

upclose 

## RAFAEL KARLEN

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His father was a renowned jazz guitarist, his grandmother an opera singer and his great grandfather, Hilding Rosenberg, one of Sweden's most prolific classical composers. Music, for Rafael, is in the blood.

"If it wasn't music, it would have been something else artistic. When you're exposed to things like that growing up, you're drawn to them as something very important," says Rafael, whose parents moved the family from Stockholm to Mount Tamborine for a new lifestyle when he was three years old.

Rafael's mode of creative expression turned out to be the saxophone, which he picked up at the age of 13, just after the death of his father.

"Mount Tamborine is a beautiful place and I wasn't motivated to stay inside and practice anything, so I'd failed quickly at the other instruments I'd tried. But when I found a good teacher, I discovered I enjoyed the saxophone."

Rafael studied the instrument at the Queensland Conservatorium and went on to join the 10-piece jazz group West End Composers Collective, penning the music for its 2008 album *Driving Hat*.

"Although I love classical and I scored better at it, I found it easier to find myself in jazz. There's a freedom to find your own voice."

Rafael is among the 36 Australian artists recently awarded a Jump mentorship, so he'll soon be workshopping his pieces with his chosen mentor, renowned jazz musician and composer Mike Nock.

It's a sad irony that Rafael's jazz musician father wasn't able to witness the realisation of his son's talent.

"I was never able to take advantage of his resources and experience, but it's nice to think he's happy with what I'm doing now."

LIZZIE CORSER

**JAMES SHERLOCK AND WEST END COMPOSERS COLLECTIVE**, Fri, May 7, 7.30pm, from \$25, Judith Wright Centre, 420 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley, ph: 3872 9000. [www.judithwrightcentre.com.au](http://www.judithwrightcentre.com.au)

