

Trumpeter's classical CD project that includes local contributions will be celebrated with concert

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By Kerry Clawson
Beacon Journal staff writer

Trumpeter Josh Rzepka wanted nothing more than to produce his own classical CD in Northeast Ohio, using local musicians, a local recording and production company as well as a local crew.



So the Firestone High School graduate made it happen last winter and spring. Rzepka, 26, graduated in classical and jazz performance from Oberlin College and received his master's last spring from Boston University, working on his recording project during school breaks.

His CD, *Josh Rzepka: Baroque Music for Trumpet*, is being pressed now at Oasis in New Jersey. He'll celebrate its release with a concert at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Akron-Summit County Public Library auditorium, 60 S. High St., Akron.

The CD of trumpet concertos and solos is backed by a chamber orchestra, including 12 strings and harpsichord. Composers include Torelli, Purcell, Handel, Neruda, Telemann and Vivaldi.

Northeast Ohio soprano Rebecca Freshwater sings Handel's *Let the Bright Seraphim*, while Chris Toth is organist for Neruda's Concerto in E-flat. The only import for the project was conductor Genevieve Leclair, a doctoral candidate in music at Boston University who originally hails from Montreal.

The CD was recorded by Five/Four Productions of Shaker Heights, which went on location with Rzepka to record at both St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights and Oberlin's Warner Concert Hall, whose organ Rzepka wanted to use.

Rzepka's classical CD project cost \$15,000, financed half with his own savings and half by donors who have asked to remain anonymous. Their common goal was to help Rzepka in his career.

"One thing I wanted to do from the beginning was keep it a local project," Rzepka said. "We have a tremendous number of incredible musicians in Northeast Ohio . . . that are every bit as good as everybody else, and in some instances better."

His release concert celebrating the classical CD won't feature the full chamber orchestra, but will highlight classical pianist Amy Malyuk along with Rzepka. He'll perform some selections from the CD as well as other pieces. He'll also play tracks from the CD and talk about its creation.

Vocalist Freshwater also will perform. For the live Vivaldi Concerto in C for Two Trumpets, both of whose parts Rzepka played and recorded separately on the CD, Rzepka will bring in another trumpeter.

The second half of the program will feature Rzepka in a jazz quartet including Theron Brown on piano, Mark Gonder on drums and Mike Forfia on bass.

Cost for the performance is \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door. To order, see <http://www.joshrzepka.com>.

Rzepka works as a full-time musician in Northeast Ohio, doing gigs from jazz bands to musical theater. He has 19 engagements this month, including the musical *Curtains* at Cleveland State University and *The Producers* at the Beck Center.

This musician loves playing varied gigs, from private parties to Renaissance fairs to a Dixieland quartet he puts together periodically at West Point Market.

"To me, it's just real exciting," he said. "I really try to have as many musical collaborations as I can."

Rzepka's recording of his first classical CD comes on the heels of his self-recorded jazz disc last year, *Midwest Coast*. That CD has received airplay in more than 40 states and reached the No. 33 spot on the JazzWeek chart.

He said that although recording his own classical CD was more labor intensive than he anticipated, he enjoys the flexibility and control of being an independent musician.

"I'm confident that it will give me good returns" in the form of better bookings and the ability to market himself, Rzepka said.

"*Midwest Coast* is a good calling card for my jazz playing," said Rzepka, who composed all of its music. "This is kind of the other side of the coin."

Rzepka, son of Sarah Greenblatt of Akron and Hillel Rzepka of Laguna Niguel, Calif., began playing trumpet while in fourth grade at Lippman Day School. He plays all of the instruments in the trumpet family but says he composes on piano.

Rzepka plans to put down roots in Cleveland, where he is apartment hunting. In the short term, he sees himself living and continuing to work as a full-time performer in Northeast Ohio for the next couple of years. He also plans to pick up some trumpet students.

In the long term, he plans to push for bookings out of town, including recitals and concerts.

Arts writer Kerry Clawson may be reached at or kclawson@thebeaconjournal.com.



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