

Girls Rock Detroit: Penny
Long Haul Productions // MCACA Creating Connection project

(INTRO ASSUMES PENNY/MADDIE ARE RUN SEQUENTIALLY ON SAME SHOW)

INTRO: We're excited to bring you another story in a series of first-person stories demonstrating the personal and community impacts of arts programs in Michigan. This week we hear from Penny and Maddie, veterans of Girls Rock Detroit. There, young women ages 8 though 15 form a band, learn how to play an instrument, write a song, and perform it in front of a live audience -- all in the course of a week.

FROM STAGE: Hello, hello. Welcome to Girls Rock Detroit. CROWD CHEERS)

PENNY: My name is Penny. I am thirteen years old and I have been coming to Girls Rock Detroit for four years.

AMBIENCE

FROM STAGE: Are you all excited? Gettin' hyped?

PENNY: It's a five-day-long camp where girls get to learn instruments but also learn about about empowering themselves and just learning about who they are and they get to form a band and play a show at the end of the week.

MUSIC

I was put in a band with completely new people. I didn't know anybody. We actually kind of chose a silly name. It was the Seven Bold Banana Slugs. We each kind of chose something that we liked and put it together. I chose Banana Slugs.

MUSIC

I have been playing the acoustic guitar for about a year or two but I never played the electric guitar before.

MUSIC

It was just a completely new experience for me because when I was playing the acoustic guitar you had all these rules and they didn't want you to play like you played the electric guitar. And I actually liked it better. You could just be louder and wilder. It was just more free.

MUSIC

Sometimes I get more shy around boys because it's just the way that I am. So I feel like this does make kind of a space where girls can be girls.

MUSIC FADES

We had this workshop where we would write about how we felt when women were harassed and things like that. That was fun for me because I like to write. And I found out that you could write songs that were about how you felt inside, that you could really express yourself.

LYRICS: Don't squeeze me
Don't pick me up
Don't get mad when I tell you to stop

There were a couple of incidents at my school. Just boys being boys and I got tired of that. Because I'm small, people like to pick me up so I don't like that. I would tell them that I didn't like it and when they didn't listen I wrote a poem. It's called Try Me. And my band decided to use it as lyrics for the song.

LYRICS: Don't hug me
Don't pull my hair
Don't try to make me laugh, you'll just fail there

PENNY: On the day of the showcase I change some of my clothes to make them look more punk rock.

LYRICS: And you are just a boy

I feel really excited to go on stage and perform for all these people and I'm never that nervous because I feel like if somebody is going to judge

us that's their problem.

MUSIC

My guitar makes me feel safer almost.

LYRICS: I'm not your baby
I'm not your toy
I'm not an object
And you are just a boy

PENNY: It makes me feel powerful. And angry sometimes but, strong, that I could do that. And it has given me more confidence. I find it cool that sometimes I can be really loud.

LYRICS: Try Me! (scream)

BACK ANNOUNCE: Penny and Maddie's stories were produced by Elizabeth Meister and Dan Collison of Long Haul Productions, with support from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. Thanks to Ros Hartigan, Melissa Coppola, and the 2018 Girls Rock Detroit rockers.