

Lew Tabackin Biography

Lew Tabackin, flutist and tenor saxophonist, is an artist of astonishing vision. His electrifying flute playing is at once virtuosic, primordial, cross-cultural, and passionate. His distinctive tenor sax style includes the use of wide intervals, abrupt changes of mood and tempo, and purposeful fervor, all in the service of showing the full range of possibilities of his instrument - melodically, rhythmically, and dynamically. Without copying or emulating jazz greats of the past, Mr. Tabackin has absorbed elements into his style, ultimately creating his own sound and aura.

His interest in music began in his birthplace, Philadelphia, where he first studied flute and then tenor saxophone in high school. He majored in flute at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music (B.M. 1962) and studied privately with composer Vincent Persichetti. After his U.S. Army service (1962-65), Mr. Tabackin moved to New Jersey and then to New York, where he played first with Tal Farlow and Don Friedman and later in the big bands led by Cab Calloway, Les and Larry Elgart, Maynard Ferguson, Joe Henderson, Chuck Israels, Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, Clark Terry, and Duke Pearson. During the late 1960's, Mr. Tabackin led a trio at a club called La Boheme in Philadelphia, in addition to playing in smaller groups with Donald Byrd, Roland Hanna, Elvin Jones, and Attila Zoller. In those early years he worked with Doc Severinsen and the studio band for Dick Cavett's television show. He also spent some time in Europe, where he was a soloist with various orchestras, including the Danish Radio Orchestra and the Hamburg Jazz Workshop.

In 1968 he met Toshiko Akiyoshi when the two played together in a quartet. They eventually married and moved to Los Angeles, where they formed the award-winning big band known as the Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra. While in Los Angeles, Mr. Tabackin also played with Shelley Manne and with various trios of his own with Billy Higgins, John Heard, and Charlie Haden. He also toured Japan frequently with Ms. Akiyoshi and her orchestra as well as with his own trio, which included drummer Joey Baron and bassist Michael Moore.

During the 1980's he began to get some long overdue recognition as a flutist, winning many Down Beat critic's and reader's polls. In 1982 Mr. Tabackin and Ms. Akiyoshi moved to New York, which brought him back to the Manhattan jazz scene. Since then he has solidified his position as a major tenor saxophone and flute artist, both in live concerts and on recordings. In 1990 Mr. Tabackin released his first disc for Concord, *Desert Lady*, featuring Hank Jones, Dave Holland, and Victor Lewis, followed by the acclaimed *I'll Be Seeing You* with Benny Green, Peter Washington, and Lewis Nash. In 1994 the same group recorded *What a Little Moonlight Can Do*. Mr. Tabackin has also been associated with several all-star bands, including George Wein's Newport All-Star Band, the New York Jazz Giants, and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band.

He continues to tour the world as a soloist, playing clubs and jazz festivals with his own groups and as featured soloist with the Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra. In 1996 Concord released *Tenority*, Mr. Tabackin's latest album and the first recording on which he concentrates solely on tenor sax.