

Walker benefit concert coming to Museum Aug. 30

Most musicians tend to have interesting stories to tell, and Kelly Walker, who will be performing a benefit concert for the Dufferin County Museum and Archives (DCMA) on Saturday, August 30, is no exception to that.

From the day he was born, music was a part of Mr. Walker's life. He recalls being told that on the day of his birth that his father brought a piano home from the furniture store that day. He began lessons on the instrument at the age of four, and pursued his post-secondary studies at the Conservatory at Western University in London.

"I have performed music my entire life," said Mr. Walker. "Even as a young teen, I was a church organist and choir director at my church."

At the age of 20, he completed his university studies and decided to enter the Dominican Order in Quebec, where he spent the next 20 years of his life as a monk. There, he studied the organ and harpsichord before leaving the order at 40 years old.

"Kind of out of the ashes of a breakdown and a burnout, I had to recreate my life," he explained. "I began playing music at a bar in Mississauga called La Castile, as well as other venues in Toronto while I tried to figure things out."

During that time, he was invited to tour with Mary O'Hara, who at the time, was the leading Irish singer in the world. He performed with her for several years across Canada and the UK, then pursued a solo career.

As most musicians know, sustaining oneself with a full-time career in music can be rather difficult, and Mr. Walker realized he needed to get a job to support his life. He continued doing concerts here and there, but worked full-time as a psycho-therapist for 12 years before moving to Hockley Valley with his partner, Ray.

With the ever-flowing talent to be found in Dufferin County, it wasn't long before he met and began performing with local musician Mark DuBois.

"For the past 10 years now, I've also been the artistic director for an annual concert in Toronto that is put on to support LOFT Community Services," he explained. "I pull in artists from my world of theatre and music, and we make about \$100,000 in that night to support their services."

The organization, formerly called Anglican Houses, has 70 residences across the Greater Toronto Area who look after people that tend to fall through the cracks of the medical system and social service programs.

"They help everyone from the elderly to street kids who live off prostitution, homeless people with HIV, mentally challenged and addicts who have difficulty getting accepted anywhere else," he said. "It's a wonderful service, and at this stage in my life it's my main involvement with music now."

The DCMA has had Mr. Walker perform in the past with Mark DuBois, and decided to invite him back to perform a benefit concert on the long weekend. One reason he mentioned was the planned retirement of museum creator Wayne Townsend.

"I'm guessing because it's Wayne's last year that he wanted me to do something for the museum," he said. "At this stage, it's just me and a piano, but I've also invited Mark DuBois to perform some songs with me."

The performance will be held at the Rosemont Hall from 4 to 7 p.m. Admission is \$20. For more information, contact the DCMA.