

## MUSIC

# Juilliard breaks with Steinway – and tradition

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The Juilliard School, long an all-Steinway institution, is breaking with tradition and buying a non-Steinway piano. Paolo Fazioli, the Italian piano maker, will be in New York later this week to complete the deal with Juilliard, after the performing-arts school agreed to purchase one of his pricey, handmade – and coveted – pianos.

"I'm very happy," said Fazioli from his home in Sacile, north of Venice, late Monday – adding that he was trying to be cautious until the historic deal was finalized.

"I am moved, of course, about this. It's a special situation."

The Fazioli piano, worth six figures, has been on loan to the prestigious New York institution since October on spec. Fazioli pianos are the most expensive on the market; ranging from about \$80,000 (Canadian) for a baby grand to \$225,000 for a standard black piano. Customized Faziolis with decorative bells and whistles can run up to \$500,000.

The reviews were good, but the politics of piano sales is fierce and according to sources, there was pressure on Juilliard to remain an all-Steinway school, as it has been since 1924.

"There is politics inside," Fazio-



A historic deal will see Juilliard purchase its first-ever Fazioli piano. LAURA LEYSHON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

li told The Globe a couple of months ago during the Juilliard trial. "I don't think you can know a lot ... in this kind of situation."

The school approached a Fazioli dealer last year with the trial proposition. Fazioli said he was uncomfortable with the idea at

first, but ultimately agreed "because it's Juilliard."

In February, Juilliard used the Fazioli for student auditions, after which a school official said the school would be going ahead with the purchase.

Some Juilliard students have also tried it out. "It is a great in-

strument with a very beautiful sound," reports Devon Joiner, 21, a Vancouver pianist in the first year of a master of music in piano performance at Juilliard.

"The action is quite light and easy to control, and the sound is very sweet and projects well. It is difficult to make a harsh or ugly

sound on this instrument. It is definitely a pleasure to play."

Since January, Juilliard has had a Yamaha CFX at the school on spec as well – also unprecedented.

Juilliard did not want to comment for this story, and was still referring on Monday to the Fazioli at the school as "leased."

For Fazioli, the pending Juilliard deal will be a big feather in its cap.

Still, New York-based Steinway & Sons remains the clear market leader, with 125 all-Steinway schools to their credit.

Steinway produces about 2,500 pianos a year worldwide (about 2,000 grand pianos), compared to Fazioli's annual production of about 110 – all grands.

With the purchase of the Fazioli – and even if Juilliard buys the Yamaha as well – Juilliard remains an all-Steinway school, because by that definition, 90 per cent of all instruments owned by the institution must be designed by Steinway. Juilliard owns about 260 Steinways.

Steinway's Sally Coveleskie, reached Monday at the Music Teachers National Association convention in Milwaukee, Wis., said she was unaware of Juilliard's decision to purchase the Fazioli. "It would be surprising," she said.