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LAPD Concert Band

BY CHRISTINA CHALLEY

As Mufasa says in "The Lion King," "We are all connected in the great Circle of Life." This quote came to mind when writing about this month's featured LAPD Concert Band member, Brandon Wilkins. Not only is Brandon a very talented musician, he is the son of a dear friend of mine who I met in college while

studying at UC Berkeley. Little did we know then how our lives would connect again years later through her son, Brandon, and his musicianship.

Brandon grew up in the beautiful city of Torrance, Calif., surrounded by music from day one. His father was a drummer, who also did tech work and tour managing for such A-listers as David Sanborn, Pat Metheny, Pat Benatar and James

Taylor. His mother worked at Roland US, a musical instrument company. "Great music was always playing around the house or in the car," he says.

With music always a part of his life, Brandon naturally transitioned into becoming a musician, and by the age of 16, he knew he wanted to pursue music professionally. "Thankfully, my parents have been tremendously supportive of me throughout my journey. Honestly, I don't think I'd be the musician I am today without them."

Following in his dad's footsteps, Brandon started off playing the drums. But a desire to



play the melodies in his school's concert band, along with a friend who he thought was cool because he played the saxophone, led Brandon to, as he calls it, the "woodwind world." Not only did he try all the saxes, but he also tried the flute, clarinet and oboe—all of which he still plays, although the saxophone remains his favorite.

Brandon honed his craft at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston. (Hmm, Berkeley/Berklee?) He studied with a double major in Saxophone Performance and Jazz Composition, and played for school concerts as well as some "casuals here and there."

When asked what his favorite style of music is, Brandon said it was really hard to say as he appreciates the best in any style. But if he had to choose one, it would be jazz. "It was the most motivating in my development as a musician, especially as a saxophonist. Hard to beat Charlie Parker and John Coltrane!" he said.

As for other musicians who offered inspiration, Brandon said, "I am constantly inspired by other musicians, even my peers. Everyone is so creative!" Throughout the years, other favorites have been the likes of Pat Metheny, David Sanborn, Grover Washington Jr., Paul Desmond, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker and Cannonball Adderley. "I could go on forever!" he says.

Brandon's hobbies include chess and cooking. He finds chess a game that is great for developing foresight. And when it comes to cooking, he said, "Some of my fondest memories were cooking in the kitchen alongside my

grandmother. She was a fantastic chef and passed her love of cooking to me."


Besides Brandon's occasional game of chess, or his time in the kitchen, music has become his life, and he says he wouldn't have it any other way. Through his music, and a chance meeting with an LAPD Band member, Brandon now shares his talent with the LAPD Concert Band. Not only did the Band gain a great musician, but two old friends were reunited in the process.

For more information about the Band, see our website at www.lasown.com and contact Jim Starr, executive director, at sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations, please go to www.lapolicefoundation.org, and in the "Comments" box, put "For the Band." ♦



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