

Rhythm Concert Series trumpeter wants to teach world music

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Love fell out of the clear blue sky when Josh Rzepka least expected it.

While still in grade school, Rzepka, an Akron native, was expected to learn how to play an instrument for the school band. Any instrument would have done, and he had his choice of quite few.

But something happened when he picked up that trumpet. Something magical.

He remembers picking up the trumpet and looking it over curiously before putting it to his lips and blasting a note.

"I was able to make a noise with it," Rzepka said. "I had picked it up and managed to play a note on it. It probably didn't sound that good, but it must have sounded confident because that's the instrument I started to play."

Just like that, Rzepka fell in love with music.

Since then, Rzepka has been a musical ambassador with a simple mission: Teach the world to fall in love with music again.

"I am giving it back to them," Rzepka said. "Music is for everyone."

For some reason, Rzepka contends, the simple joys of music have been lost inside a twisted, complicated web of sophistication. Especially when it comes to the genres of classical and jazz. There's an assumption that in order to truly appreciate the music, you have to intricately understand it.

Not true, he says. You just need to like it.

"Music is taken very, very seriously, and some people give you the impression that you have to really understand it if you want to enjoy it," Rzepka said. "That's not true. When you eat something, you don't have to know exactly how it was prepared or how to cook it yourself to know that you like it.

"I make sure people know that it's OK to like jazz and it's OK to like classical music," Rzepka said. "There is no prerequisite."

Playing both familiar and original jazz and classical tunes, Rzepka is going to remind Massillon-area residents what it means to fall in love with music when he performs as part of the Rhythms concert series at the Massillon Museum.

"Personally, I think it's great having concerts in less traditional settings," Rzepka said of the museum show. "To play in a setting surrounded by art is something really terrific, I think."

Those attending Rzepka's MassMu show, set for 8 p.m. March 26, will find that they become an intricate part of the music themselves as they help to create the concert atmosphere, especially when it comes to the jazz.

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Jazz is very organic, influenced by the venue in which its created.

"Jazz is all improvised," Rzepka said. "Everything in the atmosphere and everything that happens that day contributes to it. What is happening within the band and within the room affects the music."

His hope is to have everyone tapping their toes and clapping along with the tune. In doing so, he hopes to prove there's more to the trumpet than many might expect.

"The trumpet is definitely misunderstood," Rzepka said. "A lot of people think it's a brash sounding thing and it's not. It can be very soft and sweet, very melodic like a singer."

Meet Josh Rzepka

Hometown Akron

Family Parents, Hillel Rzepka and Sarah Greenblatt.

Education graduated of Firestone High School; graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of music with a double major in classical and jazz trumpet performance; master's degree from Boston

University.

Upcoming album Not yet titled, the album will feature original music and performed by a jazz sextet. Josh plans to record in June.

Release date August 2011

What makes the next album special “It’s my second jazz album and it’s been a few years since my last one. The main thing for me is that, musically, my thoughts of music and feelings of music have grown so much. I feel like I have really matured. I am really excited to record a new CD and express myself better than I did originally.”

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