

Two sides of one musician

Larry Redhouse: traditional Navajo song and improvisational jazz

By Theresa Poalucci

For some people there is no question about what they will be when they grow up. It could be because there is a family business, a tradition to follow. For others it just seems to be in their DNA. For Larry Redhouse it was a combination of the two.

“I was the youngest of a family with 6 children, all musicians,” explained Redhouse. “My Mom is a classically trained pianist. My father, Rex Redhouse started a Native American Dance group in the mid-60s, the Redhouse Dancers, sharing Native culture and dance wherever we lived.”

Redhouse started on piano at a young age. “My music career started very early,” he said. “I began playing with the Redhouse Band when I was in elementary school. In high school I continued playing in clubs in Tucson. The Larry Redhouse Quartet played original jazz for years in the 80s in Tucson on 4th Ave. at a club called Cafe Sweetwater, owned by jazz enthusiast Alex Berger.”

As a musician Redhouse likes the freedom to improvise with both jazz and native flute. “When it comes to native flute. I am attracted to honoring songs and sweat lodge ceremony songs,” he said. “They are very relaxing.”

“I’ve been sharing Native American dance and culture since the mid-60s,” he continued. “I have performed at every school from elementary to university level in the Tucson area and have played at the Meet Yourself Festival for some 40 years now.”

Today Redhouse is best known as jazz pianist, composer and band-leader. He has released two self-produced jazz trio CDs: Live at the Westward Look and Spirit Progression and has played at many prominent venues locally, nationally and internationally. Currently he is finishing a new recording project called The Great Mystery in which he plays Native Flute and showcases light introspective jazz compositions utilizing electronic keyboards, synthesizers and World Percussion. Another original music project recorded in 1988, The Larry Redhouse Quartet-Naomi’s Dance, a jazz fusion recording, will be re-released very soon.

Redhouse has performed at concerts featuring headliners; pianist Chick Corea, trumpeter Terence Blanchard; saxophonist Donald Harrison, Trumpeter Rick Braun and many others. He has also performed with his trio at the Grenoble Jazz Festival in France, in Washington D.C. at The Kennedy Center’s famed Jazz Club to wonderful reviews, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and for the Steinway Peace Piano Concert.

Currently he is also playing with the Civic Orchestra of Tucson, which he told me forces him to be more disciplined as there is no room for improvisation in a classical piece of music.

Redhouse is proficient on piano, trumpet, native flute, timbales, Latin percussion and drums. For a man who considers himself to be a bit shy, he is capable of making a lot of beautiful noise.

“Being in front of an audience was something that I learn at an early age,” he confessed. “I just tap into being in the moment and the music when I am performing.”

The Larry Redhouse Quintet will open for Pancho Sanchez on January 21st, Martin Luther King Day, for the Tucson Jazz Fiesta downtown. Information on this concert can be found at The Tucson Jazz Society website, www.tucsonjazz.org.

To purchase one of Redhouse’s CDs or to learn more visit www.larryredhouse.com.

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