


music

DREW TUCKER: Changing Culture and Changing Lives through Music

The Pineapple's Ellen Thistle recently sat down for an extended chat with Drew Tucker, Artistic Director of Arts Garage Performing Arts Academy and their Education and Outreach Coordinator.

By Ellen Thistle

The Pineapple Contributing Writer

Pineapple: You just opened up a new music school at Arts Garage. Tell me about your journey there.

Tucker: I started the Tucker Music Academy in 2007 in Parkland. It was in a small office building where I taught music lessons (along with a few other teachers). We grew into a few thousand square feet. When I moved to Delray, the commute became too much so I moved the academy here, and continued to slowly grow. This summer I teamed up with Arts Garage here in Delray. We renamed the school the Performing Arts Academy, and we're going from there. We teach private and group music lessons, mostly to kids but we teach adults, too. I have a staff of degreed music teachers. We perform. It's awesome.

Pineapple: How did you start teaching music?

Tucker: I started teaching as a necessity in college, as an alternative to waiting tables (although I did that, too).

Pineapple: What instruments did you teach?

Tucker: Percussion. Drums, stuff you bang... things like that. I taught out of my house. And then I had other people who wanted to teach lessons so they taught out of my house, too.

Pineapple: How did your roommates feel about that?

Tucker: Not too happy. But then one day I was shopping for comics, because I'm a comic book nerd, and I saw a "for rent" sign above this comic book store, so we rented it out and started teaching lessons out of there.

Pineapple: Do you run the school, too?

Tucker: No, my wife works with me.

Pineapple: She's more than just arm candy?



Tucker: She's kind of the lifeblood of this whole thing. It wouldn't work without her. But she also serves the dual purpose of legitimizing me. I can dress funny but people think that I must have something going on because I have the hot chick.

Pineapple: So what do you enjoy about teaching?

Tucker: (Pauses, deep in thought) Well...my favorite part about it is watching other aspects of their lives change.

Pineapple: Can you give me an example?

Tucker: Sure. Sly kid comes in. Doesn't really talk much. He cries at the first lesson, is terrified

of performing. Then, through practicing and performing, gains the confidence to talk to people, he makes more friends, he is no longer nervous to give presentations in school. He is more assertive in class. His grades go up.

Pineapple: Have you had students whose grades improved after they started playing music?

Tucker: Oh yeah, all the time. Or like with teenagers. They come in, don't really express themselves well...you know, they just give one-line responses like "fine", "whatever." But through music they learn a new way to express themselves. And we emphasize performance, stage presence, how you present yourself to the world. It's so cool to watch kids learn that, to teach that to them, along with the value of practice and hard work. And, later on, that's the difference that allows them to nail the job interview, it's those skills that transcend their music study and, I believe, make their lives better. And I think it makes a community better.

Pineapple: How do you think it betters the community?

Tucker: I'll tell you. When you have students (or anyone) perform, they bring their parents, their parents bring their friends, they meet other friends and parents of performers, and other music lovers what you have created is a village. Village-building is at the heart of any community. It implies an intimacy, people bonding over a similar experience. There's no better way for people to come together than in support of one another. Music facilitates that.

Pineapple: So, what instruments do you play?

Tucker: I play anything you hit: drums, congas, hand percussion, vibraphone, marimba...

Pineapple: That's all?

Tucker: Oh, and I started playing the piano when I was four.

Pineapple: When did you start playing percussion?

Tucker: Eleven.

Pineapple: Because you felt like pissing off your parents?

Tucker: Not exactly. In the middle school band they didn't have piano. So I told them I wanted to play saxophone, but they'd already assigned the saxophone to Jimmy or whoever, so they said, "how about drums?" They clapped some rhythms. I clapped them back. And they said, "you're great."

Pineapple: Nice job!

Tucker: And I did marching band in high school.

Pineapple: Did you get to wear the plume?

Tucker: Proudly.

Pineapple: So of all the instruments you play, do you have a favorite?

Tucker: Vibraphone.

Pineapple: Why?

Tucker: Because you can do more with it, in my opinion. Because you have a sustain pedal, and it sounds better with jazz, and jazz is probably my

favorite style of music if I had to pick one.

Pineapple: How long do you practice?

Tucker: I'd love to be able to get a few hours in every day, but I tend to be a crammer, so I sort of ramp it up when I have a concert coming up.

Pineapple: Do you get nervous before performances?

Tucker: Well...I get more nervous for my students' performances.

Pineapple: Really? Why?

Tucker: You know, I think as a teacher you inherently want your students to succeed. You've worked with them so hard, and you just hope they come away from the experience feeling like it was positive. I want my students to like playing music. And performing. I want it to be fun. Bombing isn't fun for anyone.

Pineapple: Have you ever bombed a performance?

Tucker: Oh yeah.

Pineapple: Haha really? Give me details.

Tucker: (groans) Ugh...it was the longest half hour of my life. Let's save that story for my second interview.

Pineapple: Well, do you have any performances coming up?

Tucker: Yep. I have a concert on October 6 at Arts Garage in Delray.

Pineapple: Tell me about it.

Tucker: Well, it's going to be heavily percussive, meaning there is going to be a lot of interesting drumming incorporated. I'm combining drumming from all over the world. So I have a tabla player from India, a taiko drummer from Japan, but also there will be a lot of cool melodies because I'm going to be playing the vibraphone, and we have a Latin piano player, and then we're going to throw in some electronics—sort of combine the old-school and the new school—there will be a lot of improvisation. Some standard jazz stuff, some original stuff. I'm calling it Heartbeats, because of the percussive element it implies and because heartbeats are one thing that unite us all as humans. There's going to be a lot of excitement. A lot of rhythm. I want a Nike endorsement after this concert.

Pineapple: Could you ever see yourself doing something other than being a musician?

Tucker: Style consulting for men.

Pineapple: Excuse me?

Tucker: I think that pop culture has lowered the expectations of what we expect men to be. It's unfortunate. I think a call back to more of a mid-century man is necessary. And I try to teach that to the kids at the Academy, too—both onstage and in their interactions. I let them know that as young men and women, I expect them to be polished and polite. I'm just trying to change culture.

Pineapple: That's all?

Tucker: And I like to get a workout in when I can.

To learn more about the Performing Arts Academy and Drew Tucker's upcoming concert Heartbeats, visit www.artsgarage.org.

the Beached Boat co

introducing

COASTAL COTTAGE FURNITURE

Great quality, colorful
cottage furniture made at the
original Maine workshop

**Furniture
and Home Décor
in classic coastal style**



**206 NE 2nd St in Pineapple Grove
Delray Beach, FL 33444
561-278-3130**

10-6 Weekdays Closed Sunday

...come see what's washed ashore!

www.beachedboat.com