

Ralph Bowen enjoys creating the sounds of jazzy music

BY ERIC BALKIND

You know you're on the right track when what you like to do most takes you to the far corners of the earth and also brings you into contact with people you admire and respect. For Acton's Ralph Bowen, that's the way life is working out. In recent years, Ralph has played his tenor saxophone at Harbourfront in Toronto as well as in the shadow of Mount Fuji in Japan, he's performed in jazz festivals in Europe and he's done concerts in both the United States and South America. Along the way, it was inevitable that he would also rub shoulders with some of the great names in jazz.

Grandfather Gordon Bowen also played sax and, many years ago, he had his own band in Toronto; uncle Allin plays (you've already guessed it — the sax) in our own Acton Citizen's Band and Ralph's brothers (Wayne and Paul) can also produce some good notes although they are not in the business of making music. In the Bowen family, music is in the genes.

Ralph's parents still live on the family farm at Crewson's Corners, just west of town, and mother Florence (that's Flo to you) says that even as a boy Ralph demonstrated the discipline which has taken him so far. She recalls that "he loved to play and he'd spend hours running up and down scales." In point of fact, Ralph studied piano first, until at the age of 12 he became interested in his brother's sax. Just four years later he was playing with the professionals. Since those early days Bowen has also become more than proficient with both the flute and the clarinet.

While he was busy graduating from Acton High and GCVI in Guelph, Bowen was also playing with the Acton Citizen's Band. Later, he spent time on the Toronto jazz scene playing with a band known as Manteca and doing solo stints.

Jazz enthusiasts will recognize the names of many of the talented folk whom Ralph Bowen has met and played with over the years; early on, he worked with such men-

tors as Phil Nimmons, Pat LaBarbara and David Baker. For three years he played the world with Horace Silver and he has performed with the likes of Hank Jones, Eddie Shaw, Art Blakey and Kenny Drew, Jr.; he also did a European tour with Michel Camilo's Latin Sextet. Bowen has played and recorded with both Renee Rosnes and Benny Carter.

But Bowen has also taken every opportunity to extend and refine his skills; for example, classical player Eugene Rousseau helped him develop a deeper understanding of his chosen instrument — the saxophone. As well, he has studied a variety of ethnic rhythms and sounds including both African and Latin; it appears that the world of music is Ralph Bowen's classroom and he wants to learn it all.

In 1986, Ralph was one of six young players chosen, by the Blue Note record company, to form a group by the name of Out of the Blue; they have recorded four albums and he has become co-leader of the group. Most recently, Bowen has performed his debut solo album on Criss-Cross Jazz Records. It is entitled "Movin On" and jazz enthusiasts will be glad to hear that it should now be available in major record outlets in Canada.

Bowen's sense of discipline has served him well since he has already earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Saxophone and Classical Flute at famed Rutgers University in New York; he is now on faculty and he teaches Sax and Jazz Theory while he works towards a doctorate in classical flute. It all sounds like a very demanding regimen but clearly Ralph Bowen is thriving on it.

In 1987, Ralph was married to Geraldine Anne; together with son Gordon (aged two and a half) they live in Piscataway, New Jersey.

At the ripe old age of 30, Acton's Ralph Bowen is already a well-seasoned veteran who seems to have found his niche in the world of jazz. Let's hope that, one of these days we can persuade him to bring his talents (and his family) home so that we can all enjoy them together.

LETTERS

Violence against women

The Halton Inter-Disciplinary Committee on Violence Against Women is a group of concerned people who meet regularly to discuss issues related to prevention of violence against women.

The committee consists of mem-

bers of the Halton school boards, police, social service agencies and government.

December 6, 1992 marks the third anniversary of the murder of 14 women at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, the worst single tragedy ever experienced by women in Canada.

The committee urges the people of Halton to reflect on the issue of violence in our society and to make a personal commitment to taking action, however small, to make our neighbourhoods a safer place for

women.

There will be a vigil to remember the victims of the Montreal massacre and all women who have experienced violence at 7 pm at St. George's Square, Trafalgar Road, Oakville on Sunday, Dec. 6.

The Halton committee also supports and endorses the work of the White Ribbon Committee in bringing the issue of violence against women into the public conscience and urges all citizens of Halton to support this campaign by wearing a white ribbon this week.



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