

## Teaching keeps Goodspeed playing Saxman shares his talents with students across the province By STEPHEN PEDERSEN Arts Reporter

If you make a living as a journeyman musician in Halifax, you're probably also a teacher. It's a big part of your life, but it's an ironic existence. In a market too weak to fully support you, you supplement your sporadic income as a player by flooding the supply side as a teacher giving away your best secrets to your future competitors.

No musician is unaware of this irony. But it's just whistling in the wind.

"The ones who wind up teaching, really love it," says Halifax sideman saxophonist and band leader Jeff Goodspeed. Hardly an explanation. But Goodspeed elaborates: "It's pretty hard to teach something a new concept, say without learning something myself," he said. "Teaching is an active part of my professional development. First I explain, then I create an exercise for any problem a student is having. Sometimes I can't wait for the lesson to be over so I can try out the exercise myself."

For Goodspeed, the lines between teaching, practicing and playing are often blurred. "I do a lot of cocktail gigs," he said, "receptions, corporate events, weddings usually as a trio with piano and bass. I like those gigs. It's just playing standards, tunes that people know. I feel right at home. And probably because I'm comfortable, it makes people feel comfortable."

"Besides, there's no better place to practice than that kind of gig."

For the last two years, in addition to playing journeyman music gigs, Goodspeed has been in charge of Sunday Jazz at Stayner's on the Waterfront. It runs from 5-9 p.m. and he calls it his weekly chance to get out and challenge himself.

"It's boiled down to a house band a quartet with Jamie Gatti on bass, Dave Burton on drums, Sylvio Pupo on piano and me on sax and flute. It's nice to have a house band to play originals and more polished arrangements. It's also fun to bring in a guest every other week or so to play standards it keeps me feeling like I'm a musician."

"I feel like a musician every day of my life. But you need an outlet to test yourself, to grow, to have a reason to practice."

Goodspeed wanted to be an environmental scientist when he grew up in Truro. His dad ran Goodspeed Chev-Olds. He worked at a variety of jobs repair and body work in the garage, but also building a cottage. As a freelancer, one of the best things you can do for yourself is become a jack of all trades a little bit of plumbing, cabinetry, drywall.

Watching Don Messer on TV, admiring the freedom and virtuosity of his playing, Goodspeed took up the fiddle when he was eight, taking classical lessons, teaching himself tunes and playing it for 5 years.

Then came junior high. "I became self-conscious about the violin," he said. "It's a hard time for kids from 10 to 16. They need something to give them confidence something to be passionate about."

He met Ron MacKay and signed up immediately to play sax. MacKay started him on clarinet, and on his first day playing it, he played every single note possible on the instrument.

"I decided to be a musician in Bermuda," he said. "It was our second trip with the high school band. We were out playing dances and hotels. That year I was president of the band. The sax player from the hotel came up and complimented me. He said, 'It's a pretty good life.'"

After high school Goodspeed went to Berklee for a year to study jazz. It was an eye-opener, he said. "I was only one of 200 sax players it was the best thing that could have happened to me total immersion. I had the perception of being in the middle of the group. practised four hours a day."

After a year at Berklee, Goodspeed went to Acadia University for two years and then, like so many of today's Halifax players, two years at Humber College in Ontario. By now he could play jazz at a professional level. He also made a lot of contacts, enabling him to work as a freelancer in Toronto.

For three years, like Nova Scotia bassist Gatti, he played in the RCMP Band in Ottawa. In the next 10 years, Goodspeed worked the Ottawa-Toronto circuit as well as two years touring with Roger Whittaker.



He played as a free-lancer in bands accompanying a parade of celebrity entertainers, including Frank Sinatra, Liza Minelli, Bob Hope, Shirley MacLaine, Natalie Cole, Aretha Franklin, Mel Torme, The Platters, The Spinners and The Drifters, even Liberace.

In 1992, he came home to Nova Scotia, and soon established himself as a band-leader, sideman and music educator.

Then came Los Primos and an ongoing connection with Cuban music and musicians. "In 1997 at the Acadia Jazz Band Camp, one of the jazz camp kids called from Fredericton. His aunt was married to a sax player from Cuba and said, "Why not invite him to Acadia." "

It was an ear-opening experience.

The next winter, through his wife Amara, who spends six months of the year in Cuba for reasons of health, helping out with the Nova Scotia-Cuba Association, Goodspeed became aware of Cuban bands through NSCA-sponsored tours.

While visiting Cuba he heard his first Los Primos band 12 astonishing young school-age players, and invited them to come to the Acadia camp the next summer.

"Los Primos is Spanish for 'the cousins'," Goodspeed said. Their instruments were in such poor shape the Goodspeeds started a campaign to find used horns players might want to donate to them. MusicStop puts them into playable condition if they need it.

After a second Los Primos visit to Nova Scotia in 2000, school bands from C.P. Allen, Dartmouth High School, King's Edgehill and Antigonish High School went to Cuba to play and mix with their fellow young musicians.

Goodspeed then started a Canadian version of Los Primos, giving the name to 10 kids he took to Cuba for a musical study tour with kids their own age. "Lots of school bands go down to Cuba, but nobody brings Cuban bands back. We're the only ones," Goodspeed said.

"Today I mostly work on Los Primos. It's my full-time gig. I teach the Canadian Primos and the Junior Primos in the studio behind my house every week." One of their visits became the subject of a recent documentary.

Goodspeed meets a lot of young Nova Scotian players through clinics he does for MusicStop, and as one of the directors of the Nova Scotia Honour Jazz Program. He also is director of the Acadia Summer Jazz Camp.

As a musician he has developed two Latin groups who play professionally the dance band Latin Groove featuring Lisa Lindo and Doris Mason, and the hot jazz band HavanaFax mixing musicians from Halifax and Cuba. HavanaFax has already produced one CD (best ECMA jazz recording in 2004) and during this year's Atlantic Jazz Festival, opened for the popular Yellowjackets.

Goodspeed is currently in the final stages of putting together 15 musicians to take to Havana later this year to showcase at the Havana International Plaza Jazz Festival. They include HavanaFax, Gypsophilia and the Chris Mitchell Quintet.

Through teaching and playing, Goodspeed has witnessed the development of a small but tightly-knit group of young jazz musicians, keeping in touch with them on the net.

"In '92 when I came to Nova Scotia, you couldn't get a student to improvise," he said. "Now we find improvising players in all the schools. They line up to take a solo. Everybody wants to do it."