



# Musicians of the Midnight Sun

Thank you for visiting the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website. Even though these blogs are being posted many weeks after the launch of the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website, my hope is that they will remain as a document along with the website itself with the intention to give a little bit more of a personal story of my relationships with these featured artists.

## Alex Czarnecki:

Somewhere, way back in the faded, jerky clips of celluloid memory, I am sitting in the St. Pats gymnasium, on those really uncomfortable metal stacking chairs, and watching the community theatre production of “Fiddler on the Roof”. Again, I wish I could remember more detail other than flashes of colourful costumes and those unforgettable melodies from the score but my young 8 – 10 year old brain could only take in so much. A few years later, I was old enough to realize that this was only one of many community theatre productions pulled together by a handful of Yellowknife thespians to keep the town entertained and to keep their own acting, singing and playing skills from atrophying or to discover a new skill set. These were not small productions either. The crew of townsfolk involved in all aspects of pulling it together was formidable, all were all working full time day jobs, raising families and yet they still found the time and energy to turn a school gymnasium into a concert hall for a few nights and take the audience to someplace new.



Alex Czarnecki (photo from “Two Hands and Forever” pamphlet)

It was a golden era in Yellowknife at the time. There were many professionals living in town that also carried with them their talents for performing on the stage and here was an outlet for them to carry on. Some of these professionals, while working their day jobs, were also highly recognized in their respective artistic fields in the south before they moved north. As a result, the level of talent and production at these community events was at an elevated level for such a small town.

Alex Czarnecki was a tour de force, a visionary through this golden era of community theatre. He found a kinship of like-minded artistic souls and gathered them together around the idea of putting on a show. After the curtains closed, the chairs were stacked and the concert hall returned to a gymnasium, with all of the positive post stage energy, plans were already afoot for the next one.

A brief bio of Alex Czarnecki:

*Alex Czarnecki has worked in the fields of Theatre, Film and Television as a creator, producer, actor, mentor and director. He has worked as Associate Artistic Director and Faculty Advisor with Michael Bawtree (Stratford Festival) at the internationally acclaimed Banff Centre School of Fine Arts, Music Theatre and was the first Executive/Artistic Director of the Northern Arts & Cultural Centre. Alex has produced and directed over 40 works for the theatrical stage. Equally at home with serious vehicles and the pleasures of entertainment, his production credits encompass compelling dramas like A Streetcar Named Desire, The Royal Hunt of the Sun and Macbeth, buoyant musicals like Man of La Mancha, Fiddler on the Roof and Oliver!, and engaging comedies like I Remember Mama, Waltz of the Toreadors and Last of the Red Lovers, not to mention a dash of who-dunnitry afforded by The Mousetrap. From 1990-1992, he resumed the responsibilities and powers of Artistic Director, this time for the NACC Studio Theatre Ensemble and Yellowknife’s Raven Theatre. In 1986 produced and directed the Canadian premiere of Matonabee, which garnered meritorious reviews in the regional press and was invited to tour nationally.*

Through all of these years, Alex was teaching full time, raising his family, directing all of these community theatre productions and playing saxophone along with his musical partner, Wilf Schidlowsky in the Yellowknife bands, “The Alley Cats” or “Easy Street”. I never got to hear Alex playing his tenor saxophone as I came on the scene a few years after he stopped playing.



Alex Czarnecki performing with the Island City 7, Montreal, 1968 (photo © Alex Czarnecki)

Alex’s perspective and insights of living in Yellowknife through those years had me laughing one minute and almost in tears the next. Alex is a true Jazz musician at heart, never losing his passion for the music or the instrument and in that, has endeared himself to my own musical heart.