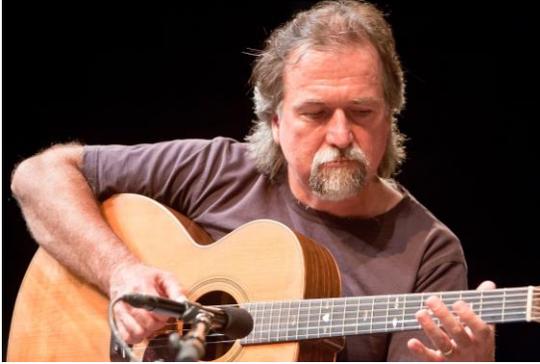


Beatles, Blues, and Bouzouki

Faculty Member David Surette



Like so many others, David Surette's musical journey began with a love for the Beatles. As a kid, he started a band with some fellow Beatles fans, but he didn't think a music career was in his future. "In high school, the idea of a career as a musician was more like a career as a major league baseball player," says Surette. "It would be totally awesome, but it didn't seem realistic."

Now head of the Folk Department at the Music School, and one of the most sought-after folk musicians in New England, Surette has made it to the major leagues. He is known for his masterful fingerstyle guitar playing, nuanced accompanying, and incredible ability to switch genres as often as he switches instruments (which is often; Surette is equally at home on the guitar, mandolin, and bouzouki).

It was during his college years at the University of New Hampshire that he began to see music as a possible vocation. He discovered the thriving music scene on the Seacoast, and he found that he loved the blues. From there, he says, it was a short step to the Celtic, bluegrass, and contradance music that pervaded the NH music scene in the '80s. He started playing and collaborating -- a lot.

"That was when I saw that there was a way to make a healthy living at it. And I've been making a healthy living at it ever since," he laughs.

After a few years of gigging and teaching, while taking on some jobs familiar in the world of starving musicians -- waiting tables, landscaping, and carpentry -- he joined the Music School faculty in the early '90s.

There, he was one of few of his colleagues who hadn't majored in music in college. Folk music is different, he says. "There's a certain simplicity, and kind of rough quality to folk music, an unschooled quality that people like and look for."

But anyone who saw Surette play at the 2015 March Mandolin Festival, a popular annual event at the Music School that Surette founded, knows that there's nothing "unschooled" about his playing. Audience members watched him transition with ease from Celtic jigs to jazz standards to cowboy songs, while sharing the stage with a diverse lineup of nationally acclaimed mandolinists and with his wife, singer Susie Burke.

Surette says he's always been able to learn from his diverse musical collaborators, and also from his students. "I've learned so much over the years from giving lessons," Surette says. "Teaching has taught me so much about music and about learning music. And about how music relates to people's lives."