

Seth Glier draws inspiration from 9/11, family to create unique pop sound

By Andy Tybout (</search/node/Andy Tybout>) / Staff | | [More \(http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&pub=xa-4ac15c7168a4200d\)](http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&pub=xa-4ac15c7168a4200d)
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[enlarge \(/sites/default/files/imagecache/Large/images/Seth Grier.jpg\)](#)
 photo credit: Courtesy Tom Moore



Cutline: Seth Glier, a new fan of Primanti Brothers sandwiches, played in Pittsburgh Sunday.

Seth Glier, a 20-year-old piano-playing falsetto, fondly recalled the time he played in front of roughly 20,000 people at the National Mall.

“I think I did that when I was 16 or 17,” Glier said. “We had this really kind of picturesque stage where, as we were performing, the sun was setting right behind the Washington Monument. So you would look out from stage at this sea of people and see this perfect glow of light.”

Seth’s music — a delicate strain of piano pop — has taken him on multiple tours across the country, to venues big and small. But it evolved at home in a musically eclectic household.

“My father would listen to everything from Middle Eastern trans-Siberian punk to Charlotte Church and Enya,” Glier said.

Although he has a long history of performance — singing the national anthem during Little League games were his first live gigs — Glier said he was never inspired to write songs until the events of Sept. 11.

“I went to a very small, hill-town country high school, and we just didn’t talk about 9/11,” Glier said. “I feel like [9/11] was the catalyst to get me to start writing and questioning things around me.”

After the emotional turmoil of Sept. 11 and the musical advances it inspired, Glier said he found himself “playing a game of catch-up,” as his talents for singing and piano chased one another. He enrolled in Berklee College of Music, where he studied under his mentor Livingston Taylor, but he dropped out after a year when he found he had begun to define himself “less as a musician and more as a writer.”

As a writer, Glier tries to counter to the model of the repetitive pop song, which he calls, “band in the box in terms of its emotional content.”

Glier said he prefers to emulate a romantic American icon: the helpless, everyday people.

“I tend to take on characters of other people,” Glier said. “I like to tell the stories of people who either can’t tell the stories for themselves or people who aren’t telling the stories for themselves.”

Glier cites his 24-year-old, non-verbal autistic brother as a prime example of the former category.

“There’s a lot of reading into things, there’s a lot of ambiguity,” Glier said. “I think I get that knack for reading into characters from having that relationship with my brother.”

In addition to his voice and his storytelling, Glier has recently been gaining attention for his unique touring methods. Currently, his mission, like that of many musicians, is to “go green,” using recyclable materials and limiting emissions. But he was also featured in the Boston Globe for a largely unknown concept in the music industry: the fan-funded tour.

“I was going to go down to [music and film festival] South by Southwest (SXSW), and I had a bunch of dates along the way,” Glier said. “I was kind of just punching the numbers, and I was just looking at gas prices, and it didn’t look like I was going to really make

money on this tour.”

For most musicians, Glier said, this is ordinary. But rather than settle for a budget-strained trek to Austin, Glier decided to raise \$500 through fans, mailing lists and street teams to cover expenses like gas and hotel rooms.

“We had that \$500 in about three-and-a-half hours,” he said. “We kept the campaign going for a full month and we raised just over \$3,500 through contributors throughout the country and even got a couple donations from Japan — places that we weren’t touring, but places where, somehow, the music got to them.”

Glier played in Pittsburgh this past Sunday night at PULSE – House Concert on Stanton Avenue to an eager crowd. In an e-mail follow-up, Glier raved about the show.

“The show was really amazing. I really wasn’t expecting Pittsburgh to be a highlight of the tour. However, it was one of the best shows on the run so far. The room was full and the audience was incredibly kind and receptive,” Glier said.

Glier said he and the crew traveled to Mount Washington to see the city at night, where he said the view “took my breath away and made me appreciate the uniqueness of Pittsburgh’s rolling hills and bridges.”

When asked if he made a stop at Primanti Brothers for a famous sandwich, he said he did, and it had left its mark.

“Oh my God, I still feel that fried egg and cheese sandwich [packed with french fries and cole slaw],” he said.

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