

Tom Collier
Class of 1966
Composer & Musician

“Tom Collier one of the best jazz vibraphonists on the planet.” - Scott Mercado interview, Modern Drummer Magazine

At the age of 9, Tom Collier made a guest appearance on The Lawrence Welk Show, wearing a tuxedo while simultaneously tap dancing and playing the marimba. Students and faculty at Genesee Hill Elementary School will never forget how they proudly watched Tom perform on TV and how they enjoyed his amazing talent as he performed on the stage at Genesee.

Tom’s career took off at an early age, so in a predictable career progression he worked as a studio musician in Hollywood California and in 1980 became Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Washington. In 2001 he was appointed the esteemed position of Professor of Percussion and Jazz at the UW. He twice served as Chair of Jazz Studies at the school in 2001-2003 and again 2011-2012.

As a vibraphonist, marimbas, percussionist and composer, Tom Collier has enjoyed a stellar career during his nearly 60 years in music. He earned an international reputation as a world-class musician in jazz, classical and pop circles. Collier celebrated his first public performance at the age of 5 in 1954 and will mark the 60th anniversary of that performance with a concert at Meany Hall in Seattle, Washington in April 2014.

Tom has appeared in concert and on recordings with many important jazz and popular artists including Frank Zappa, Eddie Daniels, Ry Cooder, Earl “Fatha” Hines, Roger Kellaway, Emil Richards, Don Grusin, Alex Acuna, Ralph Humphrey, Victor Feldman, Howard Roberts, Ernie Watts, Dave Holland, Cal Tjader, Shelly Manne, Joe Porcaro, Laurindo Almeida, Buddy DeFranco, Diane Schurr, Peggy Lee, Natalie Cole, Morganna King, Herb Ellis, Bill Mays, Bobby Shew, Ernestine Anderson, Mannheim Steamroller, Sammy Davis, Jr., Barbara Streisand, Johnny Mathis, Olivia Newton-John, The Beach Boys, The Mills Brothers, Della Reese and many more.

In the classical arena, Collier has appeared as guest soloist with the Seattle Symphony, The Denver Symphony, The Bellevue Philharmonic, The Northwest Chamber Orchestra, The Everett Symphony and The Olympia Symphony. He was timpanist in the Los Angeles Repertoire Orchestra in 1976, vibraphonist in L.A. Contempo Four, 1975-77 (a modern music ensemble), timpanist with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, 1972-73 as well as the Federal Way Chorale.

Collier has released several albums as leader or co-leader beginning with Whistling Midgets (with long-time musical cohort Dan Dean, WSHS grad) in 1981. Collier and Dean’s 2005 album, Duets on Origin Records, was nominated for “2005 Jazz Album of the Year” by Earshot Magazine. Other recordings include Illusion (1988, T.C. Records), Pacific Aire (1990, Nebula Records), Mallet Jazz (2004, Origin Records), Mallet Fantastique (2010, Origin Classical) and Tom Collier Plays Haydn, Mozart, Telemann, and Others (2012, Origin Classical). Collier has also recorded several educational albums for Music Minus One and Studio 4 Music and has presented over 300 jazz concerts in public schools around Washington State for the Arts Len Education Program of the state Arts Commission. Collier has received many awards during his lengthy career. In 1980 the National Association of Jazz Educators presented Collier with an “Outstanding Service to Jazz Education Award”. Over the past thirty years he has won twenty—

two “ASCAP Popular Panel Awards” for his various jazz and percussion compositions. In 2011 Collier was awarded the prestigious “Adelaide D. Currie Cole Endowed Professorship” in the School of Music. In 2013, Tom Collier received a nod from the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS, the Grammy Academy) with the inclusion of his 2012 Origin Records release “Tom Collier Plays Haydn, Mozart, Telemann and Others” and was placed on the 2013 Grammy Awards ballot for “Best Classical Instrumental Solo”. This was the second time he was placed on the Grammy ballot. The first time was for one of his jazz albums.

Tom Collier never forgot his West Seattle High School roots. During a concert he has been known to dedicate a song to his West Seattle High School classmates and finish a song with the WSHS favorite “firm and loyal too.” In 2014 Tom produced and released a new Jazz CD called “Sleek Buick,” which received very positive responses from music stations across the country. It also was considered for his third Grammy nomination.