindeblad Piano Restoration of Pine Brook, N.J.

The purchase and installation of the magnificent instrument, completely refurbished by Lindeblad Piano Restoration Company, is part of a strategy to offer audiences in the 850-seat high tech auditorium an experience rarely found in a town the size of Wolfeboro.

Pianists Heske, Kit Petersen and Elizabeth McCrae had the pleasure of participating in the search for the perfect piano, a search that took them from Paramus and Pine Brook, N.J. to Boston, Mass., where they were each able to try out their particular favored types of music on the various pianos, both new and refurbished, to assess the sound quality under different demands.

There are obvious economic benefits to bringing high quality entertainment to the area (WFOM has booked the Ramsey Lewis Trio for Sept. 17, for starters), but Holm is especially exuberant about the opportunity it will provide the school. "We need to be more responsive to music education in the schools," says Holm. "Who else is doing it?"

Friends of Music's connection with the school system is well established with its annual grants to students from the Bill Gibson Fund (named for Kingswood's late music director) for instruments and music education, and its two \$500 end-of-year awards to students demonstrating outstanding leadership in music.

Holm says that 20 percent of the money raised in the non-profit group's annual fund drive and two dollars from every ticket sold goes toward that fund.

WFOM also has brought performers to the school in tandem with their public performances in various locales around town, primarily Brewster Academy's Anderson Hall. Daniel Heifetz, founder and director of the Heifetz International Music Institute, a six-week residential music school, first visited Kingswood Regional High School in just such an arrangement.

It is fitting that his Institute's seven professional accompanists have committed to perform in the last of an upcoming series of three summer fund-raising concerts at the Arts Center.

Holm and WFOM board member John Sandeen took part in the piano search. The group decided that new pianos, priced at \$100,000 or more, were out of the question in today's economy and decided early on to look at used and refurbished options. They found 10 to 12 in a countrywide search on craigslist and eBay, developed a spreadsheet with specific details on each. When they found one they liked, they asked who in the area worked on pianos and sent a technician to check it out.

The Lindeblad piano was fully restored in 2010 and comes with a 20-year warranty. They sent the President of the Piano Technicians Guild for New Jersey out to check it out and asked Tobey Twining, the former music director of the First Congregational Church, now living in New York City, to play it. He liked it, as did the trio of local pianists, for whom it was the preferred choice.

The gleaming mahogany piano will move from its lifelong residency in New York City, the better part of which was spent in an apartment overlooking Central Park, where it was played by the students of Sascha Gorodnitzki, former concert pianist and Julliard faculty member. One of Gorodnitzki's students, pianist Walter Ponce of the Yehuda Hanani Trio performed in WFOM's most recent concert on April 9.

Holm is pleased to report that the downpayment for the piano was paid for by The Wolfeboro Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Trust. The fundraising goal is \$75,000.

The organization has already raised \$20,000 and has been offered matching gifts of \$25,000 from an anonymous donor, and another for \$5,000 from Russ and Judy Sabanek of Emma Taylor Lifestyle Clothing. That leaves a remainder of \$25,000 to raise within the community.

Anyone who would like to make a tax-deductible contribution of any amount, large or small, is welcome to contact the organization at 569-2151, or write to Don Holm for information at info@wfriendsofmusic.org.