

Musician, craftsman Goddard a polymath

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Outside of a venue in Chattanooga, Tennessee, musician with the New 76ers and local artist Danny Goddard found himself in deep conversation with a peddler. The man was seated on the stoop outside the bar with his dog and guitar trying to earn spare change while Goddard picked his brain. He's willing to learn something about music from anyone and everyone — his life-long quest is to find what connects humans emotionally to music.

The answer is still a mystery to Goddard, whether he's playing a show for 2,000 people or 20. While the crowd dictates the energy of any given performance, he finds himself onstage transcending the mechanics of playing an instrument and falling into a trance. When Goddard does notice the audience, he's amazed to see such a dynamic range of emotions from weeping to hugging, hanging from the rafters or dancing up a storm.

"I see people engaged in a way that I never see anywhere else," said Goddard, who reveres music's power and those who wield it. "Anyone that will teach you music, whether it's a whole sonata on the cello or a lick on a banjo, is an amazing person as far as I'm concerned."

For Goddard, his musical journey began when his grandmother encouraged him to join concert band in sixth grade where he played in the percussion section. In his childhood home in Fort Myers, Goddard's father encouraged his passion and devoted a room to various instruments and a full drum set.

When band practices weren't being held, Goddard would play alongside favorite tracks like Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida." His cassette deck was stacked with Beastie Boys, Led Zeppelin, and the Footloose Sound-track.

Goddard listens to a range of styles from bluegrass to classical and consequently has picked up a number of instruments: glockenspiel, electric, acoustic, and bass guitars, mandolin, banjo, trumpet, harmonica, keyboard, tambourine, and more. He performed with jazz, marching, and rock bands throughout high school, until he eventually earned a solo gig that prompted him to pursue music full time. He attributes this fluidity between genres to mastering basic music theory.

"Instruments are just tools to engage the magic of music," said Goddard. "I was in a band once where I played eight different instruments every night. It



BRYAN GARRIS

Goddard performs with his band, The New 76ers.

doesn't matter to me what's in my hands because you can pick up any instrument once you understand the basic mechanics."

Goddard described himself as a lifelong learner and polymath with a persistent curiosity. He earned three college degrees, two from Florida State University in Geology where he teaches as a professor. He enjoys watching students grasp concepts about the earth and want to make the world better once understanding more about the planet.

When it comes to making music, Goddard shares a similar excitement and sentiment. The piano is where he accomplishes the majority of his songwriting and he has had melodies picked up by television shows like A&E's "Dog the Bounty Hunter." Onstage with family trio, the New 76ers, for the past 11 years, he writes, plays guitar, and sings, and is always intrigued with how his compositions come to life.

"It's cool to see your song design being worn by someone else," said Goddard. "When you're writing a song you can be struck by inspiration in anything. The words, melody, and chords can come at any point in the process as long as they can all be done to suit each other."

He applies the motto to "always build it better" to his pursuits as both



DANNY GODDARD

Danny Goddard's Shellsmith jewelry

songsmith and craftsman. In partnership with Deborah Amesqua, he produces mandolins in three private workshops and studio spaces, as well as makes his own jewelry under moniker, Shellsmith, and knives as The Knivery. Materials tie together these diverse products, upcycling the exotic hardwoods and shells left over from the instruments he builds.

The top of a guitar is transformed into a pendant or a handle for a knife. He enjoys involving his daughter, who will readily strap on an apron and face



IF YOU GO

What: Music as Muse

When: Opening Reception 6-7:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 14. Open for viewing 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday through Nov. 14

Where: City Hall Galleries, 300 South Adams St

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information, call 850-224-2500 or visit coca.tallahasseearts.org/art-in-public-places/city-hall-gallery.

mask to help, and even built a new ukulele for her mother, Goddard's wife and partner in the New 76ers. His life blends together this way, and no matter the task, Goddard relies on muscle memory to stay focused in the creative process and simultaneously let go and experience the moment.

"If I play a note it's right there at my fingertips, but then it's gone," said Goddard. "While music is instant and temporary, making a physical object is a long process. When I make a piece of jewelry or a knife I'm trying to make something special, so when you touch it you know that the person who made it is permanently contained in it somehow."

This October, a number of local musicians along with Goddard will share another side of their artistry with the Tallahassee community. The Music as Muse event in the City Hall Gallery will showcase how these musicians jump mediums.

Goddard considers his piece to be an enigmatic sculpture. Assembled from salvaged materials, his one hope is to engage viewers in reading the title "It Really Works" and question, how? He says that if one looks close enough, they'll find the answer and have their curiosity sated.

"I've learned as I've become more mature in my creativity to take leaps," says Goddard. "My dad always told me to follow your heart, but when you need to get somewhere sometimes you have to have faith to step off a ledge. Sometimes you hit the bottom, but at least you did something."

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).