Remembering Leon Atkinson, Continued

Leon's inclusivity extended to the guitarists of our area making guest appearances on his program, as well as other musicians from the community such as the Sandpoint High School Choir every Christmas.

Leon valiantly fought significant health problems over the past 20 years, finally succumbing on September 1. The month of September included retrospective programs, which can be accessed as podcasts by going to the Guitar Hour under the program listings on our website. Thank you, Leon—and others—for those gifts of time and talent through the years. ‘You will be missed—and remembered.’

-Verne Windham, Emeritus Arts & Music Director

My colleagues who assemble The Guide have graciously afforded me this opportunity to introduce myself. I’m E.J. Iannelli, the new guy. My official position here at Spokane Public Radio is arts and music director. Many of our longtime listeners might find incidental details like, say, my job title or name to be unimportant. What really matters is that I’m the person who was hired to succeed the incomparable Verne Windham. And I should note that my word choice here is very deliberate: succeed rather than replace.

Believe me, as someone who’s regularly listened to Verne hosting Morning Classical and conducting From the Studio interviews since my arrival in Spokane more than a decade ago, I’m acutely aware of the bond that Verne created with you—with us—and the legacy that he leaves here at SPR. Those kinds of relationships are cultivated over many, many years, and it can be unsettling and a little sad when their circumstances change.

But even though Verne is no longer on the air as often as he has been for the past thirty-some years, SPR is still like a second home to him. In fact, as I was writing this, he popped into the office to say hello. He’s been generous about offering me valuable advice and insider tips from his career in radio as my own begins.

And Verne’s occasional drop-ins here at the station aren’t the only continuity. Poetry Moment will continue to air at 9 a.m. followed by Morning Classical. From the Studio will continue to bring you interviews with artists of every discipline from across our broadcast area. All of our hosts, including myself, will continue to play the varied music you love—as well as the music you have yet to discover!

On top of that established programming, we’re looking at how we can augment our coverage to serve our community and our listeners in new ways. The upcoming introduction of a dedicated Friday morning arts program is just the start.

As the torch passes from one hand to another, you’ll find no shortage of reasons and opportunities to join us as an SPR listener, sponsor or volunteer. Together we can usher the Spokane Public Radio of today toward the Spokane Public Radio of tomorrow. I have no doubt that the journey will—as always—be an enjoyable, exciting and enriching one.

Meanwhile, this is a great opportunity to thank Verne for his service, his loyalty, and his steadfast dedication to a great public radio service in our community. We hope you will call the SPR Comment Line at (509) 232-6904 to leave your good wishes and memories. You can also send him a note at kpbx@kpbx.org.

- E.J. Iannelli, Arts & Music Director
Coming Up with Spokane Public Radio

Fall Pledge Drive
October 11, 12, & 13 on KPBX 91.1, KSFC 91.9 & KPBZ 90.3
Show your support for your favorite hosts, programs, and stations by donating during our three day drive. We wouldn’t be here without you! Help build a stronger station by tuning in and donating online at spokanepublicradio.org.

Fall Folk Festival Live Broadcast from SPR
November 12, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. on KPBX 91.1
The annual Fall Folk Festival kicks off November 12 with a broadcast on KPBX. SPR’s Steve Jackson and E.J. Iannelli will host a diverse group of folk performers in this free concert. Experience the festival November 12 & 13 on the grounds of Spokane Community College.

KPBX Kids’ Concert: Classical Favorites Broadcast
November 19, 1 p.m.-2 p.m. on KPBX 91.1
Hear your favorite classical tunes played by local musicians in our Classical Favorites KPBX Kids’ Concert. Host Jim Tevenan will join classical artists to provide insightful commentary on some of the world’s most iconic classical pieces.

Community Call-In
December 6, 12 p.m.-1 p.m. on KPBX 91.1, KSFC 91.9 & KPBZ 90.3
What do you think of programming on Spokane Public Radio? Tune in or call during our annual live call-in event to give your input, ask questions and learn about programming. SPR’s Cary Boyce and Doug Nadvornick will host and field questions from listeners.

SPR Media Partner Events
The Music of Harry Potter and Other Halloween Favorites
October 29 & 30 at the Martin Woldson Theatre at The Fox
The magical sounds of Hogwarts and the wizard world are back at The Fox. Listen as the Spokane Symphony conjures tunes from the Harry Potter films and other Halloween favorites.

Remembering Leon Atkinson
by Verne Windham, former Arts & Music Director
When a station like SPR has been around for more than 40 years, it becomes inevitable that we must say good-bye on the deaths of beloved on-air personalities. Frank Delaney, Joe Zupan, Charlie Schlesinger and Michael Patoray come to mind. Recently added to that list was Leon Atkinson, founder and host of Guitar Hour.

Leon moved to North Idaho about 50 years ago in the midst of a successful music career in New York City. With his classical, jazz, and teaching background he quickly established himself as The Guitarist of the Inland Northwest. In 1994 he created Guitar Hour, which became one of KPBX’s most popular long-running music programs. Leon also founded a concert series which brought many of the significant guitarists of our time to audiences and guitar lovers in our region.

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