

Gary Santucci: Composer and Guitarist

Gary Santucci began his formal studies at The Royal Hamilton College of Music and went on to study Classical and Flamenco guitar in Spain. Returning to Hamilton, he carried out his vision of continuing on the Flamenco and Classical traditions, introducing these traditions to local students, and establishing himself as a performing artist.

He opened the Levantine School of Music which quickly became much more than just a school; it became a meeting place of musicians, a place where many young, now professional, musicians got their start. He was on the Faculty of Music at Mohawk and taught extensively in Mohawk's Continuing Education Department. He became part of their Music Advisory Committee.

The Musicians in the Schools Project for the Hamilton Wentworth Separate School Board was also a creation of Gary's. The restaurant/jazz club, Stardust on Duke, which became a community focus for jazz musicians and jazz aficionados was conceived, implemented and operated by Gary.

As an Arts Community activist Gary headed up an Artist in Residence Program initiative as a sub-set of "Vision 20/20". "Urban Dwellers" was the name of a weekly program on the McMaster radio station which Gary hosted focusing on local politics and personalities. "Arts Alive" which brought together a number of local artists and activists from many different fields, to promote interdisciplinary collaborations was also one of his co-initiatives.

Gary has completed a number of projects with musicians from around the world, notably India, China, Spain and South America and has put together a number of performing ensembles. He is known for his fair and collaborative leadership style. His latest group is called Zarabanda and is a euro-jazz sextet featuring more of his original compositions. He continues to perform, compose and record his original music solo as well.

Among his awards is Best Classical Musician 1982, presented by the Hamilton Wentworth Council of the Arts and The City of Hamilton Arts Award for Music 2004. Most recently Gary with his life and business partner, Barbara Milne, received The City of Hamilton Arts Award 2008 for Lifetime Achievement.

And now Gary and Barbara have devoted their energies to The Pearl Company, an arts and performance facility in the heart of the Landsdale neighbourhood of downtown Hamilton. Renovated in 2006 from a three-story brick factory building, the facility has devoted two of its three floors to the arts. In the past four years, The Pearl Company has launched a number of arts initiatives, including the Art Bus, numerous theatrical performances, musical concerts, festivals, and community events. Performers have included Rita Chiarelli, the Hamilton Philharmonic, and many, many more.

The Pearl Review is an arts journalism newsprint magazine and an exciting new take on the Hamilton Arts Scene and an Arts view of Hamilton issues, publishing a spring issue.

What next.... Only time will tell.