

Brian Pearce – Tribute from Jazz Steps

We are deeply saddened to learn that Brian Pearce died recently. On behalf of all at Jazz Steps, we pass on our condolences to his wife Shirley, their family and close friends.

Brian was so well liked and respected, period; not least in the jazz world that he was so much a part of. He was dedicated to the promotion and development of jazz in and around Nottingham since 1990. With great charm and no fuss, he was a mainstay of Jazz Steps over the past 23 years,

Relevant experience: many years of promoting jazz in Nottingham, including co-founding Jazzhouse and Jazz Steps



Brian Pearce

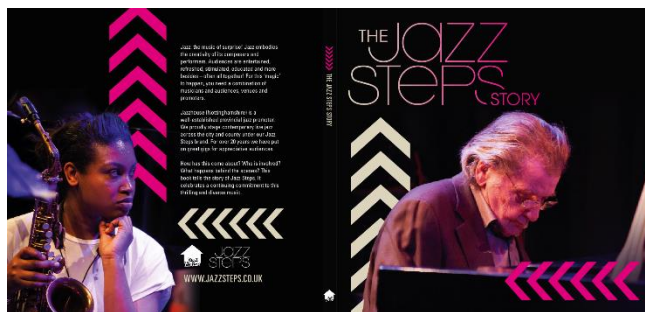
Roles include: company secretary and finance, representative at EMJAZZ; longest-serving current Board member who has performed most roles, including booking artists

covering pretty much every role going – a veritable ‘Swiss army knife’ of a man! He and his friend David Shepherd – who also sadly died recently – were innovators who were instrumental in bringing top quality live jazz to delight audiences over decades.



Brian’s ready smile, warmth and hospitality touched audiences and artists alike. We will miss him greatly.

Brian’s voice comes through in the sections he wrote in **The Jazz Steps Story** – a 150-page fully-illustrated book that celebrates 20+ years of Jazz Steps at the Bonington Theatre (available in local libraries and to purchase via [Jazz Steps](#)). His *Recollections* chapter tells the story well: the moves



across various venues (Hand & Heart, Nottingham Playhouse’s Limelight Bar, the Old Vic, Thurland Hotel and The Mill) as well as the personalities involved, leading up to the inaugural Jazz Steps gig in 1997 at the Bonington Theatre.

He pops up in lots of places in the book because he was so involved: as company

secretary, music programmer, finance director, representative at East Midlands Jazz (EMJAZZ); facilitator of jazz education and our mentoring of young musicians, MC at gigs - including at Southwell Library where, for the past 8 years, he welcomed audiences for our popular monthly *Jazz Steps Live At The Libraries* sessions, in association with Inspire. And the list goes on...

Brian was born and brought up in Gedling and left secondary school to work as a technician at the college that eventually became Nottingham Trent University. His attempt to complete a part-time degree in microbiology was thwarted by National Service with the RAF. Returning to civilian life, Brian took up a research post at Boots, progressing to more senior development roles within the company. As mentioned, he began promoting live jazz in Nottingham with Dave Shepherd in 1990. Following his retirement in 1995, he and Dave formed Jazzhouse.

Brian was a man of diverse talents. For instance, for many years he was Club Secretary for the British Sporting Sidecar Association and highly competitive in motorcycle trials, being one half of a motorcycle trials sidecar combo that won numerous trophies and competed at courses across the UK and Europe, including winning the Manx (Isle of Man) 2-day trial and the European Championship in Normandy, France. Nimble and lightweight, he must have been the ideal daredevil passenger!



In the 1950s and '60s, Brian loved jive dancing and the accompanying music; in fact, he's held eclectic musical tastes throughout. When asked to nominate a great jazz record, it was Weather Report's LP *Heavy Weather*. He called it 'sunshine' music and used it as a soundtrack to his exercise bike workouts! This photo of him with the LP mentioned was taken when he was at a Nottingham Jazz Orchestra gig.

Brian and Shirley were a great team throughout, with Shirley actively supporting Brian's involvement in Jazz Steps. Indeed, for many years, she assisted with making payments to artists; Jamie Cullum, for one, sent her a kindly 'thank you' note that was much appreciated! And, over the years, many musicians have enjoyed warm hospitality at their home.

On gig days at the Bonington, Brian's preparations started with a visit to the bank, then early arrival at the theatre to welcome the artists with a brew and to take their orders for later refreshments – hospitality that was always welcomed by the band. He was there to welcome audiences too, a natural conversationalist on first name terms with regulars and quick to get to know new attendees.



Brian showed an impish delight when it came to the half-time raffle, moving fluently amongst the audience in the bar and auditorium, plenty of banter being exchanged along with ticket sales. His delivery of the 'big draw' ahead of the resumption of the gig further added to everyone's entertainment. On behalf of Jazz Steps, he always expressed appreciation for the raffle contributions.



Brian was on great terms with musicians and when Alan Barnes played a Jazz Christmas Carol gig, the occasion lent itself to some entertaining on-stage banter ahead of the second set.

When Brian was MC, keen observers welcomed his catchphrase "And without further ado..." that brought on the band.

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Brian was a stalwart of Jazz Steps, clearly in his element in this photo, taken in front of a full house at the Bonington Theatre. He's with contemporary members of the Jazz Steps committee, from left to right, the late Dave Shepherd, Katie Butcher, Ian Perry, Bob Meyrick, Brian Pearce and Carl Billson.



Brian's sheer energy, pragmatic can-do approach and generous outlook were inspirational and highly infectious. We all have hugely valued and appreciated his many rich contributions. Cheers Brian!

You are invited to share any memories and stories about Brian through emailing info@jazzsteps.co.uk. Alternately, please comment on our [Jazz Steps Facebook page](#) and view others' comments there.

.... Jazz Steps - November 2020