

Vibraphonist brings his success home

By Doug Drown

Playing in the Pittsburgh Symphony at age 14 is prestigious credit. Now 33, Jerry Tachoir is one of those former Pittsburgh area jazz artists who, while not being a household name like George Benson, Erroll Garner or Stanley Turrentine, has by virtue of talent, ability and hard work gained quite a reputation through the ranks.

During his early symphony days, budding young vibraphonist Tachoir attended West Mifflin South High School near the old county airport. Representatives from the Ludwig Drum Company were so taken by his musicianship, they asked him to demonstrate a new marimba they had developed for presentation at the Mid East Music Conference at Duquesne University.

At 16, Tachoir was one of the company's youngest clinicians and has remained a spokesman for Ludwig/Musser Instruments since.

After stints with the American Wind Symphony and the Wilkinsburg Symphony, Tachoir went to Boston's Berklee School of Music where he was the first to receive a bachelor's degree in applied music for the vibraphone and mallet instruments. He graduated *summa cum laude* in 1976.

While in college Tachoir met his wife, Marlene Desbiens, a talented keyboardist who plays in his quartet. Not one for nepotism, the vibist says, "I never wanted the press to think 'gee, isn't that cute, this guy has his wife playing in the band.' I simply hired her because she was one of the best piano players I've heard anywhere."

Next step was to find a market where they could develop musically. The three choices seemed to be New York, L.A., or Nashville, Tenn. Tachoir decided to bite off a piece of the Big Apple for 2½ years.

music scene provides a relaxed and comfortable lifestyle conducive to the arts.

On the phone from his Tennessee home, he said, "Two-thirds of our country's population lives within a 600-mile radius of Nashville. This helps make professional contact a bit easier and the routing of tours a snap."

Although he's always fronted some kind of band, The Jerry Tachoir Quartet really started to jell in the 1980s with three albums: "Forces," "Canvas," "Jerry Tachoir and Friends." A fourth LP is to be released this year. Joining Tachoir and his wife in the quartet are two of Nashville's most sought-after bassists, Roy Vogt, and a newer, yet highly accomplished drummer, Wayne Killius.

They've kept a tight schedule over the years playing a number of major outings, like the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, the Northsea Jazz Festival in Holland, the Montreal Jazz Festival and Three Rivers Arts Festival. Several years ago

Tachoir also performed here with guitarist Van Manakas as a duo in the Shadyside Arts Festival and at the Balcony on Walnut Street.

It's been a long time and Tachoir said he can't wait to get back to his old stomping ground this weekend. The quartet was on hand for two shows at Bucky Fitzgerald's on Route 51, Saw Mill Run Boulevard, actually not far from West Mifflin South High School.

Tonight Tachoir's foursome travels to Greensburg's Palace Theater for a concert with the Westmoreland Symphony highlighting composer Gunther Schuller's Concertino for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra.

Tachoir has a European Jazz Festival tour coming up as well as completion of his fourth album.

Tachoir's quartet joins the Westmoreland Symphony at the Palace Theater in Greensburg for a concert at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10, \$8, and \$6. Call 837-1850.

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Jerry Tachoir

At this time a couple of producers approached him to be in a musical titled "Pennsylvania U.S.A." During a trial run near Harrisburg, the project was canceled because of the Three Mile Island incident.

Tachoir remembers: "A few musicians and myself were in the park throwing Frisbees when we heard Walter Cronkite or somebody say you better stay inside, there's a possibility of a meltdown. It was the first really nice day of spring and I'm saying to myself, 'What the heck is a meltdown?' Did the snow evaporate too quickly?"

Even though the program's backers maintained a show-must-go-on attitude, the sobering near-disaster was a little too intense, so the group decided to pack it up and split.

Seeking a less hectic pace, the Tachoirs next moved to Nashville, where they've been based for about a decade now. Tachoir hardly considers himself one of the Grand Ole Opry gang but he says Nashville's

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