



STIRRING IT UP

MIXING MUSIC AND MEDICINE COMES NATURALLY FOR  
LEESBURG ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON JOHN T. WILLIAMS

WRITER: MARY ANN DESANTIS // PHOTOGRAPHER: FRED LOPEZ



**A**ging Baby Boomers may have thought they were having a flashback to a 1970s reggae concert when “John Truth and Reflexx” hit the stage in February at the Lake-Sumter Community College Paul P. Williams Auditorium. While some concert goers were amazed at how much the lead singer looked and sounded like the legendary Bob Marley, others may have thought he vaguely resembled a local physician.

The truth is ‘John Truth’ is really Dr. John T. Williams, Jr., an orthopaedic surgeon with Tri-County Orthopaedic Center in Leesburg. A well-respected orthopaedic specialist by day, Williams channels the Bob Marley persona with ease when he’s on stage, especially when it’s for a good cause. February’s concert was a benefit for the Carver Middle School Mentoring Program, which Tri-County Orthopaedic Center has supported for several years.

“I’m a big Bob Marley fan and I have similar philosophies to the ones Bob believed and sang about such as peace, love, prosperity, and anti-exploitation of people,” says Williams who moved to Leesburg from Philadelphia, Pa., seven months ago. “His philosophies also included a respect for nature and our planet.”

As a child and teenager, Williams spent summers with friends of his parents in Nassau, Bahamas. The couple had a son about the same age who introduced him to reggae music and the Caribbean culture.

“I’ve always liked all types of music, but at age 30 my brother

gave me a CD-set of Bob Marley songs,” says Williams, now 47. “The music, the lyrics, Marley’s philosophy... it just clicked for me and became part of my soul.”

Williams loved to sing and even performed with his high school choir. But his education came first, and it was long after graduation from the Howard University School of Medicine and his fellowship training before he even learned to play a guitar.

“At age 40, I signed up for guitar lessons,” he says with a chuckle. “I had rhythm and could sing, so I picked it up pretty quickly.”

Williams mostly played for friends and co-workers. Occasionally, he performed his Bob Marley repertoire in a small Philadelphia lounge. He told one of his knee replacement patients about his act, and she insisted that he go to hear her son’s rhythm and blues band at another Philadelphia club.

“The band performed many songs from the ‘70s and ‘80s, and I asked them if they’d be willing to back me up on some Bob Marley songs,” remembers Williams. “That was six years ago and that’s how John T. and Reflexx came together.”



The band became quite well-known around Philadelphia for its Bob Marley tribute concerts. And like Williams, the band members have other fulltime careers. Alicia Burns, one of the back-up singers, is a registered nurse at Albert Einstein Medical Center, where Williams was the director of the total joint replacement program for 11 years. Other band members’ professions include teaching, social work, barbering and welding to name a few.

“Only my keyboardist makes a living from music and that’s as a piano and guitar teacher,” says Williams.

In February, all the other seven band members and well-known Philadelphia radio personality Mimi Brown — a long time supporter of the band — came to Leesburg to help Williams with the benefit concert that raised money for Carver Middle School’s Mentoring Program.

Tri-County Orthopaedic Center has worked with the mentoring program at Carver Middle School for six years to educate students about orthopaedics and professional opportunities. Last year, the Center sponsored an all-expense paid trip for Carver’s honor students to the Zimmer Corporation in Indiana to see how orthopaedic implants are made.

“Some of these children had never been outside of Leesburg, much less on an airplane,” said Dr. Alfred J. Cook, Jr., who was one of the hosts for the trip. “The mentoring program is a bigger calling for all of us because it gives back

to the community and helps these kids who don’t have a lot of opportunities to learn about various professions.”

Dr. J. Mandune Kerina, founder and director of Tri-County Orthopaedic Center, hopes the benefit concerts will become an annual event, but in the meantime he’s glad Dr. Williams’ first priority is treating patients.

“John is a brilliant specialist who has helped many patients regain their quality of life through surgical and non-surgical treatments. We are lucky to have him,” says Dr. Kerina. “He just happens to be a talented musician, too.”

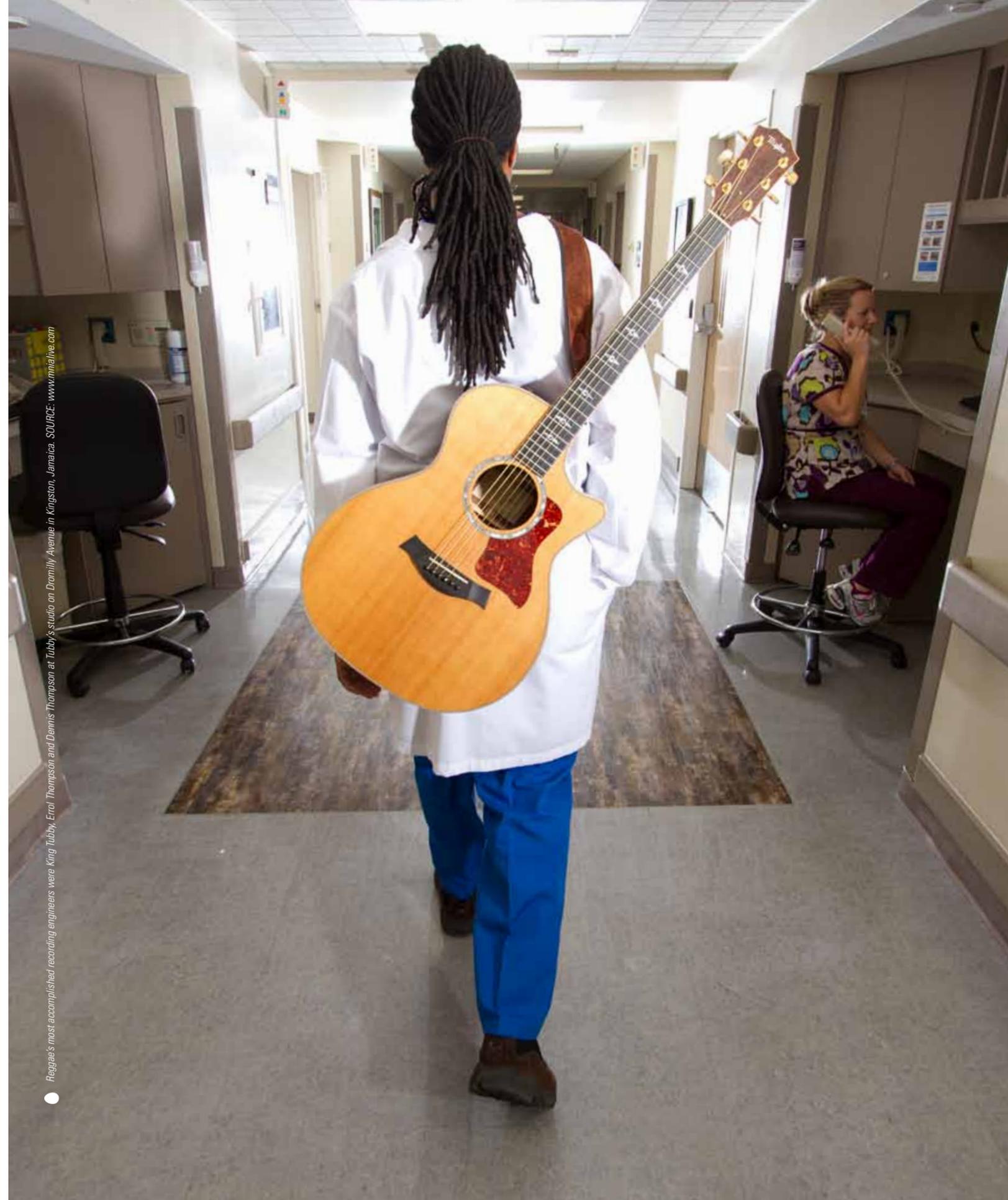
Assuring others that medicine is his first love is nothing new for Williams.

“At age 42, when I started doing shows, my mother was worried that I’d give up my medical career,” he says with a laugh. “I assured her that I no intention of throwing away all my years of training and my medical practice. Now my parents are very supportive.”

Williams hopes that his colleagues and patients who attended his concert in February will want to see more. The Philadelphia-based band members are willing to return for future concerts, especially those benefiting Carver Middle School students.

“We pride ourselves on giving concerts that resemble a real Marley concert,” says Williams, who has been married 16 years to his wife, Tina, and has an 11-year-old son, T.J. “A lot of people who saw Bob Marley perform live tell us that we’d definitely have his approval.”

Live at the Turntable Club (1974), the first live reggae album recorded in Kingston, Jamaica will be released on CD in 2012. SOURCE: www.mmialive.com



Reggae’s most accomplished recording engineers were King Tubby, Errol Thompson and Dennis Thompson at Tubby’s studio on Dromilly Avenue in Kingston, Jamaica. SOURCE: www.mmialive.com