

54. Back by Popular Demand

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SPEAKERS

Rebecca Toal, Hattie Butterworth

Rebecca Toal 00:04

Hello and welcome to Things Musicians Don't talk About with your hosts Hattie Butterworth And me, Rebecca Toal.

Hattie Butterworth 00:11

Within our vibrant musical world it can often feel that the struggles and humanity of musicians is lost and restricted.

Rebecca Toal 00:19

Having both suffered in silence with mental, physical and emotional issues. We're now looking for a way to voice musician stories discuss them further and to connect with the many others who suffer like we have.

Hattie Butterworth 00:30

No topic will be out of bounds as we're committed to raising awareness for all varieties of struggle.

Rebecca Toal 00:36

So join me Hattie, and guests as we attempt to bring an end to stigma by uncovering the things physicians don't talk about.

Hattie Butterworth 01:05

Welcome everybody to a Wednesday evening in end of March.

Rebecca Toal 01:11

A little, cosy, cosy corner in Hattie's house.

Hattie Butterworth 01:15

Rebecca ... this is her first time in my new pad. What do you think about the new pad?

Rebecca Toal 01:20

Urgh, it's so far away from my pad. I really like it. It's very you.

Hattie Butterworth 01:25

Thank you.

Rebecca Toal 01:25

And to be fair, this is like a perfect podcasting room.

Hattie Butterworth 01:28

It is very quiet, isn't it?

Rebecca Toal 01:30

Very quiet, very cosy ... like good acoustics.

Hattie Butterworth 01:33

Good acoust. Acoust.

Rebecca Toal 01:34

Oop. Hashtag Acoust.

Hattie Butterworth 01:36

Yeah, it's nice and it's also like, my little reading room that I go on my phone in. You know what I mean?

Rebecca Toal 01:43

Read your messages.

Hattie Butterworth 01:44

And I also put my laptop on the shelf that no one can see.

Rebecca Toal 01:48

Good audio content Hattie.

Hattie Butterworth 01:50

And I watch telly sat on the futon.

Rebecca Toal 01:53

Futon.

Hattie Butterworth 01:54

Futon.

Rebecca Toal 01:55

You're really living that like journalism life.

Hattie Butterworth 01:57

Urm, yeah. Middle-class 20 year old with her futon in South London.

Rebecca Toal 02:03

Her foots on her futon.

Hattie Butterworth 02:04

On her futon. So today, this is our first ... I guess like... No, it's not actually.

Rebecca Toal 02:11

It's not our first chatty episode, but it's our first one in a while.

Hattie Butterworth 02:15

Yeah, obviously, we love interviews.

Rebecca Toal 02:18

We love them.

Hattie Butterworth 02:19

And they are ... so. you know, important and restorative, but also a lot of what we do is on Instagram, and the blogs and everything is talking about current issues or just like having a bit of a laugh half the time.

Rebecca Toal 02:35

Pretty funny.

Hattie Butterworth 02:36

And we kind of feel like it'd be nice to be able to share this with everyone, not just our patrons. So patr-... patrons on Patreon?

Rebecca Toal 02:44

We'll go with patrons.

Hattie Butterworth 02:46

So we're still going to do our Patreon episodes, but they're going to be more like...

Rebecca Toal 02:52

Stupid.

Hattie Butterworth 02:52

A laugh. So go over there if you want to have just a bit of a laugh. I mean, this might have some laugh in hopefully. Fingers crossed.

Rebecca Toal 03:01

Hopefully.

Hattie Butterworth 03:02

Let's see how funny we can make the BBC Singers being axed.

Rebecca Toal 03:05

You're getting so stressed that your glasses are fogging up.

Hattie Butterworth 03:07

I'm actually quite ... Yeah, I'm like ... because when we record our Patreon episodes, it's very much like, we don't have that many ...

Rebecca Toal 03:14

Plans.

Hattie Butterworth 03:15

Yeah, exactly. Just do them ad lib and it's like, fine, but to know that this is on the main feed, it's like an extra bit of pressure isn't it? But it's fine.

Rebecca Toal 03:24

It's all good, we're chill.

Hattie Butterworth 03:26

We're just us, you know?

Rebecca Toal 03:27

Yeah, and I think yeah, to start off with current affairs, the most current thing that's going on at the moment is more funding cuts and BBC Singers being axed and 20% of BBC orchestras positions being cut. So we thought it'd be good to have a little meltdown about that. What do you think?

Hattie Butterworth 03:51

When I first heard it, I didn't really know what to think which, I know sounds like "what you weren't outraged?!" But I just remember having no emotion because it almost wasn't a surprise.

Rebecca Toal 04:02

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 04:02

So I guess, now it's been a few weeks on, lots of things have happened. There's been lots of backlash and I guess Twitter at the moment, still is just like people shouting about how important it is and how it should exist, and, you know, I guess we're slightly at risk of it being very much still like ... we're talking to people that agree with us. You know, we're talking within the industry a lot.

Rebecca Toal 04:25

Yes.

Hattie Butterworth 04:26

And, like, obviously there has been some more high profile coverage. But yeah, I don't know, I guess we don't want it to run out of steam, but I'm slightly running out of steam with it all.

Rebecca Toal 04:36

I think it kind of comes back to we often don't feel that outrage or we kind of expect these sorts of headlines because we've just come to kind of not tolerate, but like just expect more things to be cut.

Hattie Butterworth 04:52

Yeah. How do you feel about it though? The orchestra one I think especially I'm interested.

Rebecca Toal 04:56

I think as a freelancer ... or when you auditioning for orchestras you're always kind of looking at these salaried positions as kind of utopia. At music college, I was always taught that having a job in an orchestra was the top of the pile, that's like, where you should be aiming for. Anyway, that kind of sidetracked from what I meant to say, which was that, yeah, if you remove secure positions, it kind of takes away some of the structure of being an orchestral musician, or the kind of what you're aiming for, I guess, for a lot of people. Because even if you're not aiming for that, it still kind of pulls the rug out from under your feet a little bit?

Hattie Butterworth 05:38

Yeah, that's so true, it's quite hard to put that into words, that feeling of like, "even if that's not part of my plan, just knowing that 20% less salaried secure positions for musicians", you know, it really made me think as well about the discrimination at work, and the vulnerability of freelancers and the BBC basically, kind of saying, on one level...

Rebecca Toal 06:00

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 06:01

"They're not our responsibility."

Rebecca Toal 06:02

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 06:03

Also kind of thinking a lot about, you know, college, and like how college felt so much like a lot of people were aiming for those jobs. And now, what's the impact of seeing so much of that cart?

Rebecca Toal 06:15

Well, and there were never enough jobs for everybody to have in the first instance.

Hattie Butterworth 06:19

Not even a tiny amount.

Rebecca Toal 06:21

And yeah, I was saying to you earlier, like who's responsibil-... Is it the music colleges' responsibility to take fewer students so that...you know, the industry isn't as saturated?

Hattie Butterworth 06:31

Or could you say that... I mean, maybe the sort of drop in audiences, is that being made up with more alternative projects? You know, are more people going to like, slightly more obscure...

Rebecca Toal 06:42

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 06:43

...Classical events. I don't know. You know, maybe people don't wanna listen to a symphony orchestra as much anymore.

Rebecca Toal 06:47

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 06:47

Maybe they're more interested in you know, chamber music or contemporary music or opera or ...

Rebecca Toal 06:52

Even that in itself seems unlikely.

Hattie Butterworth 06:54

It does. It does. it's just a thought.

Rebecca Toal 06:56

All right.

Hattie Butterworth 06:57

It's just thought.

Rebecca Toal 06:58

It's just a thought.

Hattie Butterworth 06:58

I can't get a ticket to go see ENO Akhnaten.

Rebecca Toal 07:02

That's true actually.

Hattie Butterworth 07:03

It's crazy. Honestly, everyone's like, "we can maybe squeeze you in with a 10 pound standing ticket." It's incredible. It's pretty, I think, maybe because it's quite a short, like, run. But also, our previous guest, Ella Taylor, they are in the production.

Rebecca Toal 07:21

Yeahhhh.

Hattie Butterworth 07:21

Which is amazing.

Rebecca Toal 07:22

So cool.

Hattie Butterworth 07:22

Which was another reason I was quite devastated I couldn't go, but like...

Rebecca Toal 07:25

Yes.

Hattie Butterworth 07:25

... you know, I ... in a way, I was like, that is actually brilliant that I can't get to see something at the ENO.

Rebecca Toal 07:31

That is a very positive...

Hattie Butterworth 07:33

Yeah, it feels like a weird kind of positive. It's like "wow".

Rebecca Toal 07:35

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 07:36

And, yeah. Any other final thoughts?

Rebecca Toal 07:39

Well, just to go back to kind of the education side of thing, like, as a teacher, I have one student at the moment, admittedly, a piano student that ... he really wants to do music, and I'm sat there like, "you know, how, what do I say when he asks me if he should do music?" Because of course, I want to say "yes. Like, you know, you're a brilliant musician. Do what you love." And it's amazing that he has this enthusiasm that he's basically nurtured himself, like, of course, I've been there but he's very much

taken it and run with it. And really, like, listens to music outside of our lessons and like finds things that he wants to play. And I'm like, "Well, you're the ideal candidate to go and do music... But is, are you...?"

Hattie Butterworth 08:28

Is it empty encouragement?

Rebecca Toal 08:30

Yeah. And then on the other hand, I have a parent whose children want to do music. And she keeps saying, "well, obviously, that's a ridiculous idea. I would never let them do music." And she looks at me as if she she's expecting me to agree with her. And I want to be like, "well..."

Hattie Butterworth 08:50

God that's so hard. Because it's like, we're constantly saying you know, you hear of people whose parents are like, "well, you should be ... you should do a real job, like be a doctor or a lawyer." But there's part of me that's like, "I get that a bit more now."

Rebecca Toal 09:01

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 09:02

And all these cuts, I'm like.

Rebecca Toal 09:02

But then even then is like, well, is a job in the NHS gonna...?

Hattie Butterworth 09:07

Oh god.

Rebecca Toal 09:08

The nurse strikes...

Hattie Butterworth 09:09

Yeah, true.

Rebecca Toal 09:09

... and the teacher strikes and rails strikes.

Hattie Butterworth 09:11

Just don't get a job. Just don't work.

Rebecca Toal 09:14

I actually often think about this, I'm like, "isn't it crazy that as a human, you have to work?"

Hattie Butterworth 09:19

Isn't it? I mean, not if you're like a member of the ...

Rebecca Toal 09:24

Yeah?

Hattie Butterworth 09:25

Um.

Rebecca Toal 09:25

Go on. I actually have no idea what you're about to say. I'm really intrigued.

Hattie Butterworth 09:29

The Faberge egg family.

Rebecca Toal 09:30

Oh!

Hattie Butterworth 09:31

What are they called?

Rebecca Toal 09:33

The ... eggs.

Hattie Butterworth 09:34

I was gonna say the Royal Family, but then I was like ... "do they work?"

Rebecca Toal 09:41

Hahaha. Spicy.

Hattie Butterworth 09:43

Aristocracy or, you know, being a kept woman or whatever, but ...

Rebecca Toal 09:46

A kept women.

Hattie Butterworth 09:47

I also remember my cello teacher, when I was like 14, which was probably the ... no, actually about 15. It was like towards the kind of peak of my like, crazy obsession with the cello. I was like, "I want to be a cellist, I've decided." And I remember her saying, "you really shouldn't be a cellist unless you absolutely have to."

Rebecca Toal 10:05

Boof.

Hattie Butterworth 10:06

And I was like, "what does that mean?" Like, I never really knew what that meant. But she was like, "look, it's a ..." She would tell me so honestly, she'd be like, "it's really, really, really hard. Conservatoire is terrifying. It's really stressful, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So much competition." She said, "Only if you can't think of anything else you want to do, should you do this."

Rebecca Toal 10:27

But that's also the kind of worst position, if you're just doing it from a place of like, "I've got nothing else."

Hattie Butterworth 10:32

But then I kind of, then, that's why I kind of did nothing else because I was like, "I need to prove that this is what I should be doing, because she's told me if I if I enjoy anything else, then I should do that instead."

Rebecca Toal 10:45

Wow.

Hattie Butterworth 10:46

Anyway ...

Rebecca Toal 10:47

I wonder what that anybody out there has ... And their parents aren't allowed to be musicians or should they be?

Hattie Butterworth 10:50

Out there.

Rebecca Toal 10:50

...ever has.... Is there anybody listening? Whether anybody out there has ever had full support of their parents, and full support of their teacher to go and be a musician. Yeah, I dunno. I feel like most people have had one... At least one party that's ...

Hattie Butterworth 11:12

Yeah, been sceptical.

Rebecca Toal 11:14

...kind of sceptical, or downright just like trying to block them becoming a musician.

Hattie Butterworth 11:20

Cock block. The musical cock block.

Rebecca Toal 11:23

Do you want that on the main feed?

Hattie Butterworth 11:25

Yes.

Rebecca Toal 11:25

Okay.

Hattie Butterworth 11:25

No, no, no. So you have come out of another audition...

Rebecca Toal 11:33

Another audition.

Hattie Butterworth 11:34

...without ...

Rebecca Toal 11:35

Success.

Hattie Butterworth 11:36

...success, just to put it mildly. And remind you.

Rebecca Toal 11:38

Objectively.

Hattie Butterworth 11:38

... if you forgot.

Rebecca Toal 11:39

Oh, thanks Hattie.

Hattie Butterworth 11:40

So this was for ... you might not want to say what it was for.

Rebecca Toal 11:43

It was for an orchestra.

Hattie Butterworth 11:44

It was from an orchestra up in the North, levelling up.

Rebecca Toal 11:46

Levelling up, I was trying to do everybody a favour.

Hattie Butterworth 11:48

She was trying to level up, okay? She was trying to level the fuck up. And she wasn't allowed.

Rebecca Toal 11:53

I wasn't allowed. They said, "stay in London. Keep the culture at the centre of London, please."

Hattie Butterworth 12:00

So this has now been one of a number of the last six months, I guess.

Rebecca Toal 12:05

Even like a year.

Hattie Butterworth 12:06

Or just a year.

Rebecca Toal 12:06

It's just been like constant trumpet auditions.

Hattie Butterworth 12:08

So tell us about how you're feeling now after like, basically always having an audition to work towards.

Rebecca Toal 12:15

I hate it, like it's such an artificial way to have the majority of your practice structured, sitting in a practice room, playing excerpts for a year is the worst way to try and fuel your passion for music. I was pretty crushed by this one, actually, because I'd plucked up the courage to go for my first lesson after music college, and I even went back to Academy, which I was really nervous about for this lesson. And, you know, it felt like I'd really prepared and I was feeling really confident. So it felt even more crushing to not have had any success, because I felt like I really put in a lot of effort. Which is funny because I often, I mean, I think a lot of people have this sense of sometimes you don't put effort into something because you don't want to be rejected and feel like you actually deserved to be rejected, because you put in all the effort that you could and you still didn't get any success. Whereas there's a comfort in, "well, if I don't go for a lesson, or I don't play my excerpts to people, I don't put in this effort, then, you know, if I don't get anything from it...".

Hattie Butterworth 13:29

No time wasted.

Rebecca Toal 13:30

No time wasted, and it's not a real reflection ...There's something so ...

Hattie Butterworth 13:33

Yes, yeah.

Rebecca Toal 13:33

...about like, "it's not a real reflection of me anyway, it was just me trying to fit in."

Hattie Butterworth 13:37

That's so true. So when you'd finished playing your excerpts, like completely honestly, like, I know, you don't want to sound arrogant or whatever, but did you think you had a good shot at maybe getting a second round? Did you feel like "oh, you know, this is on the level that I think I could get something from?"

Rebecca Toal 13:54

It was um... it was a mixed feeling because I knew ... there were only four excerpts. And I really messed up one of them. But I also played two of them what I thought was really well, and one of them kind of fine.

Hattie Butterworth 14:10

So that shows that like, "yeah, okay, you made a slip up. But actually..."

Rebecca Toal 14:14

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 14:15

...Generally, you nailed it."

Rebecca Toal 14:16

Yeah, it's tricky. But yeah, I got more nervous than I thought I would in this one. And like, overall I'd say the past year or so of doing semi-regular auditions has been a really good experience in terms of just getting better at auditions in general. Because that's always been ... like, I've never been good at performing. I've never enjoyed performing that much like solo stuff. I enjoy playing in an orchestra, but playing excerpts by myself or even solo pieces by myself has never really vibed with me very well. So having done so many auditions has been a really good practice in doing auditions...

Hattie Butterworth 14:57

But that's so fun-... like, as you're saying that I'm just thinking like "Yes, but you're practising to be a kind of soloist, you're not practising....You're not really showing them yourself as an orchestral musician."

Rebecca Toal 15:07

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 15:08

It's really odd.

Rebecca Toal 15:09

It's the thing of like, what, what I take from this last one that I did was that I'm still not where I'd like to be in terms of performing in an audition. So therefore, I clearly have to do more audition practice, which

really ultimately just means doing more auditions, which is not what I want to do, because I just feel so at the point where I'm kind of done auditioning, at least for now.

Hattie Butterworth 15:35

Does that feel empowering? Or does that feel like a risk? Or...?

Rebecca Toal 15:38

It does feel like a risk, because it's like, "Well, how am I going to get any new work?"

Hattie Butterworth 15:43

Leads.

Rebecca Toal 15:44

And I guess there's always a thing of like, you can go and play to people in an orchestra and hope that you know, they give you some extra work. Like if you go for a lesson and say, "Can I play to you as kind of an audition to be an extra?" Like, there are cases where that happens.

Hattie Butterworth 16:00

To be honest, that's another thing though that's a really unwritten rule.

Rebecca Toal 16:04

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 16:04

That's so interesting isn't it?

Rebecca Toal 16:05

So, yeah, now it feels like if I decide not to audition, I have to find another way to like weasel my way in.

Hattie Butterworth 16:14

Is there something as well about getting it out of an audition that feels more valid?

Rebecca Toal 16:18

Yeah, it feels way more legit.

Hattie Butterworth 16:19

Yeah, than being sort of asked because they you know you or...

Rebecca Toal 16:22

But then, even the work that I have got through auditions before, there's the side of me that's like, "well, you know, that was just a fluke that day." You can always justify it one way or the other can't you?

Hattie Butterworth 16:36

Imposter syndrome Rebecca. This was ... that would be my diagnosis.

Rebecca Toal 16:41

Ah, thanks, Dr. Butterworth.

Hattie Butterworth 16:44

Professor, Professor Butterworth. My dad at one point was the Reverend Prebendary Canon, no, the Reverend Canon Prebendary James Butterworth. The church loved that.

Rebecca Toal 16:56

That is the most like quaint ... I don't know. Wind in the willows.

Hattie Butterworth 16:59

Countryside fucking... yeah, literally,

Rebecca Toal 17:01

I can see him like skipping over a hill with a cup of tea and ...

Hattie Butterworth 17:05

He probaby would have done.

Rebecca Toal 17:06

... freshly baked bread in his hand or something.

Hattie Butterworth 17:08

Oh my gosh, he honestly would as well.

Rebecca Toal 17:12

James. We love him. So we're also going to talk a little bit, kind of linked into this...

Hattie Butterworth 17:19

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 17:20

...About performance anxiety.

Hattie Butterworth 17:21

Yes.

Rebecca Toal 17:23

Because we realised we haven't really talked about this much on the podcast and this... I don't know, when I think about people ... actually, I've had it quite a few times where I've tried to describe the podcast to people ... which in itself, I hate. I hate when you say "oh yeah, I've got a podcast" and people are like...

Hattie Butterworth 17:41

I always talk for too long when I'm trying to describe it, as well. What's it about?

Rebecca Toal 17:41

... "what's it about?" And then you try and describe a podcast to someone. Yeah, I try and justify it. Or make it sound better.

Hattie Butterworth 17:48

Cos it's really really hard to say it in a short sentence,

Rebecca Toal 17:51

But they're, they're always like, "oh, things musicians don't talk about. What, like performance anxiety?"

Hattie Butterworth 17:56

Yeah, that is true!

Rebecca Toal 17:57

It's the first thing that comes to people's minds. So what is your experience with PA Hattie?

Hattie Butterworth 18:07

Well, put it this way ... If I had managed my performance anxiety better, it's questionable whether I would be in the position I'm in today as, you know, a magazine editor instead of a cellist. I think performance anxiety was a massive reason for giving it or putting it to the side. Because on the a day of a performance or leading up to a performance it took over so much of my brain, and I know for some people that happens, and it's not an OCD thing, it's just kind of an a kind of obsessive fear, I guess. But for me, as I was healing from my OCD, I also saw when I perform, I get quite triggered. It's quite a triggering experience, because I'm focusing on "Oh, if I go that way to the venue, will I play better than if I go that way?"

Rebecca Toal 19:05

Wow.

Hattie Butterworth 19:05

And "if I eat this before, will it go better than if I do this?"

Rebecca Toal 19:09

Yep.

Hattie Butterworth 19:10

"And is the fact that I only played it through twice today, does that mean that I've jinxed it?"

Rebecca Toal 19:15

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 19:16

Or "if I only practised two hours yesterday instead of four hours before, does that mean then that...?" You know, it's so much kind of obsessive superstition...

Rebecca Toal 19:25

Yes.

Hattie Butterworth 19:27

...that I kind of noticed "this is this is really similar to OCD, and I just need to break from it." So I think yeah, and still today I genuinely feel like if I was to perform, the obsessions would be so intense about ... just that fear of like forgetting how to play your instrument or like the fear of memory slips. I think it's just so intense in my mind still, that it's a big relief now not to have that on my mind.

Rebecca Toal 19:55

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 19:55

So I think performance anxiety as it was happening, I'd very much viewed my mental health problems as separate to that. But now I'm like, "Oh my gosh, that was so ingrained in all of it," you know...

Rebecca Toal 20:07

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 20:08

... that kind of underlying pressure of always knowing there was performance coming. And I was always dreading it and I'd pretend that I would enjoy it, but I wouldn't really. I was all ... I always really did not enjoy performing. I enjoyed the relief afterwards.

Rebecca Toal 20:21

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 20:21

And I kind of interpreted that relief as like, "this is what I ... this is why I love what I do." And it's like "you should ... you're loving, you're loving the relief... You're not loving what you do."

Rebecca Toal 20:31

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 20:32

So I think I had to have a really stern chat with myself and be like, "you know, you don't have to do this anymore. You don't have to put yourself through that." And that was like, quite a big revelation, I think.

Rebecca Toal 20:43

I think yeah, I always thought that if I didn't enjoy performing, then that makes me a lesser musician.

Hattie Butterworth 20:50

So true.

Rebecca Toal 20:51

Because it's like, "well, what is a musician other than a performer or an entertainer? If you're not enjoying that, then what are you doing?" And I also recognise that a lot of my performance anxiety is related to kind of under confidence in myself as a person, which is stuff that I will continue to work on, forever I think, because of previous experiences with eating disorders, and whatever, I find that my performance anxiety is much better when my mental health is better, or my like self-acceptance is better. And as I've yet worked on like bodily acceptance, for instance, my performance anxiety is also lessened. Nothing is isolated.

Hattie Butterworth 21:36

That's so true. I think I never really witnessed that as much. I definitely did have a kind of breakthrough period in my last year, where ... I don't know what it was, I kind of developed an apathy to performing and I don't know if that's because I was burnt out, and I just didn't really care anymore. But that was quite funny, because I remember saying to my therapist like, "I can perform now without anxiety, but I also just don't feel anything. I don't enjoy it still, because I just don't feel anything. I don't feel connected with music at all."

Rebecca Toal 22:05

Which is better? Like...

Hattie Butterworth 22:06

Yeah!

Rebecca Toal 22:06

... which of those situations is ...?

Hattie Butterworth 22:09

Well, I was convinced that the side of feeling nothing was way better, because it meant that I ...

Rebecca Toal 22:15

Just could get through it.

Hattie Butterworth 22:16

I could get through it, exactly. And I wasn't in like mental pain.

Rebecca Toal 22:18

Yes.

Hattie Butterworth 22:19

I guess. But it was kind of wider feeling of like, "should I even be a cellist if I don't really feel anything from this at all?"

Rebecca Toal 22:26

Yeah. What ... like, is there anything in particular that helped you with performance anxiety?

Hattie Butterworth 22:33

Um ... I think viewing the thoughts, like treating the thoughts, I guess, in a CBT way.

Rebecca Toal 22:41

Yeah. More objective.

Hattie Butterworth 22:41

And realising that your actions aren't linked to your thoughts at all. And we kind of have this huge doubt as musicians that's like, "if I don't play this through trillion times, then what could happen?" But I think what really helped me was to like see, sort of catch myself in a thought spiral. I would often go through these spirals of like, feeling a bit more confident, and then ruminating, and then kind of like diminishing my confidence. And then at another point in the day, I'd feel confident again, and then I would like ruminate and feel really unconfident. And that would be like a cycle on performance day. And I think I kind of got better at like, spotting "hat's interesting my brain is doing that."

Rebecca Toal 22:41

Yes.

Hattie Butterworth 22:46

More objective. And just kind of more like, I don't know, this is less about presenting yourself as a perfect, polished version. And more about, I don't know ... I'd forgotten actually what I used to do. It's been so long now. I just, yeah, I don't really have any advice, because I just never really figured it out.

Rebecca Toal 23:48

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 23:49

And in some...

Rebecca Toal 23:49

Which is powerful in itself.

Hattie Butterworth 23:50

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 23:51

Like, most people have a performance anxiety story, and they only feel comfortable telling it because they've gotten through it. Or I hear a lot of people go, "ah I went to this performance anxiety coach, like

they're amazing. Now, I don't feel it at all, like you should check them out!" And it's like, "well, maybe that worked for you and that's great," but you don't hear many people talking ... especially like, top tier, you know, international musicians who are still suffering with it. I guess it's like a lot of kind of mental health things: you often only hear about the things once people have gotten through it, and...

Hattie Butterworth 24:27

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 24:27

...Feel that they're able to kind of voice it from hindsight, a bit better.

Hattie Butterworth 24:31

That's so true, because it's like you, you never really hear of someone deep in it. I think there is one documentary of Martha Argerich...

Rebecca Toal 24:39

Ooh!

Hattie Butterworth 24:40

... where they followed her around, and there's a clip of her in bed on the day of a performance like really ill with anxiety.

Rebecca Toal 24:48

Oh gosh.

Hattie Butterworth 24:49

Like ... I think there have been a few films, but that's very rare that someone like ...

Rebecca Toal 24:55

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 24:55

You see like the rawness of how anxious...

Rebecca Toal 24:58

Somebody that famous as well.

Hattie Butterworth 24:59

Yeah, exactly.

Rebecca Toal 25:00

That they've got to that point. And they're still dealing with that.

Hattie Butterworth 25:04

I think it's also like...especially with something like the piano - I mean, any instrument. It's so ... it so relies on freedom in the end. And I think when you have an obsessive brain, you can overthink everything you do and you can dissociate ...

Rebecca Toal 25:21

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 25:21

...to like, the furthest corner of the room. And you just don't feel in control of anything you're doing or playing. And it's, it's really hard to bring yourself back from that space.

Rebecca Toal 25:32

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 25:33

And I think when I was like deep in a performance, sometimes it would take me until like five minutes before the end to feel remotely comfortable. And I would come offstage, like, so upset because I'd just want to go back on because I was finally feeling ...

Rebecca Toal 25:47

In that flow.

Hattie Butterworth 25:47

... a little bit more in the flow. Like, you know, the half an hour before that had been like, really painful mentally.

Rebecca Toal 25:53

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 25:54

Just like, get me out of this hell. I don't ... I don't know how to calm down.

Rebecca Toal 25:58

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 25:59

I don't know how to relax like that...

Rebecca Toal 26:00

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 26:02

But yeah, have you performed yet with your ...

Rebecca Toal 26:04
Have I performed yet?!

Hattie Butterworth 26:05
Have you performed with your beta blockers yet? If you don't mind...

Rebecca Toal 26:08
No, not at all.

Hattie Butterworth 26:09
...bringing that up?

Rebecca Toal 26:09
I've tried it a few times...

Hattie Butterworth 26:12
Have you seen any difference?

Rebecca Toal 26:15
I kind of got to ... yeah, a stage of apathy through them with performance. And I haven't used them in a while because I was originally prescribed them just for anxiety in general, rather than performance anxiety. So once I stopped taking them for anxiety, I think I just kind of didn't really think about them as a tool for performing as well. But yeah, it definitely felt more just detached, which...

Hattie Butterworth 26:40
Interesting.

Rebecca Toal 26:41
... can like, in those situations where I did use them, was really helpful because I was so ... it wasn't just the music that I was anxious about, it would be like the socialising and I dunno, the travelling and it was all kind of too overwhelming, so actually having something to hold on to that was kind of reliable was really helpful for those situations. But I'm also really happy that I never really got into a kind of momentum of relying on them. And I think I was very aware of that when I was first prescribed them. I had like a voice in my head that was like, "Oh, it's great you've got these now, like, you can just use them for performing..."

Hattie Butterworth 27:24
Yeahh.

Rebecca Toal 27:24
... forever." And I'm really glad that I kind of stopped that thought and didn't let myself go down that path because ... yeah, and I am really interested in doing like a an interview series or something on the podcast about beta blockers because that is a huge thing that people don't talk about. And it's so ... yeah it's so widespread. And people are so ashamed of it.

Hattie Butterworth 27:51

I don't think anyone ... I've heard very few people open up about it, but I think there's been some surveys or something in it.

Rebecca Toal 27:57

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 27:57

And the percentage is quite high.

Rebecca Toal 27:59

And the p... and the number of people that don't get them prescribed from their own doctor but borrow somebody else's...

Hattie Butterworth 28:04

Yes.

Rebecca Toal 28:06

...Is just ...

Hattie Butterworth 28:08

Fuck.

Rebecca Toal 28:09

... appalling.

Hattie Butterworth 28:10

So hard.

Rebecca Toal 28:11

I mean, yeah, not ... sorry, not appalling as in it's their fault for ... I'm not criticising those people for not getting it through their own doctor. I know that that people have their own reasons and and stigmas and it's just...

Hattie Butterworth 28:23

But at the end of the day it's a heart medication, isn't it? You know?

Rebecca Toal 28:25

Yeah, it's it's at the at the stigma is what's appalling.

Hattie Butterworth 28:29

Whenever I go to a concert and watch someone playing a concerto, I just can't ever see myself being in their position and feeling remotely comfortable.

Rebecca Toal 28:39

Yeah. I could never envisage myself being a soloist onstage, and not just having the worst time ever.

Hattie Butterworth 28:46

I thought it was just me. I just watch them like, "you must be having such a hard time right now." But it's like so projected. Maybe they love it. But I just can't imagine that. But then we ... we were going to mention this weren't we? We went to Manchester...

Rebecca Toal 28:49

No. Oh, yeah! Sorry. I was gonna. Yeah. Good. Yes. Well done for remembering!

Hattie Butterworth 29:05

Yes. Continue.

Rebecca Toal 29:06

Yes, continue that.

Hattie Butterworth 29:07

We went to Manchester for this International Women's Day event run by the beautiful ladies of Empower.

Rebecca Toal 29:13

So good.

Hattie Butterworth 29:14

Follow them on Instagram.

Rebecca Toal 29:15

Do it.

Hattie Butterworth 29:16

But yeah. So we went and had the most beautiful evening, and we were sort of on a panel with some other incredible women, which was like, such a privilege oh my gosh, but we started and I like, had to kick off with first question. And I just got like, I don't want to use the word flashback with like ... flippantly but I guess I just felt all the same emotions that I had felt playing solo cello because of the lighting and the setting and I don't know what it was, but I just felt that horrible anxiety freeze, where you can't connect what's in your brain with what comes out of your mouth and you just feel paralysed. And it was really hard because after I'd said that, you also felt kind of anxious as well.

Rebecca Toal 30:07

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 30:08

And then we went down like the line of the panel and like everyone nailed it.

Rebecca Toal 30:11

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 30:12

It was so stressful. I was like, "I'm the stupidest one here. The audience must think that like, why on earth have they invited her?" Like, but then I realised the privilege of speaking rather than playing...

Rebecca Toal 30:25

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 30:25

...is that I could use it to my advantage a bit more.

Rebecca Toal 30:29

Well, yeah then you brought it up and said, "Look, I'm feeling ..." I can't remember what the question was that led you to then bring it up.

Hattie Butterworth 30:35

It was like, "What's the biggest issue..."

Rebecca Toal 30:36

That's it, yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 30:37

...women face in classical music," or something.

Rebecca Toal 30:40

Yeah, it was just amazing that you actually kind of named what you were feeling. And when you did identify that and say it, quite a few of the panel resonated with that. And it was this moment of, again, I get bowled over every time, there's some connection between me and somebody else that I admire, and you're like, "oh, no, they're human as well." Like everyone was a bit nervous to some extent, even though they were so eloquent. And it was a very kind of levelling experience to hear you say that.

Hattie Butterworth 31:14

I guess you could say that when you've finished, say, in a recital, or when you've played one piece, you could say to the audience, "you know, I'm feeling really, really awful today. And I feel like I don't deserve to be here." But you just, you just wouldn't hear that would you?!

Rebecca Toal 31:29

You worry that people will think that that's you trying to excuse your playing.

Hattie Butterworth 31:34

Yeah, or like, this isn't why ... what I've come to see. I haven't come to like, listen...

Rebecca Toal 31:38

Hear your life story.

Hattie Butterworth 31:39

Yeah, I've come to listen to you play perfectly.

Rebecca Toal 31:41

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 31:41

So it kind of felt like, "oh, I felt really privileged that my anxiety could be like, reduced by naming it in the moment."

Rebecca Toal 31:50

Yeah.

Hattie Butterworth 31:51

And I don't think we have that privilege on stage so much.

Rebecca Toal 31:53

So before we finish, we would like to say a huge thank you to our Patrons, who have been supporting our work for ages now, over on our Patreon channel. I actually heard this on a different podcast the other day that really, I really liked the idea that people who are paying for the Patreon are paying for people who can't afford the Patreon to listen to for free.

Hattie Butterworth 32:25

Aww! Yeah!

Rebecca Toal 32:25

Like that idea that you're kind of paying it forward. You're supporting an artist that you want to support.

Hattie Butterworth 32:30

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 32:31

So yeah, I will ... we really wanted to shout out our beautiful patrons. So thank you so so so much, to Hugh, Melissa, Fionnuala, Stuart - who the hell is that? Ciara, Holly, Seb, Nicola, Alice, Lucy, Francesca and Becky. Honestly, it means ... I know say this all the time, but it means the world that people wanna give us three pounds a month to just I mean, basically usually just hear us ramble on for an extra episode.

Hattie Butterworth 33:05

There are also some blog posts that we do sometimes.

Rebecca Toal 33:08

Little blog posts.

Hattie Butterworth 33:09

Little catch ups and little behind the scenes things.... Um, what was I gonna say? Yeah, please do follow us on Twitter, Instagram.

Rebecca Toal 33:18

Facebook.

Hattie Butterworth 33:19

Everywhere.

Rebecca Toal 33:20

Thank you so much for listening. All the love and goodbye.

Hattie Butterworth 33:24

Goodbye.