

Akron Ohio News

9/2/2010 - *West Side Leader*

By Kathleen Folkert WEST AKRON — Trumpeter Josh Rzepka is measuring success one CD sale at a time.

"I'm not going to sell 20 million records like Lady Gaga," he said. "A big success would be to sell 1,000 or 2,500 units. That would be huge for me."

Rzepka, who was born and raised in West Akron, just released his second recording, *Baroque Music for Trumpet*. It comes out less than a year after he released *Midwest Coast*, a collection of original jazz compositions.

The two CDs coming out within a year are the result of a goal he set for himself.

"I wanted to get them out quick," Rzepka said. "I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I felt that if I had jazz and classical discs out in a year, that it was a good thing for me to push myself."

On his new release, an orchestra accompanied Rzepka on works by Vivaldi, Handel and Torelli, among others.

Playing the genres of jazz and classical is something Rzepka plans to continue.

"As long as it's good music and I'm playing with good musicians, it's real rewarding to play both," he said.

Rzepka first picked up the horn in fourth grade at Lippman Day School (where his mother, Sarah Greenblatt, is a teacher). At Firestone High School, he played in the marching, concert and jazz bands and in the jazz combo.

When considering colleges, he applied and auditioned at several. Among those that accepted him was the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, where he decided to double major in classical and jazz trumpet performance.

Majoring in two different musical styles made for rigorous coursework, he said.

"I was saturated in music," he said. "Over the years I was at Oberlin, I was getting better and better and getting more confident and starting to pick up gigs."

Following graduation, he remained in Northeast Ohio and found he was able to find work as a musician.

"I took a year-and-a-half off just to see for myself if I can do this full time," he said.

While he was happy to see he was able to get gigs, he decided to attend Boston University for a master's degree so eventually he could teach at the collegiate level.


Rzepka knew he would return home, though.


"There's a lot of great opportunities around here," he said. "There are incredible musicians in Northeast Ohio and they're all very nice."




Trumpeter Josh Rzepka, a Firestone High School graduate, released his second CD in a year this summer. He plays both jazz and classical music.

Photo courtesy of Robert J. Saferstein

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While he still considers Akron his home, Rzepka is in the process of moving to Cleveland just because of the number of gigs he has there as opposed to Akron.

He can be seen locally Sept. 4 at West Point Market playing in a Dixieland quartet from noon to 3 p.m. That's just one of the side projects he enjoys.

"We just hang out and walk around the store," he said. "Last time the cashiers were dancing a little bit. The music is fun."

Still, making a living at doing what he loves has required Rzepka to look at his passion from a business perspective.

"Even if you only have a couple of gigs, you should look at it like a 9-to-5 job," he said. "You should put that many hours into it as far as practicing and networking. The people that succeed are the ones working the hardest."

In July, Rzepka celebrated the release of his classical CD with a performance before an audience of 250 in the auditorium of the Akron-Summit County Main Library in Downtown Akron. He coordinated the entire event, from getting tickets printed and reserving the space to performing.

"There's a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes on before I step out onto the stage," he said.


While earning a record contract with a big label could lessen the amount of networking and promoting he does for himself, Rzepka said he's happy with how his career is going right now.

"I'm not sure I'm ready to give up control," he said. "I decided on every aspect of how this CD looks and sounds. I want to be able to continue to keep busy, playing progressively better and better gigs and making a living playing music."

For additional information on Rzepka, go to www.joshrzepka.com.

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