

MEDIA RELEASE

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WILLIAM LARAMIE MEMORIAL CONCERT SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 17

East Hartford music gala will support music education and bicycling/pedestrian safety

East Hartford Mayor Marcia Leclerc will help kick off a special concert at noon on Sunday, June 17, 2012, at the East Hartford Cultural Center (<http://www.ehccc.com/>). Musical artists from around the region will perform to remember East Hartford resident, musician, and music teacher William Laramie. Laramie was killed September 1, 2011, when the bicycle he was riding home from work along Burnside Avenue was struck by an intoxicated driver.

The event will raise money to support music education programs in the East Hartford Public School System (<http://www.easthartford.org/page.cfm?p=8444>) and Bike Walk Connecticut (<http://bikewalkct.org/>), a bicycling and pedestrian advocacy group.

"Will often told me he was happiest when he was helping people," said Linda Piotrowicz, Laramie's partner. "His family and I wanted to do something constructive with our grief and continue in Will's tradition of assisting others. We're happy about the opportunity to team up with these two organizations to support the excellent work they do every day to make a difference in our community."

Attendees will enjoy a diverse assortment of musical styles, including folk, country, jazz, R&B, and rock, performed by musicians who knew and played with Laramie. Radio show host, author, and humorist Colin McEnroe will host the festivities, which run until 4:00 p.m. and also feature a silent auction.

The family-friendly event is open to all. Admission is by cash donation at the door. A tentative line-up is available on the event's website, www.WilliamLaramieMemorialConcert.org and Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/events/128011593990761/>.

ABOUT WILLIAM LARAMIE

A Connecticut native, Will (also known as Bill) Laramie grew up in Tolland. At the age of six, he discovered the guitar, and soon after took up the drums. While enrolled at Tolland High, he attended the Hartt School of Music on weekends to study with Stuart Saunders Smith. He continued on to the Peabody Conservatory of Music at Johns Hopkins University, training with Fred Begun, Charles Memphis, and John Soroka, among others, and graduated with degrees in percussion and music education.

Laramie went on to play with a wide and diverse set of artists, including the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Plexus Jazz Ensemble, Pipe Dreams Wedding Group, Jazz Sultans, the Jamie Ward Blues Band, Mass-Conn Fusion, Taylor and Laramie, and, most recently, the Guinea Pigs.

Longtime friend and music collaborator Phil Palonen of Canterbury met Laramie soon after college and played with him in the Plexus Jazz Ensemble, opening for acts such as Spyro Gyra. "What many people do not know is that he could play just about any instrument," said Palonen. "Will's insight and intuition into any musical opportunity was remarkable and made him a joy to play with. Other drummers always commented on his drumming inventiveness and skill."

Tony Marvici, former bandmate of Laramie's in Mass-Conn Fusion, agreed. "He was a musician's musician. He played five-string banjo, jazz guitar, vibes, every style of drums, and every instrument in the orchestra. Oh yeah, he could sing too. As a drummer he could hold his own with anyone. Will played music on the drums in a way that conducted the band without it being obvious. He was a true genius."

"He was brilliant," emphasized Dan Thompson, guitarist for the Guinea Pigs. "He had this great technical and theoretical ability. He could look at any musical situation improve it: 'Try this chord, this note, this voicing, move it all up a half step so it fits the singer's vocal range better.'"

"So many times we'd be practicing and he'd make a comment," Guinea Pigs' singer Sandra Johnson continued, "and his suggestion would literally make the song. It would redefine it. He was a remarkably gifted musician and we are blessed for the time we got to play with him."

Throughout his career, Laramie taught private and group lessons, sharing his love and gift of music with people of all ages and abilities. In particular, he loved working with children.

"We all enjoyed his camaraderie, his humor, his welcoming attitude, and we really needed his unending patience," reflected Andrea Arbur of Glastonbury, whose family took lessons from Laramie for three years. "As beginners, we all had a lot to learn, but no matter how long it took, Will was right there encouraging us. He made lessons fun, especially for my youngest, who thought Will was so cool and was captured by his magic tricks, band stories, and instruments."

Like many musicians, Laramie worked a day job to help make ends meet. It was from his position at Star Stainless in East Hartford that he was riding his bicycle home along Burnside Avenue on September 1, 2011, when he was struck down by a car operated by an intoxicated driver. Laramie lived in town with his partner, Linda Piotrowicz, and their cat, Mojo. He was 56.

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