

Cobb Business

A WEEKLY REPORT OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Instrumental elements

Quality, reputation put Marietta store on musical map

By MARY SMITH JUDD
For the Journal-Constitution

The Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra's principal clarinetist found something in Cobb County that had eluded him in New York and Chicago — the perfect B-flat Buffet clarinet.

While in the metro area to perform at the Fox Theatre, the musician made a special visit to the Whipkey Music Co. "He probably tried 50 clarinets in [other] cities until he found the one he liked," owner Dane Whipkey said. "He tried 15 at our store."

WHIPKEY MUSIC CO.

► **Where:** 2949 Canton Road, Marietta. Second location in Lawrenceville.

► **Fall hours:** 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Mondays-Wednesdays, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursdays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays, 2-6 p.m. Sundays.

► **Phone:** 770-422-8704

► **Web site:** www.whipkeys.com

A little closer to home, Sugar Hill resident Amy Herrmann remembered Whipkey from her clarinet playing days in the late 1980s. Whipkey, who was her brother's saxophone teacher, also sold Herrmann the instruments she played in Sprayberry High School's marching band, Symphony Youth Orchestra, and on to Governor's Honors and All-State competitions.

So when the time came recently to upgrade her 15-year-old son John's saxophone, she took him to Whipkey's Lawrenceville store in Gwinnett County.

"He remembered who I was, who I played with in high school, what mouth pieces they used," Herrmann said. "It's amazing."

For the past two decades, Whipkey has built his business from a small lesson and repair operation above Tommy's Sandwich Shop on the Marietta Square into a busy student and professional instrument dealership, with annual gross sales exceeding \$1 million.

Now off I-75 on Canton Road, the store gets a fair share of musicians from around the world wanting to test instruments and find



ANDY SHARP / Staff

Whipkey Music Co. partner and classically trained musician Alison Gillon (left) gives instruction to flutist Emily Pandolfi, 15, during a private lesson at the Marietta store.

the perfect match.

Whipkey recalled as an example an Irish trumpeter who bought a Getzen Doc Severson trumpet while on a layover at the airport. And the girl from Tel Aviv who bought a \$12,000 gold-bonded Aramite Powell flute.

For every unusual, high-quality or professional instrument sold in the store or online, there are dozens of repairs, rentals and sales of school band instruments.

"It is a labor of love, certainly," Whipkey said. "Teaching, providing the younger children with good quality American and European instruments gives me the most satisfaction."

Whipkey and partner Alison Gillon also

run the Greater Atlanta Music Academy in the Marietta store, where they offer everything from beginner classes to master classes for professional musicians.

They also hold concerts, where headliners have included the Canadian Brass Quintet and numerous performers from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

The school attracts a high caliber of teachers: a violin teacher who debuted at Carnegie Hall; a clarinet professor who taught at a French conservatory; a trumpet teacher who played with the Chicago Symphony.

Whipkey and Gillon are themselves classically trained musicians. Gillon now plays flute for the Macon Symphony Orchestra.