

AURORA, ILL. By Zach Phillips

# PM MUSIC CENTER

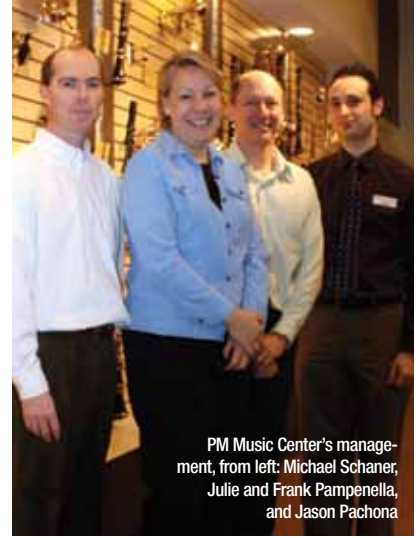
**P**M Music Center struck real estate gold with its new Aurora, Ill., location. The freestanding building, formerly home to a Tweeter store, sits across from Fox Valley Mall — a mile north of PM's previous facility. The location not only drives generous traffic to the school music dealer's retail and music lessons business but also upgrades PM's square footage from 4,200 to 8,500 square feet.

Company co-owner Frank Pampenella said he'd been looking for a new store for a year and a half, but this location was well beyond his price

range. The Great Recession changed that.

"I told the realtor, 'I'm going to insult you with what I'm going to offer, but this is all I can afford,'" Pampenella said. "I went ahead and took pictures of all the vacant buildings around here because there were a ton. I sent that, along with my proposal, showing them that the building could sit here for another two, three years vacant."

He began rebuilding the store in August 2009 and moved in Nov. 2, a half-hour after getting a final permit. "We did it on budget and on time," he said. "It was a challenge."



PM Music Center's management, from left: Michael Schaner, Julie and Frank Pampenella, and Jason Pachona

**T**he former Tweeter building makes its MI retail presence loud and clear with exterior lifestyle photos of people playing music. Being near a mall also has its perks.

"We are seeing a new customer — a slightly different customer," said Michael Schaner, PM's general manager. "We're seeing guys ages 18–35. We never saw that at the other location."

The new store has also helped bring in more of PM's core customers, as well. "We had a very good rental season, and a lot of it was just walk-in people that we didn't even work with at schools," Pampenella said. "Every year, [school rentals] have been going up for us."



## \*PROMOTING LIFESTYLE



## \*OUTSIDE HELP

**P**M's new store tripled its showroom space, effectively expanding the company's retail business and combo presence. "And we may have only added 10–15 percent more product, max," Schaner said.

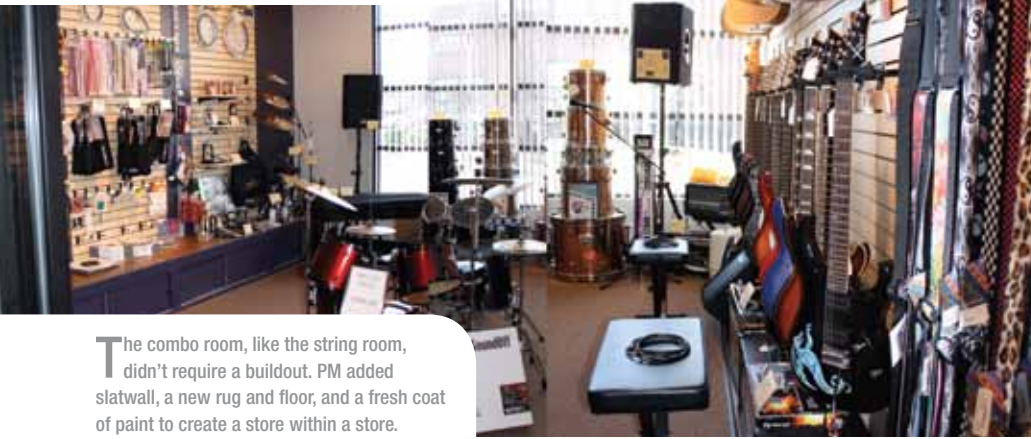
Pampenella purposefully hired an outside-the-industry retail store designer to get a fresh merchandising approach.



## \*ELEGANT STRINGS

**T**he string room is a store within the store, featuring everything from entry-level instruments to \$3,000 violins. The company recently hired string specialists to better serve this customer. Notice the shelf for storing cases (below, right).

## \*STORE WITHIN A STORE



The combo room, like the string room, didn't require a buildout. PM added slatwall, a new rug and floor, and a fresh coat of paint to create a store within a store.

## PM now has 13 teaching studios.

They're not Wenger rooms, but Pampenella said he worked hard to soundproof them with deadening materials. "They're a lot quieter than they were in the old place."

A group lessons room lets PM host Kindermusik, rock band and ukulele classes, and a music exploration class for new students. Pampenella explained that it also doubles as an effective tryout room for brass and woodwind customers, hence the instrument display on the wall.



## \*ECONOMICAL SOUNDPROOFING

## \*RECITAL HALL



Formerly Tweeter's home theater room, the recital hall required little overhaul. PM added spotlights, signage and drapes. The rest came from Tweeter, down to the sconces and color scheme.

## \*WAITING AREA



The waiting room gives parents a place to hang out during their kids' music lessons. As Schaner pointed out, it also keeps them in the store.

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