

- 30 Mission of Burma** Subterranean. Advance \$13, day of show \$15. **17+**
30 Waterstreet Martyrs. \$10.

August

- 4 The Girls at Dawn** Empty Bottle. \$8.
5 Big Sam's Funky Nation SPACE. \$12-\$20.
7 Andrea Dawn + Jeremy Keen Subterranean. \$10. **17+**
15 Broken Spindles Beat Kitchen. \$10. **17+**
15 Down the Line + Jennie DeVoe SPACE. \$10-\$20.
15 Proclamation + Black Witchery Reggie's Rock Club. \$TBA. **18+**
17 My Morning Jacket Charter One Pavilion. \$46.
19 Kim Wilson's Blues All-Stars SPACE. \$15-\$25.
20 Steve Forbert SPACE. \$17-\$28.
21 Beth Nielsen Chapman SPACE. \$15-\$26.
25 Enthroned + Destroyer 666 Reggie's Rock Club. Advance \$18, day of show \$20. **18+**
27 Drag the River + Cory Branan Schubas. \$10. **AA**
27 Jon Drake and the Shakes + The Shams Band Logan Square Auditorium. \$TBA. **AA**
27 Guster Lincoln Park Zoo. Advance \$23, day of show \$28.
28 Memoryhouse Lincoln Hall. Advance \$10, day of show \$12. **18+**

September

- 1 Sam & Ruby + Abalone Dots** SPACE. \$10-\$18.
2 Swingin' Utters + The Menzingers Reggie's Rock Club. Advance \$13, day of show \$15. **AA**
3-5 North Coast Music Festival: Chemical Brothers + Nas & Damian Marley + Umphrey's McGee + Disco Biscuits + Moby (DJ set) + Pretty Lights + Cold War Kids + De La Soul + Mayer Hawthorne + Flying Lotus + Jakob Dylan Union Park. \$35, three-day pass \$65.
8 Casiotone for the Painfully Alone Subterranean. \$8.
8 Young Widows + Helms Alee Beat Kitchen. \$10.
9 Garnet Rogers SPACE. \$15-\$25.
17 Electric Six + The Constellations + Javelins Double Door. \$12.
23 Strung Out + Rufio + Mute + We Are the Union Reggie's Rock Club. \$17. **AA**
29 Preston Reed SPACE. \$12-\$20.

October

- 2 Stephen Kellogg + The Sixers + Sara Watkins** Lincoln Hall. \$20. **18+**
11 Belle and Sebastian Chicago Theatre. \$39.50.
15 NoMeansNo Reggie's Rock Club. Advance \$15, day of show \$18. **18+**
29 Nevermore + Warbringer + Mutiny Within + HateSphere Reggie's Rock Club. Advance \$20, day of show \$23. **AA**

November

- 24 Chayanne** Allstate Arena. \$67.50-\$127.50.
25 Scar Symmetry + Blackguard Reggie's Rock Club. Advance \$10, day of show \$13. **18+**
26 Forbidden + Evile + Gama Bomb Reggie's Rock Club. Advance \$20, day of show \$23. **AA**

FIND HUNDREDS OF UPCOMING SHOWS AT

► timeoutchicago.com/bookingahead

Classical



SHH & HIM Styzens, right, suffers from hyperacusis. Beethoven did, too.

Tinnitus soldier

A little hearing loss won't stop composer Joel Styzens. By Mia Clarke

Four years ago, Joel Styzens awoke to a musician's worst nightmare. "I got up one day with constant ringing in my ears," he says between sips of a late-morning latte at Logan Square's Lula Café. The percussionist, a music instructor at Old Town School of Folk Music, was 24 at the time; he'd played drums since age nine. Styzens was diagnosed with tinnitus—the perception of sound when no external source is present—and hyperacusis, an oversensitivity to certain frequency ranges. Despite holding a music degree from Millikin University, Styzens considered abandoning his career.

"With hyperacusis, regular noises like laughing, babies crying and car brakes squeaking become excruciating," the Springfield native says. Immediately, I regret arranging

our meeting in a café. While Styzens remains upbeat and talkative throughout our conversation, the measured, soft timbre of his voice suggests his struggle. He admits that his reaction to sound leaves him perpetually on edge. "I could barely stand to go outside for the first few months," he says. "It's still hard just to walk down the street. I never know when a car horn will go off."

After multiple ear infections as a child, plus many years of giving drum lessons without adequate ear protection, Styzens's past caught up with him. Once a freelance jazz and rock drummer playing up to six gigs a week, he had to give up a major source of income. But the Lincoln Park resident was determined to keep his position as a percussion and piano teacher at Old Town—and to continue to create music. He underwent several treatments: acupuncture, cranial psychotherapy. "None of them miracle cures," he notes, "but many have helped."

Styzens then picked up an acoustic guitar for the first time. "I had one laying around the house," he says. Initially, the tinny sound bothered his ears, but he adapted and later found the tones therapeutic. Ideas for compositions came flooding. "I experimented with [moving] my fingers on the strings and tried to translate the patterns in my head," he says. "I knew what I wanted when I found it."

"I never know when a car horn will go off."

The result of Styzens's experiments can be heard on an exquisite debut album, *Relax Your Ears*, a collection of soaring, delicate instrumental songs that feature his main collaborator, CSO cellist Katinka Kleijn. Styzens wrote "Life Line" for his mother because of the support she's offered throughout his ordeal. The record was released last year on Styzens's own label, A-Sharp—named after the pitch of his tinnitus.

Gradually, Styzens has been making peace with his condition. "I was freaked out and angry when this happened. I was depressed for a year," he says. "I've stopped seeing it as an intruder in my life. I want something good to come out of it." He talks with other sufferers about ways to deal on a day-to-day basis, educates his students on the potential risks of unprotected ears (percussion lessons are given on a Yamaha electronic drum kit) and is brainstorming Chicago's first tinnitus support group. He'd like to arrange music performances at lower volumes and trips to restaurants where the music is softer and the tableware isn't clattered.

His Friday 11 performance at the Old Town School Concert Hall will be a quiet affair but no less stirring. Cellist Kleijn developed a problem of her own: repetitive elbow strain due to years of bowing. She's taking a break for a few months, so Styzens has enlisted the help of another local pal, young British cellist Sophie Webber.

During our chat, it's impossible not to notice all the noise that must be torturing Styzens, despite the white-noise generators he wears in his ears: Led Zeppelin's *Physical Graffiti* on the stereo, a woman's stinging laughter, a bucket of ice dumped into a cooler. "Yeah," Styzens says, "the ice thing was a pretty painful moment."

Joel Styzens supports House of Waters at Old Town School of Folk Music Friday 11. See Listings.