

Brokensha's music spreads 'good vibes'

By JIM WINDELL

By day, he works for major industry firms. At night, however, the thoughts of Jack Brokensha, a Detroit mainstay on the vibraphone for some 20 years, turn to jazz and more congenially musical haunts.

Brokensha was in the renowned Australian Jazz Quintet for several years in the '50s. Today, he augments his thriving business that produces music and films for large companies by returning to John Laffrey's Vineyards Annex in Southfield.

The Jack Brokensha Quartet, featuring Matt Michaels, plays from 7:30-11:30 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays.

Based in Detroit since 1960, Brokensha came to the Motor City to work for "one year" as a studio musician with the Soup Sales Show at WXYZ. He found the musical environment in Detroit compatible with his nature, not to mention his musical talents.

"THE SHOW went on for seven years," Brokensha said recently, explaining why he stayed in Metropolitan Detroit instead of returning to New York as originally intended, "and in the meantime, I discovered there were other things to do around here."

One of those things was his own night club, which featured the music of Boss Bonnier, Ursula Walker and his own vibes.

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— Jack Brokensha

"The club," he now maintains, "was a nice thing to do, and I enjoyed it. It was nice up to the time the city got a little funny (the city of Detroit's riots in 1967). We couldn't do that anymore after 1969."

Instead of operating his own club, Brokensha, a Township Bloomfield resident, found dabbling in the merchandising of Detroit cars to his liking.

His company, Jack Brokensha Musical Services, makes music for industrial and training films, puts on live musical shows and automobile presentations, and also provides the background music for radio and television commercials. While his roots may be firmly in the jazz tradition, his living now comes through music for industries.

"WE ARE involved in productions for American Motors, Ford, Lincoln-Mercury and some foreign car companies," Brokensha explained. "Production companies and advertising agen-

cies call us in to handle the musical side of things.

"I have a nucleus of people in Detroit I work with. Like Matt Michaels (Detroit jazz pianist and piano instructor). We do anything from a quartet to a 30-piece orchestra and can come up with anything from straight-out classical music to country and western.

Brokensha and the talented people working with him can write, arrange and produce any kind of music or musical project to assist a company.

When he has an opportunity, though, Brokensha enjoys getting back into a club or a jazz setting. Last year, he and pianist Boss Bonnier played at Tweeny's Cafe in Birmingham. Last summer, Brokensha made a spectacular appearance in the Montreux-Detroit Jazz Festival, where he and his quartet played hot jazz at Hart Plaza.

Brokensha plays a light and swinging

vibraphone that was initially learned in Australia, where he was born and where, as a young man, he played with the Australian Symphony Orchestra.

HE BECAME a popular musician in that country through concerts and broadcasts before leaving to become an internationally known jazz performer with the Australian Jazz Quintet from 1954-1959. With the genteel, restrained, almost classical swing of the Australian Jazz Quintet, Brokensha recorded several albums for Bethlehem Records.

"Getting together with a nice rhythm section and playing good jazz is probably the nicest thing to do from a musical standpoint," Brokensha said.

He has the chance to do that on a regular basis as he and Matt Michaels front a quartet two nights a week at the Vineyards. Brokensha is no stranger to the Southfield restaurant at 2930 Franklin Road.

"We were a permanent fixture at the Old Vineyard's," Brokensha said. "Then the restaurant was sold and it became a disco with flashing lights and mirrors. It was pretty garish."

Recently, the Vineyard's was purchased by Detroit-area restaurateur John Laffrey. "John Laffrey is going to put some music back in the place," Brokensha said. "He's trying to make it into a nice room once again."

With Brokensha playing his vibes, Laffrey's job will be made a good deal easier.



Jack Brokensha, a Bloomfield Township resident, is playing the vibes at John Laffrey's Vineyards Annex in Southfield. (Photo by Jim Wendell)

Hollywood composer makes debut with symphony

"Music for the Movies" will be the theme as Hollywood composer Elmer Bernstein makes his Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducting debut in two "Weekender Pops" concerts at Ford Auditorium at 8:30 p.m. Friday and 3:30 p.m. Sunday.

A special feature of these concerts will be the presentation of a 13-minute movie "Toccata for Toy Trains." This 1957 film is a celebration of toys, and the musical score is by Bernstein.

The program for the concerts includes a suite of music by John Williams from the motion picture "The Empire Strikes Back." The remainder of the program consists of music written by Bernstein from the following movies: "Toccata for Toy Trains," "Animal House," "Airplane," "To Kill a Mockingbird," "Walk on the Wild Side," "The Man with the Golden Arm" and "The Magnificent Seven."

The scores from the last four movies

were each nominated for Academy Awards.

TICKETS FOR these two "Weekender Pops" concerts may be purchased at the Ford Auditorium Box Office. Visa and MasterCard customers may order tickets by phone at 852-5524. In addition, Windsor residents may phone in orders (toll free) at 258-9499.

A musician with a diverse musical career, Elmer Bernstein has profoundly influenced the world of film music which has brought to him his major recognition.

Nominated nine times for music from his more than 80 film scores, Bernstein won an Academy Award in 1957 for "Thoroughly Modern Millie." He also holds an Emmy Award from 1963, two Golden Globes, and a Western Heritage Award for movie scores, and the 1958 Downbeat Award for best scoring of a short feature subject.

He has worked for all the major studios and with many prominent directors.

Music for many television series was credited to him, as well as for documentaries, TV movies, TV specials and even stage music. As a child,

Elmer Bernstein performed professionally as a dancer and actor.

He began musical studies, which were to include the piano and composition, at the age of 12. While serving in the Air Force, he composed music for

drama on the Air Force radio network, and after the war continued his interrupted career as a concert pianist.

HE DID his first film composition in 1950, launching a long and successful career. Of film composition, Bernstein

says: "Music is really an art whose life begins where pictures and words leave off. . . . Music is basically a fantasy, an emotional fantasy. This is his first appearance with the DSO.

Muppets starred in musical show

Jim Henson's "Sesame Street" Muppets take to the road in the new stage production "Sesame Street Live."

The show produced by Bob Shiptad and presented by VEE Corp., in cooperation with Children's Television Workshop, will be staged at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 12-22 at the Masonic Temple Theatre in Detroit.

Tickets for "Sesame Street Live" are on sale at the Masonic Box Office and all CTC outlets. Tickets also may be

charged by phone by calling 832-2232.

Opening night is "TV 50 Family Night," with all seats at reduced ticket prices. For showtimes and further information call 832-2232.

IN ITS DETROIT debut, "Sesame Street Live" is two hours of music, songs, dancing and comedy. Sesame Street residents Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Grover, The Count, Oscar, and Bert and Ernie, step off the TV screen

in this musical theatrical presentation. Action is centered on Sesame Street where one of the key residents seems to be missing. Everybody at 123 Sesame Street joins in the search, headed by Fortescue Farquar and P.T. Barnswallow.

The Inspector, Barnswallow and the Seedy Birds were created especially for "Sesame Street Live" by Henson.

Jon Stone, former executive pro-

ducer and head writer for the Emmy-Award-winning Muppet children's television series is responsible for the script of "Sesame Street Live," while Anita Mann is credited as director and choreographer.

Mann has choreographed by CBS-TV special "The Muppets Go Hollywood" and the second "Muppet Movie." Producer Shiptad was responsible for the overall production of Shiptads & Johnson Ice Follies for 14 years.

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