

## SRO Artists, Inc.

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### ARTIST BIO: "A Tribute to Stephane Grappelli" featuring Randy Sabien & Brian Torff

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#### RANDY SABIEN

In the fourth grade, Randy Sabien signed on to play drums for the youth orchestra in Rockford, Illinois. Someday he would be a great rock and roll drummer. However, his plans changed when the orchestra director found himself short on string players. Randy wound up with a bow in his hand instead of drumsticks.

NPR's Jazz Profiles dubbed Randy as "The past, present and future of jazz violin." His eclectic style started with classical violin lessons. From there he learned how to play along with records by the Grateful Dead, Papa John Creach, James Taylor and others. He continued his study of classical music at the University of Illinois, augmenting his formal education with as a country/rock fiddler. But his most pivotal musical influence came when he first heard the music of the great jazz violinist, Stephane Grappelli. With a new musical focus, he began learning and playing the jazz of the 30s, 40s and 50s on his violin.

In 1977, Randy enrolled at The Berklee College of Music in Boston. One year later, at the age of 21, he returned to found and chair their new string department. He stayed there for another three years.

After Berklee, Randy performed with and produced three albums for Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee, Jim Post. This led to violin, mandolin, guitar and piano accompaniment for a host of singer/songwriters. In between folk gigs, He worked on material for an album with his newly formed jazz quintet.

The album that emerged from all of these influences was a colorful, melodic, energetic album of blues based jazz. **In a Fog** was released and sent out for review by Flying Fish Records. *Billboard*, *Jazz Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *USA Today* gave it glowing reviews. He was also voted Artist Deserving Wider Recognition in *downbeat* magazine's annual critic's poll.

In 1989, Randy followed his heart to northern Wisconsin where he started his own record label, Fiddlehead Music. Since then, he has released another five titles, with two more in the works. His discography is predominantly jazz with a couple of albums that cover swing, roots blues and rock and roll from the sixties. He also plays regularly a jazz violin, guest soloist with symphonies across the country.

Hayward, Wisconsin is home to Randy and his family. If you can't get him on the phone, he's probably out back trying to catch a big fish or start the Gravelly. He'll get right back to you.

[www.randysabien.com](http://www.randysabien.com)

## **BRAIN TORFF**

BRIAN TORFF is a renowned bassist and composer, and is currently Music Program Director at Fairfield University. He is a featured bass soloist, working with the Hobgood, Torff and Wertico trio, the fusion band, Thunderstick, he performs in jazz festivals around the U.S., and has founded the Fairfield University Summer Jazz Camp. He has served as co-chair person for the music advisory board for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Brian Torff's professional career began in 1974 when bassist Milt Hinton offered him the opportunity of touring with Cleo Laine. During the late 70's, Torff recorded and performed with pianists Mary Lou Williams and Marian McPartland, and toured Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong with violin virtuoso, Stephane Grappelli.

He played in Erroll Garner's last group and worked in the big bands of Oliver Nelson, and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra.

In 1979, Brian Torff joined in a duo with pianist George Shearing. In the course of their 3 1/2 year collaboration they toured throughout the U.S., Europe, Brazil, and South Africa. Torff and Shearing were featured on the NBC Tonight Show, Merv Griffin, and their own PBS special from New York's Cafe Carlyle. They received worldwide acclaim, and were invited to perform at the White House in 1982 for President Reagan.

Brian Torff is a noted composer who has contributed works for three George Shearing albums, as well as his own recordings - Hitchhiker Of Karoo, and Manhattan Hoe-Down. He has written scores for the Boston Pops, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Pittsburgh Symphony, as well as for big band festivals throughout the U.S.

Brian Torff was recently named faculty member of the year by the AHANA students and the office of Multicultural Relations at Fairfield University. He has recorded recently with Stephane Grappelli, Toots Thielemans, Hobgood, Torff and Wertico, Milt Hinton, Carrie Smith, made a video with Larry Coryell, and performs in the group Samuels, Beck, and Torff, which features vibist Dave Samuels, and guitarist Joe Beck, in addition to appearances as a solo artist and clinician. He is currently composing and publishing big band charts for college and high school bands in a world beat style and was recently featured at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse Winterfest.

He has recently published articles on Mary Lou Williams, Stephane Grappelli, and is currently working on an interview/essay on his mentor, the bassist Milt Hinton. A new CD, Union featuring pianist Laurence Hobgood, drummer Paul Wertico and bassist Brian Torff will be released on Naim Records in the Spring of 1997.

"A virtuoso bassist, imaginative and distinctive in his solos, but more than that, a solid composer and arranger." ~John S. Wilson, New York Times

**[www.briantorff.com](http://www.briantorff.com)**