

Rave reviews accompany bassist to town

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

Little more than a year has passed since the time that a hardy handful of people huddled together in the center of the vastness of McCain Auditorium to await the arrival of pianist George Shearing.

He was long in coming, and the chances of that audience diminishing to half a handful increased by the minute.

Finally, half an hour late, Mr. Shearing arrived onstage in his traveling clothes and apologized for the vagaries of United or TWA or some other friendly sky that maximizes profit by turning aircraft into crowded stockyards and deposits jazz musicians way behind the beat in some midwestern town.

While George Shearing went off to wherever headliners go to change their personalities into evening tux-

edos, a long-haired young fellow started wandering around McCain stage, hooking up this wire to that microphone, and tapping and testing and one-two-threeing until Mr. Shearing was ready and the long-haired young man dragged his upright string bass onto the stage, grinned, started to commune with his instrument and transformed himself into Brian Torff.

We came to hear the legendary George Shearing.

We left having heard a new legend in bassist Brian Torff.

We have not stopped talking about him since, and now he is back.

Sans George Shearing, sans (we hope) the unfriendly skies, Brian Torff returns to McCain Auditorium with a new trio on Friday evening, but I cannot believe that he will also be without the captivating charm, the stunning virtuosity and the unpretentious musicianship that so beguiled

that small audience last year.

I have mentioned the size of the audience more than once. The reason is simple.

I can think of no reason why McCain Auditorium will not be filled to the rafters on Friday evening.

There is no excuse, other than death or the Superbowl, for any of us



Brian
Torff

not to scramble for every last ticket. Musicians of this caliber, with this degree of command of his or her instrument, do not touch our lives so frequently that we can afford to ignore their presence.

And I am not alone in my praise.

Here is John S. Wilson writing in the *New York Times*, "He (Torff) is into virtuoso plucking at one moment or projecting a rich cello sound with his bow at another."

Richard M. Sudhalter in the *New York Post*, "Torff worked through eight selections full of color, dynamic felicity and rhythmic surprise. (He) displayed his virtuosity without calling attention to it...bright...bouyant...original."

Rex Reed, "...the consummate bassist, Brian Torff", and "he can make his bass sound like a moog (shouldn't that be Moog, Rex?) synthesizer...At times he can even make

this most taken-for-granted of instruments sound like a flamenco guitar. The man is really amazing."

It was during the summer of last year that Mr. Torff parted company with George Shearing.

"You gotta have dreams. Everybody has dreams, and I have mine. They got to a point where I couldn't ignore them any more," explained the bassist when he formed his own trio with guitarist John Etheridge and pianist Gil Goldstein.

Brian Torff has appeared on *The Tonight Show*, *The Merv Griffin Show*, *The Mike Douglas Show*, *The Today Show*, and the erstwhile *Tomorrow Coast to Coast*, and on Friday at 8 p.m. he will be appearing at McCain Auditorium, and already the excitement mounts...as it has wherever Brian Torff has performed, the world around..."

"Brilliant technique and drive," (*Munchener Merkur*)..."Torff is probably the finest exponent of the bass that we have had the pleasure of hearing in South Africa," (*The Star*, South Africa)... "A self-contained orchestra", (*Melody Maker*, London)... "Rare sensitivity, astonishing," (*Los Angeles Times*)..."Torff sparkled like no other on the instrument, playing it the way it was meant to be played, with classical feeling," (*Downbeat*)..."The incomparable Brian Torff held the house in a trance — almost controlling their breathing," (*The Cork Examiner*, Ireland)...

All this is true, and you do not have to believe the foreigners.

"Torff is an extraordinary artist who derives the greatest variety of sounds from a bass that I have ever heard." (*The Manhattan Mercury*).