

Creativity in the Forest City begins with believing



BEN BENEDICT The Creative City

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Much of this city's creativity happens because of dedicated and hard working Londoners who believe in themselves, their community, and the events they support. Those passions account for thousands of hours of volunteer services annually and, in some instances, even translate into meaningful employment.

Meet **Ian Davies** of Ian Davies Entertainment Agency (IDEA). He's the volunteer coordinator of the Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club and Acoustic Music Concerts series. While music has always been his passion, it was a long journey that brought him to these events.

The Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club, for example, has had two lives, Mr. Davies says. "The first was from the early 1970s to about 1984. It was run out of Luther House across from Western Gates and it was run like an English folk club on Sunday nights. It was like a music circle with guest. I was a member but not all that involved. It ran till organizers ran out of gas and went on hiatus."

It was those early days, and an opportunity to get involved with

radio, that would set the course for Mr. Davies.

"I went to Western from 1969 to 1973 and in my second year Radio Western started. I was one of the first six to put it on the air. I was the music director-librarian at the time and did the programming," he says.

He eventually got a part-time job with CPPL, went full-time into radio in Windsor for 10 years, then got into the sponsorship field in Hamilton. In 1993 he was back in London as director of development for Orchestra London before starting his own business in 1999.

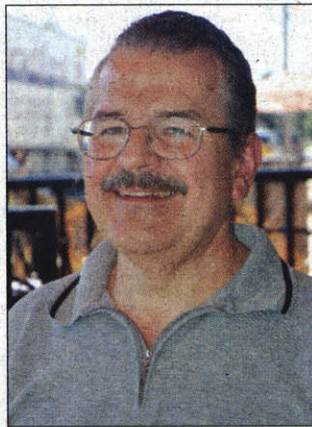
Among the people he encountered on returning here was Alis-tair Brown, one of the original organizers of the Cuckoo's Nest, which he said had run out of gas.

"I thought that was a shame and started looking for new volunteers," Mr. Davies says. "We did three concerts and they did well so we did concerts once a month at Chaucer's."

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Now in its 14th year, Cuckoo's Nest is still at Chaucer's and still runs as a volunteer organization under the auspices of the Home County Folk Festival organization.

As for his life as a music promoter, that too has its roots in London's supportive artistic com-



Ian Davies is volunteer artistic director for the Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club and owner of Ian Davies Entertainment Agency.

munity following his departure from Orchestra London.

"I needed a change. A lot of people were encouraging me to be their agent. Right away I had two people who worked with me plus I had my Cuckoo's Nest contacts as well as all the festivals I had worked with," Mr. Davies says.

"Having just left Orchestra London my first concert was well supported by friends so I made a few dollars. It was a baby step and with that encouragement I just kept going. There's a good relationship with people within the arts in London."

While Mr. Davies considers himself to be among the fortunate who have to opportunity to do what they love, that love also comes with several challenges.

"I think, and other promoters have also noticed, that since the John Labatt Centre has opened,

even though they're different, people our age have interest but enjoy both large and small events. From an economic perspective it's been great for our community but for smaller promoters it leaves less dollars in the hands of consumers so smaller shows get missed. Part of that is buying power and larger venues like the John Labatt Centre's ability to spend large amounts on promotions so we have to rely on grass roots initiatives and word of mouth.

"Keeping prices reasonable is an effort too. The niche market tickets are under \$30. I have a small group of volunteers that I rely on and I couldn't do some of these concerts without their support. You'll find that in the arts because you can't afford to pay for all those services and remain financially viable."

Those considerations also need to take in venue size, the potential for audience turn out and affordability within London's smaller venues where capacity can make the difference between a profit and a loss. Local capacity varies from Chaucer's at 85, the London Music Club at 120, the Mocha Shrine Temple at 200, the Aeolian Performing Arts Centre at 300, and the Wolfe Auditorium at 375.

"You compare the rental cost and the cost of the artist against who will come and what you can charge and hopefully at the end of the day you come out in the black," Mr. Davies says.

As for where Mr. Davies is at this point in his life with Acoustic Music Concerts and the Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club, he seems quite pleased.

"These are the two concert

series I promote and I also have a booking agency for concerts elsewhere. It's a small roster of musicians I promote. I'm at capacity right now. It's not that I couldn't expand but I want to remain a sole proprietor. I also really enjoy all the volunteer things I do," Mr. Davies says.

"Besides the volunteer commitments, the things that keep me grounded are my two and a half year old daughter and the failing health of my parents. I'm just trying to maintain and do the best I can with what I have."

SEASON OPENER — London Community Players present their season opening production *The Foursome* by Norm Foster on Sept. 28 - 30 and Oct. 4 - 6 at the Palace Theatre, 710 Dundas St. Evening performances are 8 p.m. while matinees are 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 30 and Oct. 6.

Directed by **Mark Mooney** with assistant directors **Sharon Straus** and **Andrea Bennett** the Charmaine Costello production features **Johnny Bobesich**, **Harry Edison**, **Sam Shoebottom**, and **Mark Speckley** as four old chums who during a 15-year college reunion, go out for a game of golf to catch up on each other's lives since their college days. As the game progresses, real truths start to emerge and you realize that they are just ordinary guys with their own faults and failings.

Tickets are \$17 for adults, \$14 for seniors and students and \$5 for eyeGo to the Arts patrons. For more information phone London Community Players box office 519-432-1029, visit at 708 Dundas St. or online at www.londoncommunityplayers.com.