

A contemporary keyboard connection

Sayville-based Sonny Stancarone teaches piano by applying technological and recreational techniques

By JENNIFER KATE

SAYVILLE — By innovatively combining the technology of the Internet with the relaxation techniques of yoga, Sonny Stancarone, who has owned Sonny's Piano Studio on Railroad Avenue since 1997, has created a straightforward method to learn and play the piano instantly.

His motto, "Anyone can play piano," tends to have his students amazed at their own results. "I think the difference is that he teaches you a method that is [so] easy you can start to play real songs right away," said Bob Corona, a Babylon veterinarian.

Corona has been taking lessons with Stancarone for the past three years and enjoys playing jazz and Gershwin. "I think it's the only way to go, you're up and running before you know it," Corona added.

Although Stancarone's piano teaching method produces quick results, it is the combination of his breathing and relaxation techniques that makes his program unusual and appealing to most.

"When you're first learning, you're tense and his breathing helps you relax. We can all benefit from that," says Corona.

Suffering from severe asthma as a child, Stancarone's mother brought him to a doctor who taught him diaphragmatic breathing. Stancarone says he stopped having asthmatic episodes and now he teaches his students relaxation using diaphragmatic breathing in combination with yoga stretching.



Sonny Stancarone at the keyboard of the nine-foot 1936 George Steck Victorian Style Grand Piano that graces his store.

SCN/Kate

"Breathing is the single most overlooked aspect of athletic training and life in general," Stancarone said.

Stancarone grew up with parents who were musicians; his mother was a singer and his father a songwriter and professional piano player. Stancarone first found solace in piano lessons at the age of 7.

Now, Stancarone is attempting to bring the future to piano playing, learning and purchasing. His state-of-the-art website is viewed by people

around the world he gets 50 new hits a day and a total of 80 visits a day.

"Few if any other websites on the Internet are on this level, especially as far as the quality of the Quick Time videos and the depth of the information being offered," Stancarone said.

Through his interactive piano website, Stancarone provides advice to people seeking to purchase a new or used piano, offers tips on playing and even sells rebuilt and refurbished pianos as well as a complete line of

new pianos from some of the largest piano manufactures in the world that can be bought over the Internet.

"I get regular e-mails from folks viewing my work from China and the rest of the world," he said. "I have business relationships with companies around the planet and, in particular, The Hal Leonard Music Publishing Company, only the largest sheet music company in the world." Stancarone also serves as a distributor for the Leonard Publishing Company.

His education includes a master's degree in Exercise Physiology from Adelphi University and he hopes to use his well rounded approach to wellness and stress reduction through piano in continuing to benefit children and adults.

Stancarone wants his program to "Enhance classroom and sports performance and help people enjoy a more relaxed life and a great sense of well being," he said.

His well-rounded background includes stints as a health and fitness director for AT&T, a health and fitness consultant for the New York City Board of Education and a clinician for the New York College of Podiatric Sports Medicine, where he trained doctors and students in injury prevention.

"I have studied with at least 30 different masters, Yoga teachers, Reichian doctors, meditation masters, hypnotists, gurus, Zen masters and have read most of the major yoga and eastern philosophy texts," Stancarone

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"I've always believed in breathing and relaxation to kind of let things go. When I'm stressed I play piano," Fitzpatrick said.

Her three children have all taken lessons and she believes her 13-year-old daughter has benefited from the knowledge. "She really gets into it," Fitzpatrick said. "Sonny's taught her how to be creative."

Stancarone encourages his students to improvise or go with the flow, play what they feel, and he believes everybody has it in them to play the piano. "It's not about practicing more, it's relaxing more and it's a kind of self therapy I want to help people become more fulfilled and satisfied human beings," he says.

Stancarone hopes to be able to reach out to children and help empower them in this stressful world. "If we give people ways of feeling good at a younger age we may be able to lessen adult sicknesses like heart attacks and drug and alcohol abuse," he added.

Rachel Breslin, an entrepreneur who went to Stancarone for voice lessons, said: "He showed me the proper way to sing but incorporated meditation and diaphragmatic breathing. He's an inspiration to me."

After adopting three special education students, Breslin found herself under quite a bit of stress and credits Stancarone for helping her find her way through it. "He has such a big

heart. I've learned to be myself. I still hear his voice in my head whenever I find myself in a stressful situation," she noted.

With quite an extensive and impressive educational background, Stancarone also has a vast knowledge of pianos and seems to be able to answer just about any question his customers might come up with.

Aside from having a wonderful collection of superb pianos for sale in his shop, he can also play them wonderfully and doesn't hesitate to give his customers or passersby a sample.

His collection currently includes a year 1900 Steinway valued at \$28,500 and a nine-foot 1936 George Steck

Grand Piano rebuilt in 1993, which is currently priced at \$12,900 and many others.

Those interested in buying a piano can browse through his shop and a virtual tour on his website at <http://www.SonnysPianoTV.com> or by visiting his shop at 64 Railroad Avenue in Sayville.

For those interested in learning how to play, what better way to get started than with his easygoing technique and non-emphasis on performance. "I'm not after the perfection, I'm after the connection," Stancarone said. ■