

Back in 2017, when it became clear that legendary Tampa hangout and music venue New World Brewery could no longer evade development's literal and figurative wrecking ball, Melissa Grady knew she had to bring something special to its series of closing shows.

"Everyone had things to offer, photos, poetry, art in all different media," Melissa says. "I didn't have that, but I did have the music of all the bands I'd played in at NWB—bands I'd played in *because* of the New World."

A classically trained cellist with a Master's in Music Education who's played in string quartets, orchestras and underground rock bands like the critically acclaimed indie-pop act Candy Bars, she decided to combine her musical passions as both a celebration of local music and a tribute to one of its best-loved strongholds. Same Day Delivery Orchestra debuted at the New World on September 17, performing evocative, lushly layered instrumental renditions of songs by her favorite Tampa Bay artists.

And that was supposed to be it.

"I didn't think it would be an ongoing project," Melissa says. "When there was a call for more shows, I was surprised, but also felt pretty good that the music community liked it so much."

Anchored by Melissa, her husband Joe Grady (The Holy Terror, Cacophony Street Band, Gods and Generals, multiple theater ensembles) playing double bass and sister Gina Costellano (The Tampa Bay Symphony) on viola, Same Day Delivery Orchestra has evolved into a wildly popular production. The ranks often swell into double digits for performances, when SDDO is joined by friends, peers and classical professionals on violin, piano and even percussion. The size, sound and setlist can vary widely from gig to gig—the event and venue help determine and feel and flow of each unique performance, and the group often adds more well-known material, from artists as disparate as The Beatles, Guns N' Roses, System of a Down and Nine Inch Nails. Same Day Delivery Orchestra plays everything from punk shows and charity benefits to gigs backing singer-songwriters and weddings—sometimes as a string quartet, sometimes as a 15-piece company—making each a transcendent and irreplicable experience.

"The choices for the set start with the venue we're playing," Melissa says. "Whoever books us gets to choose the next song we transcribe."

Charting out new versions of obscure and popular material can often take months, depending on which version of Same Day Delivery Orchestra will be performing. And Melissa, an in-demand collaborator who regularly plays with singer-songwriter Deb Ruby, Americana combo Urbane Cowboys, and even posthardcore outfits Choking on The Revelry and The Path of Increased Indifference when she's not teaching music to elementary school students, isn't exactly luxuriating in free time. But there's something special about Same Day Delivery Orchestra, with its roots in a love of local music and the joy it creates through inventive collaboration, that keeps Melissa, her family and their extended circle of co-conspirators saying "yes" to more shows and new opportunities.

"It's always worth it to share this thing we've created, that's built on the creativity and talent of so many people we love," says Melissa. "And to maybe create a special memory of a special night is particularly gratifying. It's beautiful."

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