

During my career, there were several prominent musicians that I have had the pleasure of playing with. One of the highlights for me was performing with Brian Ogilvie in the Louisiana Joy Maker Trio. In the late 70's, featuring Brian Ogilvie (clarinet, tenor sax), Rainer Hunck (bass) and myself, Juergen Hesse (banjo, tenor guitar), we performed at Grossman's Tavern, Toronto and the Brigadoon Tavern in Pickering, Ontario.

The following article written by Chris Daniels compliments my sentiments exactly. Herewith is an obituary dated August 2004, Vol.XXXIV No.8 with the kind consent of the Climax Jazz Band.

Juergen Hesse

Brian Ogilvie
20 March 1954 - 14 August 2004

Brian Ogilvie was a brilliant musician who died at the height of his career doing what he enjoyed most - performing with his friends for appreciative jazz audiences - in the land of his forefathers.

We Toronto musicians first encountered Brian in the summer of 1973. He was just 19 and had bused all the way from Vancouver with his clarinet to see and hear what was going on.

He found a room near Spadina and Bloor on Madison Avenue, where the pub of the same name now stands, and embarked on his musical Odyssey.

He was a skinny, serious, very likeable lad who obviously had a load of talent and absorbed what he heard and made it his. When he turned up at Ye Olde Brunswick House, where Climax was playing six nights a week, we could tell which clarinet player he'd just been listening to.

Brian was welcome wherever he went and everyone knew he was bound for glory. He had great confidence and his enthusiasm for the music was infectious.

He had formed his first group, the Lions Gate Jazz Band, when he was only 16 and went back to Vancouver at the end of the summer to form the Westside Footwarmers. He played with them and other local groups while studying music and taking tenor saxophone lessons from Fraser MacPherson.

When he was short a few bucks he used to play his sax on Granville Street and earn 'good money' from the passersby.

Brian eventually moved to Toronto in the mid-1970s and played with a number of bands, supplementing his income in a variety of ways; casual landscaping work with a diverse bunch, including graduates from jail, who Brian described as being mostly 'really nice guys' and working for the Law Society printing department.

He joined the Climax Jazz Band in 1979-80 and played the regular Toronto gigs at Malloney's Studio on Saturday afternoons and festivals and concerts in Canada and the U.S. Brian left Climax eventually to pursue a variety of musical interests, including playing gigs and recording with Boston's New Black Eagle Jazz Band and playing in Toronto with Jim Galloway's Wee Big

Band, Shox Johnson and the Jive Bombers, Crazy Rhythm, and with his brothers Don on guitar and Ken on bass, the Ogilvie Brothers Jazztet.

He played regular gigs at the Old Mill and other hotel and bar engagements and was chosen to appear in the Toronto version of the highly successful New Orleans revue 'One Mo' Time'.

Opportunity came knocking in 1992 when Brian was invited to San Antonio, Texas, to join Jim Cullum's Jazz Band, playing seven days a week at the Landing, a popular spot on the newly developed riverfront. Cullum also pioneered a weekly public radio broadcast Live From the Landing, so Brian's name became a household word among American jazz fans.

Having served his time and obtained his Green Card, Brian set out in 1997 for the Promised Land; New Orleans, where he was gladly accepted into the music community, not so easy for an outsider.

Home

Doors opened with opportunities, in local clubs, bars and restaurants and on two-week cruises up the Mississippi River on the Delta Queen with Connie Jones' Crescent City Jazz Band. They played a variety of music for the passengers, but mainly jazz. Brian shared a cabin in the stem, right in front of the big paddle wheel. He said you got used to the noise eventually and it lulled you off to sleep. He took his bike on board and rode around the countryside at the various stops at civil war battle sites and other historic places.

One of the more recent gigs that Brian enjoyed was the Burlesque Revue in New Orleans, which recreated the popular risqué shows for which New Orleans was famous.

Brian's reputation spread among musicians and fans and he made many recordings, with the more traditional trombonist Mike Owen and drummer Hal Smith and more main-stream players trombonist Dan Barrett, trumpeter Randy Sanke, pianist John Sheridan and clarinetist/saxophonist Bob Wilbur. He led a group on For You, on Arbors Records in 1999.

Life is hard for a musician in New Orleans. The gigs are long and the pay is not so good. Brian played five hour shifts at the Court of the Two Sisters brunch on Sunday and Mondays and never seemed to turn down a job.

When Climax was last in new Orleans, for the 2001 French Quarter Festival, he was running from one gig to another, yet still found time to come and sit in with the band.

One of his favorite places was the Palm Court, near the Market, where he played with some of the really old New Orleans musicians on Sunday nights ..

Brian loved to travel and was invited to festivals around North America and tours in

He came back often to Canada to visit his musical siblings and many friends in Vancouver and Toronto. Brian's quartet played at the Toronto Downtown Jazz Festival, he was a special guest at New Orleans Nights and appeared with Climax at the Sacramento Jazz Jubilee in 2002 and the Caribbean cruise in 2003.

Brian died while on tour in Europe with an all star band. He became ill while the band was playing at the Nairn International Jazz Festival, not far from where Bonnie Prince Charlie lost the tragic battle of Culloden. He died on Saturday August 14, 2004.

We shall all miss Brian. Everyone who met him, especially those who played with him, were struck by his brilliance and enthusiasm for the music.

He was always encouraging, a warm, loving guy who would say, 'Sounds good Cat'. Sounds good Brian.