

New Piano Studio

by
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The Jazz Unlimited May Newsletter asked for musicians to support the arts for *A Night at the Piano Gallery Fundraising Gala*. Musical Talent was needed to make this May 29 effort a success. The purpose of the program was to promote the grand opening of **Candice Dillon's** new business venture called Candi's Piano Studio (phone 414-334-3070) and collect food donations for America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin.

I volunteer my clarinet skills and arrive early at Steinway Piano Gallery for this black tie Gala and am guided to the beautiful lower level that has many brand new pianos, plus a large social gathering space and performance room. There I am greeted by the owners.

There was a silent auction of desirable items, like a white football autographed by the Green Bay Packers, starting at \$200, an autographed baseball with game tickets, and baskets of goodies.

Soon, **Darrien Wilson**, a gifted and talented pianist, arrives. We had met the week before to rehearse for about 15 minutes. We played parts of a few tunes, then decided that jazz, boogie woogie, a few modern tunes and blues would work for us at the program. As the room filled with folks we began creating the soothing melodies or inserting wild jazz for over an hour. Darrien and I had many unusual spontaneous ways to improvise. Considering the short rehearsal, we were even amazing ourselves. Playing along with the sounds from a full-sized Steinway was delightful.

For the main program, several young students took turns to perform on piano, violin or guitar. While student **Alex Gabriel** played the Titanic Theme there was a modeling of vintage clothing. One slow tune had the music put to dance by another youngster. This inspiring program of sounds and sights brought hope that the youth is our music future. Candice says her mission is to change the world, one note at a time!

Earl Thompson, African drummer, gave a captivating lesson with his special drum. He plays for the famous Milwaukee Ko-Thi Dance Company. Later Earl shows me calluses on his hands from many years of practice and playing.

There were about 100 people in attendance, including business supporters and music lovers. **Dr. James Kinchen**, who is Director of Choral Activities at UW-Parkside, besides giving an inspiring talk as guest speaker, tells a story about Candice. He had encouraged her to pursue playing classical piano by taking her to a major piano performance. Candice now is fulfilling her dream with certainty. Dr. Kinchen also noted our jazz performance was awesome.

Other dignitaries who gave short talks are **Marvin Pratt**, former Milwaukee Mayor; **Willie Hines**, Milwaukee Alderman and Common Council President, and **Willie Wade**, Milwaukee Alderman. Finally, at the end of his speech Alderman Wade enrolled his two children for piano lessons. "I put my money where my mouth is!" he said, and received well deserved applause.

Erica Zdroik, Wisconsin's Second Harvest representative, gave grateful remarks. **Jim Ott**, retired 30-year WTMJ-TV weatherman, now State Assemblyman, also shared some thoughtful words. Afterwards, I chatted with him about Radio City where I had worked with weather personalities Bill Carlson and Judy Marks before he was hired.

Candice was thankful and pleased about the grand opening of her studio. For just a can of beans you too could have been at this gala event. Keep reading this newsletter for such programs and then please attend to keep music alive!