

Jazz artist Saunders and friends will get the toes tapping

By Mark Pavilons

"Life is a lot like jazz . . . it's best when you improvise." ??George Gershwin

Music is immersing yourself in the moment. Jazz is bringing a smile to your soul.

King's accomplished jazz pianist Adam Saunders exudes joy when he's tickling the ivories, bringing emotions to life. Jazz, he said, is about simplicity and easy listening. It's about feeling the beat and jumping in with both hands. The pure acoustical sounds are like soft clay in a musician's hands ??you never know what form it's gonna take.

"Jazz to me is a living music. It's a music that since its beginning has expressed the feelings, the dreams, hopes, of the people."

??Dexter Gordon

Saunders, a self-taught musical virtuoso, has been hooked on jazz since he was 15. The traditional Dixieland jazz is "happy stuff" to Saunders, who just can't get enough of this intoxicating blend. Saunders never learned how to read music and he even admits he uses "all the wrong fingers." ??But the result is almost magical, the moment he sits in front of his Steinway.

"I play from the heart, not from the chart," he said with a smile.

He learned how to play the piano simply by watching others at his boarding school. He picked it up like a prodigy. To this day, he improvises. He understands the chord progression and template, which he sees as a "trellis on which to hang the melody."

Saunders put together his first band in 1959 and kept "very busy having fun" at private functions, weddings and corporate events. By day, Saunders was the consummate professional ??a commercial insurance expert. By night, he was footloose and fancy free, doing what came naturally. Saunders's music has been an important part of him all of his life.

As a purist, Saunders travelled around the world, playing with some of the industry's greats.

He visited the shrine of North American jazz ? Preservation Hall in the French Quarter of New Orleans. His hosts coerced him to play for some time that night.

"I loved it," he said, recalling the night's impromptu performance.

Preservation Hall continues the mission today as a cornerstone of New Orleans music and culture. It draws visitors from all over to their nightly concerts.

Saunders also mentioned he spent 20 minutes speaking with jazz great Eddie Condon at his club in New York. Condon is credited with creating a sophisticated variation on Dixieland music, which was nicknamed "Nicksieland."

"It was like conversing with God," Saunders admitted.

At their home in rural King Township, Saunders and his wife Valerie have hosted many high-profile visitors and musicians from across the globe. Valerie joined Adam's love of jazz and she was the founder of the Classical Jazz Society of Toronto.

He has combined his love of flying with music and just might be seen landing his float plane in the Muskokas, Georgian Bay or Temagami for a gig.

The Adam Saunders' Jazz Band includes some of Saunders' most respected colleagues and friends. Distinguished performers in their own right, they are a dynamic team always promising a lively event. He is joined by Al Cox (trumpet), Peter Hysen (trombone), Micky Loran (clarinet/saxophone), "Doc" Mike Walmsley, (Guitar/Banjo), Ron Johnson (bass) and Jamie Aug on drums.

Hear the Adam Saunders Band April 30 at a very special venue ? the home of Michele Mele and Luciano Tauro at 15785 Concession 8, Schomberg. The performance runs from 2 to 4:30 p.m.

Saunders said he can't wait to play Michele's Fazioli piano, considered one of the best in the world.

Tickets are \$30 online and \$35 at the door. They're available from Brown Paper Tickets: <http://m.bpt.me/event/2907372>. For more information, call 416-878-7922 or 905-859-3818.

"Jazz is letting everybody do his or her thing with the music." ??Percy Heath

