

## A MUSICIAN UNNAMED

*P* rowling the neighborhood as we drove toward our scheduled meeting with Frogman Henry, Fred and I were discussing the unique nature of music in New Orleans. It seems as if everywhere in the city—uptown, downtown, back-o-town, Gert Town—kids are drumming on trash bins, street signs, or window frames at anytime, day or night. Others blow their trumpets, clarinets, or tubas while waiting for the buses and streetcars to take them to school. Still others sing and rap while walking home.

As we were closing in on our destination, we heard a faint sound of music that piqued our simultaneous curiosity. Not sure what it was, we both rolled down the windows to detect the source. Too intrigued to pass it by, we rounded several blocks in search. Then, in front of us, up on top of the levee, was a young man blowing his horn. We pulled over, parked the car, sat, and listened. It wasn't such great music, but there he was, practicing soulfully on his lonesome. The day was extremely hot, the air thick with humidity, and the young man had a towel covering his head as he faced the river. We sat listening and speculating as to why he chose the top of the levee in the midday heat: maybe his mother

had grown tired of him, his practice might wake the baby, or the other children couldn't hear the TV. We speculated on all possibilities.

Then our conversation turned back to the subject of how this was a perfect example of why and how music is an ingrained part of our city. The singular soul up there practicing, performing, playing for his own pleasure or the pleasure of the passing ships, it didn't matter—he represented the importance of music to our city and culture. Whether it is because of the Mardi Gras parades, all of the festivals, or the fact that our poorly-insulated houses don't and can't contain the noise, music is everywhere. A day hardly goes by without hearing it in random locations, be it a parade, a party, a ribbon-cutting ceremony, or an impromptu jam session. Music is everywhere.

We finally decided to stop and ask this young man if we could take his picture, from the back so as to not identify him. He was to represent all of the boys and girls throughout New Orleans who have dreams of becoming a Marsalis, an Andrews, a Fats Domino, a John Rankin, and so on. Filling their need to express themselves through music, with music, they make all of us richer for it, too.



## THERESA ANDERSSON

Have a baby ten months prior and it's pretty safe to say where singer-songwriter Theresa Andersson is likely to be found when she is not performing—at the Algiers Point shotgun she shares with her husband, happily caring for young Elsie. Their house, like many older homes in the city, is in a perpetual state of renovation, nicely furnished but clearly the home of a toddler and her creative parents (Andersson's husband, Arthur Mintz, is a skilled puppeteer and musician).

The charming and attractive Andersson grew up on a farm in Sweden. Behind her New Orleans home is a lovely garden, a tranquil oasis that Andersson clearly cherishes. It is a natural space requiring very little tending. Coming back from long road trips, Andersson can pull a few weeds, do just a little digging, and feel right at home again.

An eighteen-year-old Andersson arrived in New Orleans in 1990. Violin firmly in hand, she was determined to experience the city's live music scene and its performers, both black and white. Straight from Sweden, she remembers walking out of the airport and being overpowered by the city's earthy, mildew-like smell (that was in January; imagine if she had arrived during the pungency of July—she may gone straight back to Scandinavia). For

nine years, she played violin in a band and gained inspiration for her eventual solo career from Juanita Brooks, who told Andersson, “Baby, if you ever want to sing the right way, open up your body, turn your toes out, and give it all you got.”

Andersson took the advice. Her career as a violinist, singer, and songwriter took off during the next decade. She played with the Neville Brothers, the Radiators, and the Meters and became a Jazz Fest regular. Allen Toussaint remains a major influence. She explains, “He represents so much of what is good about the music here.” Not able to afford a tour of Europe with a full band, Andersson began experimenting with loop pedals to create her “One-Woman Show,” singing while also playing her violin, guitar, record player, drums, and dulcimers. The YouTube video of her song “Na Na Na” has received nearly 1.5 million hits.

As the interview and photo shoot were ending, baby Elsie could be heard stirring in her nearby bedroom. Motherhood obviously agrees with Andersson, who has a soft and spiritual way about her. New Orleans is a long way from her native Sweden, “a lot different, a lot noisier.” But with Elsie and her garden, it obviously agrees with her too.



## GLEN DAVID ANDREWS

Few musicians are as closely identified with a New Orleans neighborhood as trombonist and singer Glen David Andrews is with Treme. It is possible that no other musician so clearly understands the redemptive powers of its streets, its people, and its music. It is no surprise then that Andrews chose his Treme church for his interview and photo shoot.

The mercurial Andrews is not easy to schedule. He calls during a lunch break to arrange an immediate meeting. For the interviewer, lunch ended suddenly for an opportunity to meet the irrepressible and talented trombonist in his neighborhood, in the church that he credits for straightening out his life. Andrews proves to be a passionate and animated conversationalist, a fierce defender of Treme and its street music (“if you got a problem with music, you ought not to be moving to the Treme”), and very open in describing the ups and downs of his complicated life.

Andrews was born in Treme in 1980. Neighborhood musicians literally brought him out of the womb: “When my mother was pregnant, Anthony ‘Tuba Fats’ Lacen came by and blew his horn outside the house. He said the sound of the tuba would induce labor. I was born the next day.” Initially a drummer, he took up the trombone at age fourteen, encouraged by his younger cousin Troy (Trombone Shorty).

Without formal training, he learned playing on the streets of Treme and busking on Jackson Square. He provided back-up to Trombone Shorty and Shorty’s brother, James, and performed with the New Birth Brass Band.

Andrews evacuated during Katrina. The storm was devastating, but Andrews claims it also helped him to refocus on what was really important and especially on his career. He began to headline more often, released several albums, and became a talented songwriter with an ear that mixes contemporary funk with traditional jazz, brass, and gospel sounds. He remains very much a part of the extended Andrews musical family: cousin to Troy, James, Revert, and another Glen (the latter two of Rebirth fame) and brother of Derrick Tabb (also of Rebirth).

Andrews freely admits to struggling with substance abuse and how, “but for music and the church (they saved my life),” he might be living on the streets. Politically engaged, in 2007 he sparked local and international outrage when the NOPD arrested him and Tabb at Tuba Fats Park in Treme for playing music during a funeral celebration for brass musician Kerwin James. Andrews is a survivor, coping with life day by day. He has the necessary education, proudly claiming that he studied at “the University of Treme.”



## JAMES ANDREWS



Outside his Valmont Street home in Uptown, jazz trumpeter James Andrews relaxes right outside in his backyard. It's a steaming New Orleans summer day, and Andrews is fresh off of playing a second line. The heat doesn't bother the seasoned veteran of the city's streets. It instead seems to energize him into passionate recollections of his extended family and their unique place in the city's music scene.

Andrews proves that, at least in New Orleans, six degrees of separation can be a gross overstatement. His family connections are deep and complex. Grandson of Jesse "Mr. Ooh-Poo-Pah-Doo," whose 1960 hit became a foundation of street funk, Andrews also claims kinship to Prince La La and Papoose Nelson, the Lasties, and a whole bunch of other Andrews, including brother Trombone Shorty and cousin Glen David. Born in Treme, Andrews grew up in the Ninth Ward with his grandfather and his neighbor, known only to Andrews as 'Toine. Only later did he figure out that the affable 'Toine was also known as Fats Domino.

Andrews built on these bloodlines to create his own blend of jazz, R&B, and brass-band music. He was an

early disciple of Danny Barker, who had returned to the city determined to revive the city's brass band tradition. "Danny recruited me for a street band and told me and Leroy Jones and Michael White to be cool, just be cool, and listen to the old cats."

Andrews has tried to "combine the R&B of the Ninth Ward with the street music of the Treme." But he doesn't stop there: "New Orleans music has a lot of the Caribbean in it so I try to work in a hot popping bosa nova beat and a good horn line with a funk on top." That's a lot of music, resulting in albums such as the widely praised *Satchmo of the Ghetto*.

Andrews's duplex is full of new, post-storm furniture. His Mid-City home was destroyed after the levees broke. Andrews was among the first musicians to return and is an outspoken champion of the city's rebirth. Talkative, both serious and light-hearted, Andrews appreciates his heritage, saying, "I had no place else to go, I wasn't about to move to Omaha. In this city, we gotta remember what we done in the past is history, it's what we do in the future that's mystery. We can rebuild places, but we got soul and spirit and that's what we gotta work to save."

