

Names in the News

NEWS

MOVES

■ Despite the soft economy hiring at some firms is still going strong. Eighteen new associates and two partners have recently joined *Borden Ladner Gervais LLP's (BLG)* various locations. **Christine LeBrun** and **Christian Lazzar** have joined the firm's Montreal office as associates. **Nina Aggarwal**, **Daniel Hohnstein** and **Ryma Nasrallah** are the recent additions to the firm's Ottawa office. **Bekhzod Abdurazzakov**, **Andrew Anderson**, **Brandon Evenson**, **Emily Fan**, **James Fu**, **Jenna Colle**, **Natalie Kolos**, **David Mousavi**, **Kendra Naidoo**, **Liz Ng**, **Fadi Yachoua**, **Aimee Collier** and **Lisa Roscoe** make up the roster of associates that have recently joined BLG's Toronto office, while **Steve Suarez** and **Alaka Chatterjee** have joined the firm as partners in Toronto and Vancouver respectively.

■ **Matthew Cameron** has joined *Zwicker Evans Lewis LLP* as an associate in Orillia, Ont. Cameron has experience in corporate and commercial law, enhancing the portfolio of services offered by the firm. Cameron will offer diverse legal services to the business community, including advice on organization and start-up of corporations and partnerships, as well as individual matters dealing with real estate and wills and estates.

■ **John Craig** has joined *Davis LLP* as counsel. With 40 years of professional experience and 30 years of dealing with Japanese clients, Craig has developed a strong client roster which will complement the firm's Japanese and business connections. Craig previously led *McMillan LLP's* Japanese practice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ *McMillan LLP* recently celebrated the 60th anniversary of its Montreal office. *McMillan's* Montreal office was founded by **S. Leon Mendelsohn**, **Leo Rosentzweig** and **Manuel Shacter** in 1951. Today, **Max Mendelsohn** and **David Rosentzweig**, sons of the firm's founders, are current partners at the firm.

Lawyer finds music is true calling

MICHAEL BENEDICT

When lawyer Ron Davis realized he lacked the "right stuff" to be a successful litigator, he became a French professor at the University of Toronto. But that, too, turned out to be a career wrong turn. Now, he has found joy for more than a decade as an award-winning, Toronto-based jazz pianist whose talents have taken him to the city's fabled Massey Hall and venues around the world.

"As long as you don't care about income, a music career is a happy one," Davis says. "As much as I liked lawyers and academics, there's no more friendlier group than musicians."

Still, Davis, 54, remains a member of the Ontario Bar and works 100 to 200 hours annually helping high-profile lawyers such as Eddie Greenspan prepare facta. "I seem to have a way of analyzing law creatively and finding new perspectives," Davis says.

The Greenspan connection goes back several decades when the two met as Davis started out articling for renowned family law expert Phil Epstein. Greenspan's offices were nearby.

To keep up to date with legal developments, Davis reads the *Ontario Reports* (which is published by LexisNexis Canada Inc. and also publishes *The Lawyers Weekly*) avidly as well as other court decisions. Through "sleep deprivation," he also finds time also to maintain a rigorous practice schedule, record music and play.

Clearly, Davis's creative gifts are strongest in the music field. His childhood Toronto home was filled with the sounds of classical music, but he had to badger his struggling Holocaust-survivor parents to buy a piano. He was eight years old at the time. A few years later, Davis was exposed to jazz. "I knew I had to play that music," he says.

When he practised at school, girls would hang around the piano to listen. "That gave me all



PHOTO BY TREVOR BOOTH

Ron Davis performing with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra.

the motivation I needed," he says.

Davis made his public debut at 13, playing the "Maple Leaf Rag" at a convention held by the now defunct Toronto Ragtime Society. His professional debut came at 16 at the opening of a Toronto restaurant. Club and restaurant gigs continued for several years, helping to put Davis through university and law school.

As an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, Davis studied French — and loved it. He wanted to pursue language studies at the graduate level, but his parents made a "persuasive" case that he, like an older brother, should take up law. A compromise was struck: Davis went to law school, but only because the University of Ottawa had just launched a French language common law program.

After practising for a year in a firm where his older brother Milton was a partner, Davis realized

he had made a wrong career choice. "To be a successful litigator," he says, "you need the ego of a gladiator and the calm presence of a judicious mind. You have to be analytical but also assertive, regardless of the facts. I'm not just confrontational enough."

At the time, 1986, Davis ran into one of his French teachers from university. Within a year, he was working part-time as a lawyer—"unheard of in those days"—and taking full-time graduate studies at the University of Toronto. After his PhD, he taught there for a few years but again felt unfulfilled.

That's when another chance meeting had a profound effect. Davis met a jazz saxophonist who persuaded him to pick up the piano after a 12-year hiatus. Soon the duo was playing gigs and the rest, as they say, is history. Now, Davis has seven albums behind him, several of which have

Name:
Ron Davis

Law school:
University of Ottawa

Called to the Bar:
1984

Career highlights:

1993 University of Toronto French Department Doctoral Thesis Prize

2004 His *Mungle Music* considered top 10 jazz album of the year by, among others, CBC Radio and *CODA*, Canada's jazz magazine

2007 Massey Hall performance with Quebec singer Bernard Lachance

2010 Tours Thailand, Hong Kong and China

2010 Releases *My Mother's Father's Song*, his seventh and latest CD

received major recognition, and is working on three others.

Davis has toured Asia four times, playing once before members of Japan's imperial family. The three new albums in development include one as accompanist to his singer-wife Daniela Nardi. The other two are for his jazz trio. One is with the Windsor Symphony, playing a fusion of classical music and jazz, a concept Davis has termed SymphRonica.

Clearly, while writing legal briefs keeps his mind sharp and supplements his earnings, jazz has become Davis's calling. ■

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THE LAWYERS WEEKLY®

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HOW TO REACH US

Phone: (905) 479-2665

Toll-free: 1-800-668-6481

Fax: (905) 479-3758

Email: tlw@lexisnexis.ca

Main Office

123 Commerce Valley Drive East
Suite 700, Markham, ON L3T 7W8
Phone: (905) 479-2665

Ottawa Bureau

c/o Parliamentary Press Gallery
Rm 350-N, Centre Block
Parliament Hill, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Phone: (613) 820-2794
Fax: (613) 995-5795

Website: www.lawyersweekly.ca

Member, Ontario Press Council

2 Carlton Street, Suite 1706, Toronto, ON
(416) 340-1981; Fax: (416) 340-8724

ADVERTISING

Advertising Sales

Jim Grice (905) 415-5807

Circulation Controller

Scott Welsh (905) 479-2665, ext. 324

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