

COMMUNIQUE ... editors: Beverley Cairns & Patricia Reimer

PROFILE

_____ Summer-2010

ERNIE KALWA, Musician



Elora resident Ernie Kalwa was born and raised in Peterborough where his musical parents exposed him to jazz and big band music from a young age. His mother Doris was a member of the church choir and saw to it that her son started piano lessons at 8 years of age. His father Ernie Sr. was an avid fan of big band dance music. "Jazz and the saxophone have always been a part of my life," says Ernie who remembers growing up listening to music playing on the stereo.

When Ernie entered grade 7, he chose to play the saxophone. "This was the obvious choice because it was the prevalent line I always heard in the music." By grade 9, he was proficient on both the alto and tenor sax. He joined the Peterborough Civic Concert Band and at the age of 14, became a member of the Musician's Union. As well as classical band repertoire, he played dance gigs in Dixieland and big band groups. It was around this time that he became interested in computers.

Ernie attended the University of Waterloo, studying both computer science and music. In 1987 he graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Mathematics. When asked why he chose to major in computers and not music, he said that he has never regretted the decision to let music take a back seat academically. Many of his friends studied music full time and as a result, some have lost the true enjoyment they used to get from their art. He enjoys working in the structured world of computers so upon graduation, he established his own company which is still thriving; he consults in data base management, installation, configuration and tuning.

All the while, he continued to play saxophone. He was inspired by the big bands of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and jazz greats Woody Herman, Stan Getz and Zoot Sims. He attended Humber College's jazz program for one year and there made many contacts with Toronto bands and musicians. Ernie lived in Mississauga from 1988 – 1991 playing many professional jobs as well as building his computer business.

Jazz is one of the greatest and most popular musical styles. Many jazz musicians are so good at what they do it seems they are "making it up as they go along," and while there is a strong improvisational element to jazz, it is built upon a set structural foundation. Whether it is a chord, a pattern, a scale or even one note, structure is the foundation upon which all good music is built. Ernie Kalwa knows this and believes that it is this structure that leads to the freedom so often associated with jazz. With "structure is freedom" as his creed, it is no wonder that Ernie is as good a computer wiz as he is a saxophonist.

In 1991, Ernie moved to Guelph where he founded the Royal City Saxophone Quartet (soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones). The Quartet played classical, ragtime and jazz repertoire, recording 4 CD's over a 10-year period. This group enjoyed popularity among ragtime festivals throughout Ontario and the United States and had the auspicious honour of playing at Parliament Hill on Canada Day broadcast to the entire nation (1998). Check out their website www.royalcitysax.com for an auditory sample of the group that Paul Brodie calls "one of the best saxophone quartets in Canada."

Ernie met Elysia DeLaurentis, a student studying art history at the University of Guelph. The two were married in 2001 and soon after moved to Elora. The quiet village setting has suited the couple very well. Not only is it a good location for Elysia who works as an archives assistant at the Wellington County Museum, but it has allowed Ernie to indulge in his other passion: fly-fishing. "Music takes me completely away from my work with computers and fly-fishing is a great way to relieve stress." Elora, with its proximity to the Grand River, provides the best of all three worlds. Ernie believes that balance is the key to a healthy and vital lifestyle;

The newsletter of the Elora Arts Council is published four times a year. It is distributed by mail to EAC members. It is also available at information offices, libraries and numerous galleries and stores throughout the area.

The Communique has been in constant publication since the founding of the Elora Arts Council in 1985.

Featured in

Ernie and Elysia have found their balance in Elora.

The Ernie Kalwa Jazz Trio (established by Ernie in 1991) is a group consisting of musicians playing saxophone, piano/vibraphone, double bass (and sometime drums). This enigmatic group, which has over 250 tunes in their song list, is well known in the Elora, Fergus and Guelph areas for providing music at weddings, receptions and other special occasion events.

Their most recent CD *The Autumn Leaves* was recorded in 2006. All of their recordings are available to download from iTunes and Amazon Music. They are also available for purchase at the Bookshelf Café in Guelph or from Ernie at his performances. Visit Ernie's self-created website www.erniekalwa.com for more information.

Ernie has served on the board of the Guelph Arts Council for over 10 years and has held key positions in the Central Ontario Musician's Association, which serves professional musicians. He believes in giving back to the community and has been a long-time donor to the Kiwanis Club of Guelph through the Music Festival.

In the future, when he is able to semi-retire from his computer business, Ernie would like to devote even more time to his music and fly-fishing. He may even try his hand at teaching private students. Although he does not fancy himself a composer, he enjoys playing along to CD's creating his own harmonies. He loves performing and would be happy to add the sparkling atmosphere of live music to any special occasion. Ernie may be contacted through his email: ekalwa@studiospace.com or by phone: 519-846-9663.

By Bronwyn Campbell and Patricia Reimer

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the Profile of a
local artist,
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