

# Aberdeen shows off famous piano

Teen musicians to play \$500,000 piano from *The Lightning Thief*

by Christine Lyon  
Staff Reporter

A grand piano known for its avant garde design and cameo in a blockbuster movie is on display at Aberdeen Centre and will be the centre of a musical performance today (Saturday).

It's also up for sale and, with a \$500,000 price tag, is one of the most expensive pianos in the country.

Handbuilt by Italian piano maker Paulo Fazioli, the artistically designed M. Liminal has a sleek, almost futuristic body. Perhaps its most defining feature, however, is its one central foot (a typical grand piano has three).

Moviegoers may also recognize the instrument from *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, which opened in theatres last weekend.

The Fazioli M. Liminal will move from Aberdeen's Showcase Pianos store to the centre court, near the fountain, from 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. today for a performance by the Richmond Music

School. Youth aged 12 to 20 will play the violin, flute and take turns on the luxury piano.

"They hear it's a wonderful piano and they're anxious to play," said Patricia Rolston, principal of the school.

While the teens may not know the difference between a Fazioli and a Steinway, Manuel Bernaschek certainly does. Manager of Showcase Pianos' Vancouver location, Bernaschek was the one who convinced Fazioli to send an M. Liminal to Canada.

"This is a real rarity, sitting on one foot, and it's one of only seven or eight in the world right now," he said.

It's not unusual for major piano makers to create "art case" designs. Austrian manufacturer Bosendorfer in the last year came out with a piano designed by German auto maker Audi. In most cases, a specially commissioned design will drive up the cost of the piano. Because of the added care and effort the M. Liminal is much pricier than a seven-foot Fazioli, which goes for \$120,000.

"Mr. Fazioli told me that because



Director Chris Columbus listens to actress Alexandra Daddario on the set of 'The Lightning Thief.'

he has to sacrifice making four regular pianos for this one, then he has to make it the cost of four pianos," said Bernaschek.

A great deal of care goes into making regular Faziolis as well. A Fazioli takes up to three years to make, while a Steinway takes one year.

The wood for the soundboard comes from the Val di Fiemme forest in northern Italy—the same place Stradivari found wood for his world-famous violins. "It's the finest and

acoustically most superior wood for soundboards in the entire world," said Bernaschek.

In addition to quality craftsmanship, Faziolis are also famous for their clear, bright sound. "It's unbelievable how much sound comes out of these pianos," said Bernaschek.

Customers often come into Bernaschek's store skeptical about Fazioli pianos—after all, the Fazioli Piano-forti company, established in 1981, is an infant in the world of piano

manufacturing. As soon as their fingers touch the keyboard, however, they change their tune.

For two to three weeks last summer, Bernaschek lent the M. Liminal to set designers at 20th Century Fox. Though it is never played in *The Lightning Thief*, the piano appears in a gothic-like mansion created inside Burnaby's Mammoth Studios.

For whoever eventually buys the piano, it comes with a thank you letter from Fox.

## Owners face \$47,000 bill

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And by paying a monthly maintenance fee of about \$360, all the building's upkeep would be taken care of.

So imagine the confusion when the Becketts and their neighbours received this bombshell in their mail: their complex has been diagnosed as a leaky condo.

And each one of them is on the hook for it.

The repair bill: \$10 million, or roughly \$47,000 per unit.

What's perplexing is that their landlord, Vancouver-based Westsea Construction Ltd., has been responsible for the building's maintenance for all these years.

And though they don't own the condo or any of the land, they are being asked to foot the bill.

But the Becketts don't plan on leaving without a fight.

Bill doesn't recall the building every having been painted in all his time there, or sections of moss-covered stucco walls being cleaned.

And he's convinced that poor maintenance is largely responsible for the deteriorated state of the building, which has been hard hit by wood rot and mould resulting from water leaks and is now surrounded by scaffolding.

### 'Things' happen

Bruce Sembaliuk, secretary

and treasurer for Westsea Construction, said sometimes "things happen," when asked about the leaky condo situation at Sussex Square.

Reached at his Capital Management office in Edmonton, Alta., Sembaliuk said the buildings on Lindsay Road, near Granville and Railway, were "built to the code and standards at the time.

"And it's like any other. If you have a house of your own, things happen. You're going to have to replace the roof or you know, whatever happens, and unfortunately there has to be repairs to the building," he said.

Sembaliuk said since Sussex Square is a stucco building, it doesn't require painting.

"That's a siding that doesn't require the maintenance," he said.

The president of Westsea is Julie Trache, who could not be reached for comment. Her father was the original builder of the complex.

### Nowhere to turn

Flabbergasted and confused, some 110 apartment residents attended a meeting recently to discuss their mutual fate, their rights as leaseholders and the range of options that are available to them.

They sought advice from lawyer Tom Russell, who spoke to the group, but haven't yet re-

tained his services.

"There are some real problems there that need to be repaired," he said.

One key issue, said Russell, is whether what's happened to Sussex Square is the result of "normal wear and tear" or the lack of proper maintenance.

Determining who's liable could require a lengthy and likely expensive legal battle.

Vancouver lawyer Stephen Hamilton said this situation underscores the need for prospective buyers to hire a lawyer, especially when dealing with a leasehold. That way they clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of leaseholders and the landlord that detailed in the lease document.

What can amount to just a few hundred dollars worth of legal advice can spare them long-term stress and aggravation, Hamilton said.

The Becketts have a long list of questions for their landlord, and near the top is whether Westsea contributed to the building's state of disrepair through its own negligence or lack of proper maintenance.

And at the back of his mind, Bill wonders if Westsea's real plan is to deter everyone from staying, and after they vacate, to raze the 36-year-old structure, leaving the firm a vacant multiple-family-zoned central Richmond property that's sure to fetch a princely



Martin van den Hemel photo

Bill and June Beckett have been caught blindsided.

sum.

Sembaliuk said Westsea doesn't work that way, and intends to fully meet its lease obligations. Westsea also owns other leasehold properties in Richmond.

"We've never sold a building in our lives through the corporation. You hear rumours like this all the time. And we just don't do business that way," he said.

Richmond realtor Shafik Ladha is listing eight units in the complex, selling for between \$109,800 and \$169,000.

He recently sold a three-bedroom unit there for \$160,000 and described Sussex Square as the "finest managed leasehold property in West Richmond" in his own website's ad for the unit.

Reached Friday morning, Ladha claimed the ad for Sus-

sex Square is "old" and the description of Westsea is no longer accurate.

The new buyers are aware that they may be on the hook for upwards of \$40,000 in repairs, in addition to the purchase price, Ladha said.

While new buyers may be aware of what they're getting into, current leaseholders have been caught blindsided, and don't know where to turn for help.

They can neither afford the repairs nor the retainer to hire a lawyer to litigate the matter.

But Bill said somebody will have to drag him out of the building before he pays a single dime for a problem that could have been prevented in the first place by the landlord who is now poised to give him the boot.

## Nesbitt

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To the delight of the nearly 8,000 fans who packed the speed skating oval, including the Dutch who made up half of the crowd, Nesbitt draped a Canadian flag over her shoulder for the traditional victory lap.

"I was really nervous," Nesbitt told reporters. "As soon as the gun went off I sort of panicked and I had a slip."

Laurine van Riessen of the Netherlands took the bronze medal in 1:16.72, just ahead of Kristina Groves of Canada who finished fourth in 1:16.78.

A former short track speed skater who switched to long track at 18, Nesbitt, the defending world champion at the distance, leads the 1000-metre rankings this season and is second in the 1500 metres.

"I'm actually really proud of myself. A year ago, two years ago, there is no way. I wouldn't have given up, but I wouldn't have had that same drive," Nesbitt told *The Globe and Mail*. "Mental training really pays off."

Nesbitt finished 10th in the women's 500 metres Tuesday and is still scheduled to compete in the team pursuit which begins with a quarter-final next Friday.