

Stories, friendship keep Hot Tamale sizzling

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"I've spent a lot of time looking for people's hidden stories," says Adrian Fogelin, one half of the musical duo Hot Tamale.

As an author and singer-songwriter, Fogelin excavates these stories by connecting to her community. She created The Front Porch Library in her neighborhood, which provides families with

weekly crafts and activities. She also volunteers for Second Harvest Food Bank to distribute food and goods to the surrounding area.

While running both projects she has heard "a million stories," and feels a stronger bond with humanity because of them. These stories become the fuel for her writings — songs about people living on the fringes or having unexpected gifts.

"I met a woman who cleaned the

bathrooms at the Baltimore Zoo who was a blues singer with Billie Holiday," recalls Fogelin. "That was the moment I realized that you never know who you're talking to. You don't know their story and you don't know where they come from, but you better know that they are far more complex than you think they are."

As Hot Tamale gears up for their Siz-

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Adrian Fogelin and Craig Reeder have been performing together for 10 years.

RAY FAASS

Hot Tamale

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zling Summer Show at Blue Tavern on Aug. 20, Fogelin and her music partner Craig Reeder want to tell these stories. They've been harmonizing together for 10 years, and borrowed their name from a Robert Johnson song lyric—"hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got 'em for sale."

Fogelin first met Reeder at Tallahassee's Downtown Market. She saw him performing on the sidewalk and felt he needed another voice in the mix. Just then, a woman walked up and started singing alongside him, which gave Fogelin the courage to do the same. After a decade of working together, she says they're well attuned to each other's musical strengths.

"When you sing with someone for a long time you get good at covering the thin spots in their voices and at knowing what you do well and what they do well," says Fogelin. "Sometimes I sing high but sometimes I sing low and Craig sings higher than I do. We have a lot of range in putting a song together."

Fogelin's music journey began with her grandfather. She inherited his guitar, a Sears Roebuck Archtop Harmony and wanted to learn the riff to The Animals' "House of the Rising Sun." After a few failed attempts, her mother placed her in guitar lessons.

The instructor discovered Fogelin's singing voice, and soon after she joined two high school bands, Half Priced Paradise and King Snail. When she began college at the Rhode Island School of Design, Fogelin was nervous to be out on her own, so she turned to her first friend, the guitar.

"I took out my guitar and sat in the stairwell of the dorm," remembers Fogelin. "It just so happened that the guy playing the commencement ceremony heard me playing, so he had me sing with him at the freshman welcome event."

Fogelin played in a series of duos before finding her groove with Reeder and Hot Tamale. The band covers everything from folk to Motown. Fogelin enjoys playing anything melodic, though she isn't a fan of generic love songs. Together, she and Reeder have composed hundreds of their own songs and like to tout their work as "original, but not painfully so."

Fogelin's songs follow a narrative structure with sparse fingerpicking on her guitar. She is amazed with how Reeder will take her "pencil sketch" of a song and adds "embroidery" with bass, rhythm and lead guitar riffs. In the songwriting process, she'll start by singing a phrase that transforms into a melody.

"I always think of songs as being stored in a place with a door," says Fogelin. "Sometimes the door opens and the songs come out. I never feel so much as



Adrian Fogelin and Craig Reeder first met at the Downtown Market 10 years ago. They'll perform a summer show on Aug. 20 at the Blue Tavern. JOHN OWEN

if I'm building them but as I'm finding them."

Songs will come in bunches for Fogelin, who has written as many as five tunes in two days. Hot Tamale practices for shows for four hours every week. They infuse humor and melancholy equally into their setlists. Songs follow characters from sidewalk musicians to a woman who sells tickets at a cheap movie theater. However, what makes the duo stand out in performances are their slapstick "shticks."

"We're like old-time vaudevillians, we have no shame," laughs Fogelin. "We pack the trunk with props. We don't take ourselves too seriously and have the absolute best time."

Fogelin often carries a feather boa, while Reeder will sport a cowboy hat for a Hank Williams tune. One gag begins with Reeder asking why they don't have a cover band, only to then whip out fake mustaches so as to be their own cover band, "Snot Tamale."

Hot Tamale has brought this fun atmosphere to venues around Tallahassee as well as the Monticello Opera House and the Sopchoppy Opry. Their music has also made the rounds on different radio stations around the world. For their summer show they'll include The Youngbloods' "Get Together" which Fogelin refers to as "the hippie national anthem," an old doo-wop standard "One Summer Night," and original "Ain't No Friend Like An Old Guitar."

If you go

What: The Hot Tamale Sizzling Summer Show

When: 8-10 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 20.

Where: Blue Tavern, 1206 North Monroe St.

Cost: \$2 cover

Contact: For more information please call 850-212-5204 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/689168651531467/>.

For Fogelin, the latter is a statement from the heart. Her guitar accompanied her through difficult times. Music provides comfort. She says stories will come up and bite her and that words and songs are as alive as the air we breathe.

"If you are ever going to be in the moment, it'll be when you're making music," says Fogelin. "You're not thinking about the past or what's ahead. You're in that one note and your hair is standing on end because you're so amazed at how it sounds."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

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