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.

Roy Menagh

In many ways, Roy Menagh is one of those seminal teachers that one encounters in their youth that makes a profound impact on one's life. Even before I went to high school at Sir John Franklin, I knew I wanted to be a professional musician. I couldn't wait to get into his music program to make that happen. I went into high school as a drummer, ended up playing percussion parts in the bands but quickly transitioned to the Bass guitar. After that, I was playing in numerous bands and ensembles that played a wide array of musical styles that would prove to be invaluable for me later on. This was due in large part to my own initiative but also to the opportunities made available to me by Roy in those years. For that, I will always be indebted to Roy.

Roy Menagh helps his students through a tune-up session before the performance. He started four years ago with 15 members and now boasts a full 55-member band.

Roy Menagh, 1977 Yellowknife, NT. (photo © NNSL.com)

I have included his story in the MMS website because of the time and energy he contributed to the musical community in Yellowknife and across the north. If you read through his interview, he facilitated so many initiatives that always included engagement of the community in the performing arts. His tenure at Sir John Franklin is a time never to be repeated due largely to his vision but also due to the political, social and cultural climate of the 1970s.

A LITTLE EUROPEAN CULTURE IN MIND

Eight Sir John Franklin students are off on 'Arts Tour Concert' in Europe, visiting London and Paris. The eight raised $9,500 for the 16-day tour, holding a student's concert, an Arts Tour Ball in the Explorer and obtaining donations from the Territorial department of education, PWA and Searle and Sigler. The idea originated in the Sir John's senior music class and snowballed from there. The eight are Tracey Stanger, Pat Braden, Murray Grabke, Diana Ganske, Gordon Park, James Emery, Debbie Fernie, Claire Mallon and Sir John's music teacher Roy Menagh and his wife, Nancy. The group left last Friday and will take in the London Philharmonic, St. Albert's Hall, a Pink Floyd concert and the play Yahoo, with Sir Alex Guiness. In Paris the tour will be mostly visual, with visits to galleries and historic sites.

Roy Menagh and students, 1977, Yellowknife, NT. Europe music trip. (photo © NNSL.com)

In visiting Roy and his wife Nancy in their home in Orillia, ON in the fall of 2018, I saw that he is still as active now as he was then in manifesting his vision of community engagement with the musical performing arts; developing a top shelf choral ensemble, producing choral performances where the proceeds in the hundreds of thousands of dollars go to charity to fundraising to improve the St. Paul's Centre into a world class performance venue. Through the 1970s, here in Yellowknife and the north, Roy was a tour de force. Even after all of these years, his conviction and dedication to the engagement of community in the performing arts remains as strong as ever.

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