

A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Orchestra

Tina Ginnopoulos

This is the story of how Ian Tanner somehow found himself composing music for orchestras mid-way into his music career!

Ian fell in love with music from the beginning. At his childhood home in Woodstock, Ontario, he played his family piano for hours on end. When he should have been doing homework or learning his actual piano lesson material, Ian would sit at the piano jamming out his favourite Beatles and Elton John songs, figuring them out by ear, and would even make recordings of "simulated" concerts in his living room!

When Ian graduated high school, he went on to study Classical music at the University of Western Ontario in London. The goal was to either become a professional bassist with an orchestra or become a composer. Neither of these things happened because Ian dropped out after his first year. He felt the calling to live out his "rock and roll dreams", to see if his band "The Awakening" could get a record deal, and to conquer the world!

What followed next was a lengthy period of Ian's life, from 1985 to 2000, where his "rock and roll dreams" lost their lustre. Two of his bands got signed to American record deals, released albums, toured, and tried their best to get further up the chain of success, but by the late 1990's, Ian had decided to put this part of his life behind him and to focus on how he could actually make a living being a musician.

He began working as a side-musician for a variety of recording artists, many in the Country Music scene of the early 2000's, such as Jason McCoy, George Fox, and Deric Ruttan. He became an in-demand session musician, recording hundreds of studio tracks and vocal sessions. He also began composing music for TV and documentary series. He was finally making a living from music!

The biggest step forward for Ian was pairing up with singer/songwriter Jim Witter. Jim had been a successful Country Music artist in the 1990's, but as the next Millennium was beginning, he created a very unique nostalgia-based show, using multi-media and the music of Billy Joel and Elton John to be a trip back in time to the 1970's. This show, called "The Piano Men", became a successful touring show, with performances all over North America, Mexico, the UK, The Netherlands, and Dubai. After 22 years with Jim, there are now multiple shows and multiple tours; even with Covid's interruption, there seems to be no end in sight for them.

In the early days of "The Piano Men," Jim Witter was asked to provide orchestral arrangements for his show so that he could perform with a full orchestra. Jim asked Ian if he would be willing to compose these arrangements. Dropping out of university after one year definitely had its drawbacks! Having never studied orchestration or arrangement, Ian was sure he would not be qualified for the job.

Alas, finding a qualified person to do this job, who would fully understand what Jim was looking for was not going to be realistic. Ian agreed to take on the job, and after much last-minute cramming and quick studying, he was able to do a modest attempt at being an orchestral arranger. Thankfully, there were many more opportunities for Ian to learn the craft, and as a result, Ian composed

arrangements for half a dozen Jim Witter shows over the next decade. These arrangements have been performed by orchestras around North America such as The Phoenix Symphony, The Edmonton Symphony, The Victoria Symphony, Symphony Nova Scotia, and many others.

The upcoming performance with the Waterloo Chamber Players is another first for Ian – his first time being the front-man, performing his own arrangements with an orchestra in his home town. The list of songs spans some of the best work he has done for Jim Witter and some of the most loved Pop songs from the "age of vinyl". Ian will also be performing one of his original songs, which he has orchestrated just for this performance.

It's been a long road from University drop-out to orchestral arranger, but it's been a road full of surprises and success.

Great Songs from the Age of Vinyl Waterloo Chamber Players

Ben Bolt-Martin, Conductor

Ian Tanner, soloist (photo credit: Roslyn Witter)

Friday August 19, 2022 at 7:00pm

Victoria Park Pavilion

80 Schneider Ave, Kitchener, ON N2G 1K9

Tickets at the door: pay-what-you-can

(suggested donation of \$20 per person, charitable tax receipts available)

Website: waterlochamberplayers.com Info at 519 208 5508 or

waterloopc@gmail.com



photo of Ian Tanner by Darren Walters

Orchestra@UWaterloo is Back!

Dan Warren, conductor

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2022 – 7:30 PM EDT

Mediterranean Memories: Orchestra@UWaterloo End of Term Concert



Please join us for the Spring Term orchestra@uwaterloo concert. Directed by Daniel Warren, this orchestra includes students from across the University in all 6 Faculties.

Well as everyone knows it's been pretty difficult to stage any kind of orchestra concerts through pandemic. The University of Waterloo orchestra is no exception and for a couple of terms we were doing things online with varying degrees of success. We had some chamber music playing on a platform called Jamulus which, if everyone's Internet was cooperating we could actually play together from different parts of the province or city. In addition to the internet, we did a strings program last fall. Everyone masked but no audience. Then we did a shortened concert in the winter at Knox. All Beethoven. That was the first time with audience so we have actually been playing this year. I'm happy to say that this term the University of Waterloo orchestra has been meeting regularly with a healthy contingent of about 40 players. We've put together a beautiful program of Mendelson's Italian symphony, Mozart Don Giovanni overture, Sibelius Valse triste and the pavane by Faure. We've had to put the winners of our solo competition on hold because it's been difficult to field an orchestra with enough forces to do either Rachmaninoff or Dvorak but hopefully this will come in the fall. The orchestra sounds great and it's been an absolute joy to be able to play together in person every Wednesday night in the great Hall at Conrad Grebel. Our upcoming concert at Knox Presbyterian will be a beautiful celebration. We hope to see you there.

SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2022 – 7:30 PM EDT

Out of Darkness: University Choir end of term Concert



The University Choir performs an eclectic range of music from around the world. Directed by Liaka Jetchick, the choir consists of students and alumni from all six faculties. This Spring term they will perform Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms, composed in 1965.

For all summer concerts at
Conrad Grebel, see:
<https://uwaterloo.ca/music/events>