

Post-nap epiphanies

Rebecca Toal 00:00

Hello, hello, hello. It is time for our chatty episode of the month. This month was a little bit different but as usual, it was our show that we put out for our Voices radio slot. So this time it was just me to start off with and then, as you'll hear later, Stu my partner, joined us for a little chat in the garden. It was really nice to be outside actually in recording. The other reason why I wanted to jump on here before we get started is to announce that we are now supported by the Royal Society of Musicians who say "since 1738, we have been providing vital financial assistance, advice and guidance to music professionals unable to work due to accident illness, stress or anxiety. Whether you're working as a performer, administrator, technician, or teacher, and everything in between, we're here to help." So if you know someone that's in need of any kind of assistance or help, you can contact them by visiting their website which is www.rsmgb.org or you can contact them via the telephone on 02076296137. We are really just overjoyed to be working with them and being supported by them as, you know, their mission and what they do is really just so in line with what we are advocating for. So yeah, watch this space for more exciting collabs in the future. For now though, let's get on with the podcast.

Hattie Butterworth 01:29

Hello and welcome to Things Musicians Don't Talk About with your hosts Hattie Butterworth

Rebecca Toal 01:35

And me Rebecca Toal.

Hattie Butterworth 01:37

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

Rebecca Toal 01:45

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

Hattie Butterworth 01:56

The personal issues we may face with our mental health, performance injury, work, pressure and finances can be overlooked as the airbrushed persona of musicians is something maintained.

Rebecca Toal 02:08

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

Rebecca Toal 02:34

Hey everyone, how you doing? Welcome to Things Musicians Don't Talk about this is our first radio show/ chatty episode for the main feed after passing our trial period with Voices Radio so very exciting that this will be our regular slot for the foreseeable future. This is the ... I think it's the second Monday of every month 4-5pm. So it's just gonna be a solo episode for me today. I've hijacked Hattie's portable microphones to ... yeah! Kind of experiment with. I'm planning on just kind of taking them on my journeys this week. Um doing some nice walks, getting my thoughts out there. Maybe, yeah, accosting Stuart for some of his thoughts as well about life.

Rebecca Toal 03:33

So yeah, I'm currently in bed. I'm ... yeah I've been putting off recording this episode, because I feel like I never really know what to talk about. And the more the podcast goes on, the more I feel like I should be very professional and have these kinds of in-depth insights. And like, yeah, know exactly which direction to take things in. I mean, the main reason for me doing this solo one is because Hattie is just so, so busy at the moment and sometimes we do it with the Patreon episodes where one of us will just take ... take that task for the month. And I was very quick to suggest ... I mean, this is yeah, typical Rebecca Toal fashion in that I'm... Yeah, very quick to say, "Oh, don't worry, I'll take ... I'll do that. You know, don't worry about it." And then I then end up stressing, because I've taken on too much or I've taken on a job that I don't actually know what I'm gonna do with it. And I feel like I have to do the job almost doubly good because I've taken it from someone else as well.

Rebecca Toal 04:42

So first off, I thought maybe I'd go through some ... Yeah, I did like a Q&A thing on my Instagram a couple of weeks ago, maybe. And I wasn't really expecting people to have so many amazing questions, not because I don't... not because I don't believe in people just because I was like, you know, "well, why would they spend their effort..." Like, you know "why, why are they going to ask me a question? I'm just another Instagram friend." But yeah, it actually was really thought-provoking, and it stayed with me. So felt like quite a gift. These people gave me their questions. The first thing that got me thinking, was our good friend, Robyn, she asked ... which slightly feels quite ... quite vain of me to read this out. But she said, "How come your soul shines out of your face, like a beautiful beam? Soul care routine please." And I read it and I was instantly like, "Soul care?" Like, "I love that as a term." I was a bit like, "maybe that's just me being really cheesy, and like, very hashtag wellness." But the more I thought about it, the more I really realised that it is incredibly important to do things that nourish your soul. And I think for me, I never really know what that looks like, because I'm not a spiritual person, necessarily. I'm not religious. Through my volunteer work on shout, and my counselling studies, I've seen this self care wheel that they have. And one of the segments of the wheel, I think, is spiritual self care. And I never know what to put, because I always feel that whatever I put feels kind of, I don't know, like a, you know, a square in a circular hole. I'm trying to put something in there just for the sake of filling in the box but I'm not really sure what spiritual self care looks like to me. So I think I preferred the term soul care, because it ... I don't feel so much like a fraud when I talk about soul care, because everyone has a soul, you know, whatever that looks like. So my answers I gave for my soul care routine, included... Yeah, volunteering for Shout, the crisis line. I said, getting out in the sunshine whether a jogging or gardening or walking, instead of busing - taking the bus that is; connecting with people that value me for whoever I am that day and definitely for not what I look like; spending time with my beautifully crazy cats; being absolutely ridiculous with Stu; trying to read hopeful books; in capital letters, I put THERAPY; spaghetti

hoops; and wearing clothes that fit me even if they're the biggest size I've ever owned. Yeah, there are lots of things I'm sure I could add to that list. But it's really hard to identify things that make you feel more authentic when it comes down to things that you're actively doing in your life. I found that I can, I can think of people that make me feel like myself, I can...I don't know, I think of like big things like pursuing a career in music and counselling but when it comes to kind of actual conscious activities, I did find it quite hard to put a list together. It was interesting thinking about things that I do for myself and for my soul but also I feel like part of the things that we do for ourselves...I don't know whether this is just me, but there's an aspect of I want to be a 'good person', whatever that means. And I don't know, like, what is a good person? Like, is, is it what other people think of you influences your definition of being a good person. And even in that, you know, you can never know what other people are thinking, so is it what you think other people think of you defines what you think being a good person is? So like, for me like volunteering and all these kinds of things, yes, I've always grown up with people saying, being a volunteer, or volunteering is a good thing. And I know that I get good responses when I tell people that I volunteer and I do love doing it, but I think primarily, a lot of these things come from a place of "oh what, what would make me look good?" And it feels really shameful to say and I don't know whether it comes from a place of not really knowing what is 'good', or maybe a place of ... there's infinite amount of good you can do in the world, so where do you start? Yeah, I don't really know where I was going with that. But it was an interesting thing of like, you do what makes your soul feel good, but how do you know what being a good person is? Because I think so much of my soul care is related to being a 'good person'.

Rebecca Toal 09:47

The next thing that somebody asked me was ...oh, yeah, it was what I originally posted the Q&A box because I'd been ... I think I said I was gonna be doing some laptop stuff all day and I needed some, some company or some motivation or whatever. So somebody asked "any tips for getting through laptop stuff? Keeping up with emails particularly is my weak spot." Keeping up with emails is also my weak spot. I've definitely gotten better since quitting some of my teaching, but in trying to assert more boundaries and place less importance on getting back to people immediately or this idea of being professional when actually as a musician that doesn't necessarily fit like the etiquette of being professional in the business world, for example. So in trying to be a bit more true to my lifestyle and how my energy is and everything, I've gotten much worse at replying to emails and doing laptop stuff in general, but also because so much of my ... well as a, as a musician, you know, you do a lot of admin, a lot of emails, a lot of website stuff, a lot of booking things that is laptop-based. And particularly, I don't know how many people listening are musicians and who also use iPads to read music off, I can spend all day on a screen. And then we're doing podcast stuff on top of that, and counselling homework, and Shout volunteering... I can end up on a laptop all day, and still not really feel like I've actually replied to anything. So I've been trying to be a bit more disciplined with working hours. I mean, having said that, it's half past 9, I'm on my laptop recording this. But my tips, I said, "Yeah, replying to your emails in your own time." And on our podcast account, we've put a little a signature saying we won't be replying in usual working hours or expected replying time, and we don't expect other people to do the same. And it feels kind of when we put it on, I felt quite rude or quiet...I don't know. Like, I was imagining people receiving that email signature and feeling like affronted by it or something. But the more that time goes on the more I think actually it's better to say these things or to assert those boundaries, then just not

reply, or like if you set expectations then I think other people might follow, or at least they'll know what's going on.

Rebecca Toal 12:43

The second of the three questions that I'm going to go through, Hatie actually asked, "Do you ever miss your eating disorder?" Yeah, this is a tricky one. I mean, again, it feels kind of shameful to say yes. Because, you know, I so clearly advocate so strongly against dieting and being aesthetics-focused, and all these things. But I think like with any period of trauma or mental illness, when you are in it, it was so hard to leave it because whatever was holding you there was like a comfort. And when you look back, you still ... or at least I still feel an essence of that kind of abusive relationship with my own brain, but it was so comforting and it felt so safe, even though I was so isolated. And yes, there are lots and lots of days, that I feel totally liberated and so proud of myself for getting to this point. But there are, there are also days where, you know, I'm ... struggle to look in the mirror, I still kind of prod and poke at my body and I, you know, I'm constantly selling or recycling clothes that no longer fit. You know, my wardrobe sizing is the biggest it's ever been. All these kinds of things, especially in the society, that we ... you know, it's still the same, even no matter how much work you put in, society often stays the same. So yes, there's a lot of good stuff on social media, but there is still a pressure to be a smaller size, you know, thinner or leaner or more toned or whatever. And the number system of the clothes sizing or the weighing or whatever numbers ... you know that feeling of always aiming for a lower number has still really stayed with me, no matter how much I try to not absorb that and not ... not feel that, it's still quite a big reflex in me. I mean, having said this, it's also impossible to ignore the memories and the feelings of just how awful life was when I was in the midst of my eating disorder, and I could never, I could never go back to that. It's ... again, talking about reflexes, like, I have so many kind of self-protective reflexes that stop me dieting, or exercising too hard. It's almost like my body has a memory of this awful time, and will not let me do any of those behaviours, or carry out any behaviours from the thoughts. It's, yeah, the trauma has stayed with my body and my brain. And there's absolutely no way that I could go so far backwards to get to that place again.

Rebecca Toal 15:54

And the third question that I'm going to cover, I mean, I could say, "how are your cats?" Somebody asked "How are your cats?" which is obviously very important, but this one is "any tips on how to practice for a recital?" Want to be structured, but it's a bit panicked at the moment. Haha." We love a "haha" at the end of a question to make it nice and light after very deep thought. Yeah, and I was very honest, when I answered this, that I was ... and I'm still not very good at practising, especially for recitals. I think I know, I'm not a soloist. And so then practising for a recital ... I have an element of fear and my practice and avoidance. So I'm definitely no expert. Here are some things that helped me during my Mast-... Well, I was gonna say during my Master's recital preparation, but that was in COVID and I definitely didn't practise enough. So here's some just general practice tips, I think. So just doing different and varied types of practice, like stamina practice, speed practice, slow tuning, articulations, score study, mental practice, etc.; taking lots of breaks, and try not to do hours and hours back to back; making sure I've nourished myself as a human being first and foremost, like hydration, sunlight, sleep, social energy, etc.; and playing other things to keep me from getting stale. Like, there's loads of amazing like backing tracks on YouTube that you can play along to, and rewarding myself for doing any amount of practice. Some of these are slightly idealistic. I'm never in a place where I'm managing to do

all of those great practice tips all the time. Practice is so hard and definitely a lot of people I've talked to were never taught how to practise. And I don't necessarily think that's the fault of a teacher in that they should teach you how to practice your instrument and your pieces, like everyone is so individual. But I do think there should be more of a narrative of, "okay, there isn't just one way to practice. And actually, if you do need to warm up and have your favourite TV show on just to encourage you to get your instrument out the case..." like there's so many times where I'm kind of passively watching a TV series around the house. And then like, "okay, no, the next episode, I'm going to put on the stand and do some practice." And that's the only thing that gets me into the practice room. And then maybe I won't do much more practice than, you know, 10 minutes or one episode or whatever, but at least I got there. But yeah, this idea that ... I remember, I went to have some trumpet lessons in Sweden when I was in sixth form. And the teacher, I had a really bad time with the teacher. They were very demanding and dismissive of my playing, and gave off the impression that, you know, why was I bothering to come all the way because I wasn't going to be a soloist, so what's the point in, you know, having these lessons? But they had a very prescriptive way of "you must do one hour of these Clarke exercises. And then you must have an hour of Stamp exercises." For these trumpet players... non-trumpet players out there, these are all trumpet technique books and methods and trumpet players and stuff. But yeah, it was like, you know, this practice timetable is the path to success. And if you're not doing it, then you're not going to make it. And yeah, there was a sense of I ... it was almost like, they would laugh at me for not doing it because they were like, you know, "well, it's so easy. You just got to do this. And then you'll be on the path to success. So why you know, why are you not doing it? I don't understand why you're not doing these six hours of technical studies every day." I mean, at the time, you know, I was still at school. Even if I wanted to (which I didn't), I couldn't have fitted in six hours of practice in the day. Anyway, that was one of the first times that I'd had the idea of "this is one way to practice. And this is the only way." So I think there is no one way, in the same way that especially now there's so much more research on neuro-divergence and how different people learn, I mean, surely it's a given that there are different ways that people practise and learn musical instruments as well. It's just seems so ridiculous to me that you could say, "Okay, this, this and this book, practise them for this amount of time, and you'll be great." Anyway, so ... I'm gonna end this chat here. I'm gonna ... maybe go on a little walk tomorrow, chat to some people. Yeah, little casual/real episode on Hattie's amazing clip-on mics. So bye-bye for now, and see you in a little bit.

Rebecca Toal 21:17

So, after this little spiel, I went to Reading with my partner Stuart to do some dog-sitting and house-sitting. And it felt like the perfect opportunity to talk with him in the lovely garden outdoors, hence some of the background noise. So yeah, we had a lovely little catch up over a cup of coffee in the garden with the dogs. And yeah, so here it is. Hope you enjoy.

Rebecca Toal 21:44

So I've just woken Stu up very rudely from a nap and forced him to come talk with me in the garden.

Stuart Beard 21:52

Good morning.

Rebecca Toal 21:53

Good morning. [dog noise] Ooh! We're dog sitting and these dogs are trying to jump on us and join in.

Stuart Beard 22:01

Freebie get down.

Rebecca Toal 22:02

Get off Freebie.

Stuart Beard 22:04

Yeah. Hello again. For context.

Rebecca Toal 22:07

Yeah it's been a while.

Stuart Beard 22:09

There's four dogs.

Rebecca Toal 22:10

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 22:12

There's Freebie, Jennie, Matty and Morag. And they're my parents' dogs.

Rebecca Toal 22:18

They're good dogs. Most of the time.

Stuart Beard 22:22

They're well-intentioned dogs.

Rebecca Toal 22:24

Yeah, it's all about the intention behind the dog.

Stuart Beard 22:26

But...

Rebecca Toal 22:28

Yeah, so I thought it'd be nice to chat just Stu because we ... the last time we spoke to you was like ... on the podcast that is, I mean, I speak to you all the time. This is my partner by the way, Stuart.

Stuart Beard 22:38

Hello.

Rebecca Toal 22:40

Can't remember when the last time was like two years ago, maybe?

Stuart Beard 22:43

Um I think it was a little bit more recent than that. You haven't been doing the podcast for two years?

Rebecca Toal 22:50

Yes, I have!

Stuart Beard 22:51

What? Nooo.

Rebecca Toal 22:53

Yeah! So you're a tuba player. True or False?

Stuart Beard 22:59

True.

Rebecca Toal 23:00

Correct. Yeah, it's been a while since we chatted on the pod and therefore a lot has happened in your tuba life and your, and your other life.

Stuart Beard 23:11

My other life?

Rebecca Toal 23:12

Not that they're different lives.

Stuart Beard 23:15

Sounds like I've got five families.

Rebecca Toal 23:17

Yeah! Your other family. So you recently-ish had an audition. And I'd be interested to hear like, how you found getting your mojo back after an audition because I find it so hard to get back to practice. It's been a little while for you now.

Stuart Beard 23:36

Yeah. So here's a secret. I've been thinking about this question since I woke up from my nap because I had one of those...

Rebecca Toal 23:45

What, ten minutes ago?

Stuart Beard 23:46

Yeah, or like one of those post-nap epiphanies...

Rebecca Toal 23:49

Oh yeah?

Stuart Beard 23:50

Where something like kind of clicks in your brain and linking auditions and this very, like goal orientated mindset that I think a lot of musicians have, like, who've been to music college, everything's working towards an exam and then post-music college, you're auditioning and stuff like that. And then that works both ways as the kind of the pre-music college, the grade cycle of music education in which I was very much wrapped up in when I was learning tuba and piano and theory where ...

Rebecca Toal 24:31

And violin.

Stuart Beard 24:32

Oh, well, yes. The less said about that, the better. We're always looking towards that next goal to attain to try out for and I think the, the one benefit of playing the tuba is that especially in the UK, you don't have that audition mindset that there's constantly jobs to be auditioning for, like the, the last tuba audition in the UK was for the LSO back in 2016, I think? Which is a long time ago. And I think the last time I saw ... not I saw you. Last time I spoke on the pod, I was preparing for an audition in Cologne.

Rebecca Toal 25:21

Oh yeah!

Stuart Beard 25:23

I think it's all coming back to me now.

Rebecca Toal 25:25

It's coming back to me as well!

Stuart Beard 25:27

And I think I replaced the sensation after that audition and it not being successful with the next goal of I could see right around the corner this, these other couple of auditions, actually in the UK that I can focus my energies on and that was kind of what got me out of my ... 'slump', maybe the wrong word for it. But like...

Rebecca Toal 25:54

Before you got into a slump, I guess.

Stuart Beard 25:56

Yeah. Whereas now it feels there's not less to look forward to but I have to think about different things.

Rebecca Toal 26:07

Make your own stuff to look forward to.

Stuart Beard 26:10

Yeah, a bit. But I think I want to try and move... sorry. Jennie is trying to pull a really big stick out of the bonfire. Not lit, I can assure everybody. And ...

Rebecca Toal 26:25

She's basically dismantling the bonfire.

Stuart Beard 26:26

Yes, piece by piece. I've always been like, goal-orientated, whether that's been like an audition or a paycheck, or XYZ, there's having the date in the diary to prep for has been always the thing that's kind of, I've thought is the thing that's gotten me out of the slump. But actually, it's the thing that's done the most work is always finding that thing that I enjoy doing...?

Rebecca Toal 26:59

Spending time with me.

Stuart Beard 27:00

Yeah!

Rebecca Toal 27:01

Owh, I was being sarcastic.

Stuart Beard 27:02

No, vut like, finding the things in your playing that bit more enjoyable to do and when practice can feel mundane, that's, that's really hard to do, so I haven't figured it out yet. Don't worry, ...like don't...

Rebecca Toal 27:21

No answers here.

Stuart Beard 27:22

Please...Yeah, please, nobody listening, think I'm ...

Rebecca Toal 27:25

You've sorted it.

Stuart Beard 27:25

I've sorted it out and I'm giving advice because ...

Rebecca Toal 27:29

He's still a hot mess.

Stuart Beard 27:30

Oh, yes, baby. Just like, just try to take it like one day, one week at a time. And sometimes it works.

Rebecca Toal 27:40

That's all that matters.

Stuart Beard 27:40

Sometimes it doesn't. But yeah.

Rebecca Toal 27:43

And then like in terms of, because you're doing quite a lot of different types of playing at the moment. Don't know if you'd be happy to go into the different types of playing that you're doing but I find it can be quite hard to change hats.

Stuart Beard 27:58

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 27:58

Like, how are you managing to like, spin those plates?

Stuart Beard 28:04

Compared to you, talking to Rebecca...

Stuart Beard 28:09

...It doesn't feel so much as changing hats so much, because it's all the different kind of different things I'm doing, they all fall under the category of tuba for me where like ... whereas, I look at your day to day and everything is so like, different, like going from trumpet to counselling, even to teaching like, I don't really teach for ... personal disclosure like I, I find it very stressful because I ... that was probably the one thing I was always felt most impostor-ish about of like, "how can I distil this information when I don't think I've figured it out yet either?" And I'm kind of blindly ...

Rebecca Toal 28:09

That's me!

Rebecca Toal 28:59

Welcome to teaching.

Stuart Beard 29:02

Blindly...blindly. Bleurgh.

Rebecca Toal 29:02

Blindly flindly.

Stuart Beard 29:02

Blindly flindly... blindly following my own path through the woods that I can't necessarily put into words. I think it's also because I think I don't practice very well.

Rebecca Toal 29:19

I don't think that makes ... I mean, I think you might do as much better than I do. But I don't think for me, like ...oh god...

Stuart Beard 29:26

Sorry, we had a near coffee catastrophe.

Rebecca Toal 29:29

With a dog. Yeah, I was gonna be like "I don't think your like your practice should stop you from teaching, but also, it's not you don't want to teach so it's not like you want to be like you should teach. It's just you're making excuses. But if you don't want to teach like that is a powerful enough statement in itself.

Stuart Beard 29:48

But going back to the hats thing, I think because I'm, I'm running the same internal programme of 'I turn up to work, and there's something different to play', and yeah, I might play it slightly differently depending on the orchestra I'm in or like, whether it's chamber music, whether it's been recorded or not it's...

Rebecca Toal 30:10

What about like oompah music to then like really pearly stuff. That's a huge difference.

Stuart Beard 30:17

Umm. I think it's all like it's also about finding what you find fun about, like, different kinds of music. It's like doing kind of pop covers... I love like, big 80s, 90s bangers.

Rebecca Toal 30:38

They are you in a nutshell.

Stuart Beard 30:39

Yeah, and I don't think that will ever change. So there's that core enjoyment of that music comes from somewhere different to the reason why I really love Brahms.

Rebecca Toal 30:54

Do you love Brahms?!

Stuart Beard 30:55

I quite like Brahms, no... I ...

Rebecca Toal 30:56

I've never heard you talk about him before.

Stuart Beard 30:59

Okay, maybe like replace Brahms with...

Rebecca Toal 31:03

Stockhausen.

Stuart Beard 31:03

Yeah. Something that seems a little bit more on brand.

Rebecca Toal 31:07

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 31:08

Those kind of core like ... that core love for those different kinds of musics, they aren't mutually exclusive. And they can ... or they can be ... it's ... music is something so deep and powerful for so many people. Oh.

Rebecca Toal 31:28

I'm interested in what you find to be the hardest thing about being a musician is right now.

Stuart Beard 31:35

What's the hardest thing about being a musician at the moment.

Rebecca Toal 31:38

For you.

Stuart Beard 31:39

Oh, for me?

Rebecca Toal 31:39

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 31:42

I think for me, it's this being in a freelance world and not quite knowing exactly where, where the money is going to come in from down the line.

Rebecca Toal 31:55

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 31:56

Like, especially having come from like quite a quiet period where it's like lots of prep work and lots of doing lots of things, looking forward to commitments, it's always hard on those days to feel like, "ah you're still doing your job." You're not sat at home on that day ...

Rebecca Toal 32:20

Playing Playstation.

Stuart Beard 32:21

Or yeah, like doing the things that make you you, because you can't do them on the other days when you're at work, because of travelling and XYZ.

Rebecca Toal 32:29

I think it's even more in our faces now that we live with two non-musicians.

Stuart Beard 32:33

Yeah!

Rebecca Toal 32:34

I feel like you know, my brother goes to work in the morning and then I'm at home like, "argh, I feel like I just ... I'm not working." And I forget to take into account that ...

Stuart Beard 32:43

Work looks different.

Rebecca Toal 32:44

Work looks different and also like the days that I am working, the hours are usually massive, like being out all day or like going to Huddersfield like we did last week, all these kinds of things. Just because on one day you're not at work doesn't mean that you're no longer a musician.

Stuart Beard 33:01

Yeah, so when we last chatted, we lived with two fantastic musicians.

Rebecca Toal 33:08

One fantastic ... No I'm joking...

Stuart Beard 33:11

Piotr was great! Like, two of the most lovely musicians that we've both had the pleasure of living with, who both now have jobs in Copenhagen. Shout out to Julia and Piotr.

Rebecca Toal 33:28

Ledge! ...s... Ledges.

Stuart Beard 33:30

And, it's like, that was as well during like pandemic as well, where I wouldn't be lying when saying like, there's definitely feelings of like claustrophobia and like, wanting to...

Rebecca Toal 33:45

Didn't feel like I was doing enough practice in comparison.

Stuart Beard 33:47

Yeah. And this hyper intense, but hyper anxious space whereas now it's ... we're living with two non-musicians, your brother and his partner, and they both have different schedules to each other as well so we're kind of back to having like a real millieu ... how do you say that word?

Rebecca Toal 34:15

You mean a melange?

Stuart Beard 34:16

No, I don't mean melange.

Rebecca Toal 34:18

Mellieu.

Stuart Beard 34:20

Mellieu.

Rebecca Toal 34:21

We'll go with that.

Stuart Beard 34:23

All the French people out there, don't at me.

Rebecca Toal 34:25

I don't think we have any French listeners. This is when we get all the...

Stuart Beard 34:33

Umm...no Jennie. Ooh!

Rebecca Toal 34:33

Oh! Jennie!

Stuart Beard 34:38

Do you want to be on the podcast?

Rebecca Toal 34:42

Can probably smell her breath from there.

Stuart Beard 34:45

I'm trying to think what the...

Rebecca Toal 34:46

We were talking about living with Alex and Pritika.

Stuart Beard 34:49

Oh, yeah.

Rebecca Toal 34:50

You mean what the question was?

Stuart Beard 34:51

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 34:51

It was like what was the hardest thing about being a musician for you right now?

Stuart Beard 34:55

Oh, but we kind of like subtly moved on from there.

Rebecca Toal 34:57

Well then I was going to ask like what's the easiest thing for you about being a musician right now.

Stuart Beard 35:08

[pauses, laughs]

Rebecca Toal 35:09

I couldn't think of an answer for myself so I was like, "well, I'll ask Stuart and he'll definitely have an answer."

Stuart Beard 35:14

What ... what's the easiest thing, or the best thing?

Rebecca Toal 35:16

Either.

Stuart Beard 35:17

Umm.

Rebecca Toal 35:18

I guess you could argue that just because it's the best thing doesn't mean it's easy.

Stuart Beard 35:24

No, that's true. What's the easiest thing about being a musician? Ah, again, I don't want it to sound really like up myself but I think the easiest thing is like...

Rebecca Toal 35:37

Playing the tuba. Imagine if you said that!

Stuart Beard 35:41

Famously! Famously the easiest instrument.

Rebecca Toal 35:44

Imagine!

Stuart Beard 35:45

No, I think the easiest thing is like, knowing that I love it.

Rebecca Toal 35:49

Aww! What a wholesome answer.

Stuart Beard 35:53

Yeah. And I think about ... I think about this quite a lot and especially now that like, back living with non-musicians, as well, and like, thinking about people who work 9-5 in office jobs, and I would sense there's a varying degree of people who really love their jobs versus people who are fine with them and want the paycheck and it allows them enjoyment in the rest of their life.

Rebecca Toal 36:22

What about people that hate their jobs? Gotta represent them as well.

Stuart Beard 36:27

I feel like those people come in... I was trying to say that in a nice way.

Rebecca Toal 36:30

It's okay to hate your job.

Stuart Beard 36:31

Yeah. But yeah, I think the easiest thing is knowing that I do love it. And even in those moments who like, low motivation, I know that it will come back and the love never dies. That's Phantom of the Opera isn't it?

Rebecca Toal 36:53

Number 2, yeah. Bloody hell. That was a disappointing end to that answer.

Stuart Beard 37:00

Can we cut that one out?

Rebecca Toal 37:01

I'm gonna keep it in.

Stuart Beard 37:02

No!! No.

Rebecca Toal 37:06

Talking of things that...

Stuart Beard 37:07

Can I just rewind? Please! No!

Rebecca Toal 37:10

Talking of things you might wanna cut out, let's talk about being a musician couple.

Stuart Beard 37:17

Oh, yeah.

Rebecca Toal 37:19

Oh, yeah.

Stuart Beard 37:19

Oh, yeah.

Rebecca Toal 37:21

How is it?

Stuart Beard 37:23

Yeah, it's fine.

Rebecca Toal 37:24

Okay, thanks for coming to our show, like this has been ...

Stuart Beard 37:28

Um.

Rebecca Toal 37:29

Long silence.

Stuart Beard 37:32

We can cut the silences shorter. For context, I was silent for five minutes there.

Rebecca Toal 37:39

Yeah! It was half an hour, and we just looked into each other's eyes and went, "oh no."

Stuart Beard 37:46

It's not without its challenges I think, and it's, it's very easy to feel like, because like we both work as freelancers...What?

Rebecca Toal 37:59

Careful of the stinging nettle.

Stuart Beard 38:01

It's not a stinging nettle.

Rebecca Toal 38:02

Yeah, it is! Just got stung by it.

Stuart Beard 38:05

Aww did you?

Rebecca Toal 38:05

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 38:06

Aww, you okay?

Rebecca Toal 38:07

Yeah. Just be careful, babe.

Stuart Beard 38:09

Aww cheers babe.

Rebecca Toal 38:11

And that's why we're in a couple

Stuart Beard 38:13

Always looking out for each other.

Rebecca Toal 38:14

From the stinging nettles that you tell me aren't stinging nettles.

Stuart Beard 38:17

Yeah, hashtag gaslighting.

Rebecca Toal 38:22

Okay.

Stuart Beard 38:23

Glad you got that on tape.

Rebecca Toal 38:24

Moooving on.

Stuart Beard 38:27

Yeah, I think it's easy to, as we both work freelance, and like, presenting of opportunities... It's not really in our control. There is a lot of chance, luck...

Rebecca Toal 38:43

Randomness.

Stuart Beard 38:44

...randomness, baked in to...

Rebecca Toal 38:46

The pie of life.

Stuart Beard 38:47

...into the pie of ... you've still got to be good.

Rebecca Toal 38:53

As a musician or as a girlfriend?

Stuart Beard 38:57

Musician. So when it's like, being supportive of opportunities that, yeah, maybe there's like a part of me or a part of you that's like, "ah, like, I wish I could be doing something like that." I think there's that direct link to knowing how good that opportunity is. Or like...

Rebecca Toal 39:18

Like, knowing the people that are going to be on it. Like it's all the same work circles and social circles.

Stuart Beard 39:23

Yeah. And feeling like you're not missing out by not being called. Yeah, I think I I can feel a little bit guilty sometimes. Like, if I get asked to do some work that I know, would like, interest you.

Rebecca Toal 39:42

And like we haven't really done much work together at all.

Stuart Beard 39:47

No.

Rebecca Toal 39:48

Feels really bizarre. Like, I know the music world is very small, but we still have done maybe two gigs together? Apart from quintet stuff.

Stuart Beard 39:57

But even then, like it's...

Rebecca Toal 39:58

Yeah, maybe four in total.

Stuart Beard 40:00

Not a huge amount and ...

Rebecca Toal 40:02

It's interesting, isn't it? Like because it's kind of ... you feel like you can directly compare yourself to somebody because you know their day to day and like ... I don't know ... I often find when comparing myself to others that aren't you that I'm like, "Well, you know, I don't know what else they've been up. Like this...", I can almost justify, like, "Oh, they got this amazing gig, but maybe it's their first thing in six months or whatever." Like, I just don't know the backstory.

Stuart Beard 40:25

Whereas we know each other's...

Rebecca Toal 40:27

I know everything.

Stuart Beard 40:28

My whole diary.

Rebecca Toal 40:29

Yeah. And like, where... like how you got the gig and that you've done this before, or like, blah, blah, blah... So it can be really difficult not to get a bit jealous I think. Or a bit sad, when things aren't ... like when one of us is busy, and the other one isn't and vice versa.

Stuart Beard 40:45

Yeah. I think, for me, it's also like, if I'm feeling a bit complain-y or something, it's hard to not feel like ... that feeling of, "well, at least you've got that, at least you're going to work that day," or...

Rebecca Toal 41:00

"Yeah, Becca's got nothing ever."

Stuart Beard 41:02

No!

Rebecca Toal 41:02

No, I'm joking. No, I know what you mean though.. And often, you know, we might go a few weeks where we're kind of ... what's it? Passing ships in the night?

Stuart Beard 41:14

Ships passing in the night, yeah.

Rebecca Toal 41:16

Or passing ships. Could be an adjective.

Stuart Beard 41:18

Yeah, you're just stood still in the middle of the ocean.

Rebecca Toal 41:22

No, I meant like, the ships are passing, like passing ships. Anyway. Yeah, like, we might not actually have any quality time together. Because our schedules have been so random, or like, you know, we're thinking about booking a holiday, but I think both of us are a little bit worried about, "oh, what if work comes in?" And if work comes in for one of us, then does that mean the holiday's cancelled? Or like...

Stuart Beard 41:46

I think we're probably gonna get at-ed by a lot of people just being like, "just book the time off." Just book the time off.

Rebecca Toal 41:51

I know! This is what people say all the time. And like, I've had this conversation with so many people, but I think especially when I've only got like nine pounds on my account or something, I'm like, "yes. But I've got to take the work", you know, like, I still feel very dependent on taking any work that comes my way. Yeah.

Stuart Beard 42:09

It's that having a holiday on the horizon that never comes.

Rebecca Toal 42:13

But like, we are in a place where, you know, we don't have kids, for instance, like that is ... imagine if we booked a holiday with kids and then we're like, "sorry, kids who go to go and play in some town somewhere. Second trum-...", they're going to be like, "that's not even worth the money!" Or, I don't know, would it be worse if one of us wasn't a musician, and the other one kept kind of having to pull out of holidays because they got work?

Stuart Beard 42:40

I think, I think that probably would be maybe worse?

Stuart Beard 42:47

What have you been listening to? On my Spotify, or on your podcasts?

Rebecca Toal 42:52

On my podcasts? I've been listening to Life of Bi's recent episode on asexuality. It's been very interesting. I hadn't realised how much of a spectrum of a-... like I just always assumed that asexuality was like, you just don't, you just don't want sex or don't have sex. But it's such a spectrum, like, some people are asexual but still have sex. There's like a spectrum of like you're repulsed to sex versus indifferent to sex and sex favourable. There's a whole thing. And like...

Stuart Beard 43:24

I really want to listen to this. And like, this might be like, my naive brain or my ignorance, but like, I've come across people using the term like greysexual.

Rebecca Toal 43:35

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 43:36

Whi-... is that ... that's part of asexuality?

Rebecca Toal 43:39

It's part of the spectrum and so as demisexual and they're different things apparently, but I'm not quite sure what the difference is between greysexual and demisexual. So I've been listening to that. I've recently written an article about opera podcasts, having not listened to any podcasts about opera ever. And there was one that I found called Every Voice with Terence McKnight, which was just amazing, like, really talking about like, the nitty gritty, problematic stuff to do with opera. And like, so well-produced, like, made me really be like, "Whoa, this must have taken months to make just one episode," especially compared to our episodes where it's just talking and then you know, intro and outro like, this is really like a piece of art every episode.

Stuart Beard 44:23

In terms of production values, like what would you list as like the core differences?

Rebecca Toal 44:30

Well, there's like clips of music all the way throughout and then there's like different interviews with different people and like, I don't know like an overarching ... arching ... overarching narrative and like, the episode's only like 20 minutes long, but it feels like you learned so much in 20 minutes. There is absolutely no waffle.

Stuart Beard 44:48

Just like high concentrated information.

Rebecca Toal 44:50

Oh my god. It's amazing. Like would totally recommend that. I also came across a very bizarre podcast, called Unnatural Act of Opera which I am obsessed with like, it's from 2000 and.... No, the podcast app is saying 19-...Oh, no, that's not ... that's 1962 is the recording. I don't think they had podcasts then. 2000 and like five I think it started? But it's like a byproduct of this underground queer magazine that was started to be distributed in the Met opera like gentleman's toilets. Because that was like, you know, where there's lots of gay men at the opera say [inaudible]... like, the Met opera were really not happy with this, obviously, so like, this journalist out there was creating the magazine. And then he went on and like, created this podcast as a drag persona. So it's basically just like, huge long recordings of like entire acts of opera, but like bookended with, like, hilarious, just like drag persona, like monologues.

Stuart Beard 45:55

Yes!

Rebecca Toal 45:55

Like, a lot of it is just about, like, bitching about the opera world, and like, the gossip of the day. But it's just so fun! Just sat there like "I wish I was listening to this in 2005." I mean, I wouldn't have understood like anything. What are you listening to at the moment?

Stuart Beard 46:12

Ooh, I have started listening to my Dad Wrote A Porno.

Rebecca Toal 46:19

Recommended by me.

Stuart Beard 46:20

Argh. Fantastic. I've absolutely boshed through it.

Rebecca Toal 46:25

You're treating it as a to-do.

Stuart Beard 46:27

Oh, yes.

Rebecca Toal 46:27

I've never seen you so like, quote unquote, productive. Ticking those episodes off the list.

Stuart Beard 46:33

Just like, I don't think I've listened to something quite as absurd.

Rebecca Toal 46:38

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 46:39

And it just tickles me pink every time.

Rebecca Toal 46:41

It makes me so happy that, like it's quite... not an old, old podcast, but like, you know...

Stuart Beard 46:46

It's finished now.

Rebecca Toal 46:47

It's finished, like it was a big thing a while ago. And it makes me so happy that people are still discovering it and getting so much joy out of it. I mean, maybe not joy maybe like confusion. But ...

Stuart Beard 47:00

Bewilderment.

Rebecca Toal 47:01

Bewilderment, hilarity. So good. Yeah, I've never seen you like cringe so hard whilst driving a car.

Stuart Beard 47:08

It's dangerous. Not sure I've been ... what I've...

Rebecca Toal 47:15

Tuba videos.

Stuart Beard 47:16

Oh no, don't.

Rebecca Toal 47:17

You did a 'the truth about quarter tones' video. You didn't do it, sorry. You were listening to it.

Stuart Beard 47:21

I was listening to it.

Rebecca Toal 47:22

I can imagine you having a YouTube channel about like 'the truth about tubaphonics.'

Stuart Beard 47:27

Oh no!

Rebecca Toal 47:29

The truth about Fnugg.

Stuart Beard 47:31

The fact that you think that that is something that fits my like MO an artist...

Rebecca Toal 47:37

Not as an artist.

Stuart Beard 47:38

Very worrying.

Rebecca Toal 47:39

Not as an artist, as a person.

Stuart Beard 47:41

It was a interesting video about quartertonal harmony, like...

Rebecca Toal 47:46

It really ... I feel like it combined your love of maths and music.

Stuart Beard 47:50

Yeah, I think so.

Rebecca Toal 47:52

And that's why I won't be watching it.

Stuart Beard 47:55

Well, can I just quickly go back and get my phone.

Rebecca Toal 47:57

Well why don't we walk over there together?

Stuart Beard 47:59

Yeah.

Rebecca Toal 48:00

And whilst like before we get there ... like ... ohhh. Your knees and your fart.

Stuart Beard 48:06

Oh no!

Rebecca Toal 48:07

What are you looking forward to in the next few weeks? Oh, we could do a win of the week!

Stuart Beard 48:11

Ah! Win of the week!

Rebecca Toal 48:12

Win of the week!

Stuart Beard 48:13

I think win of the week is just being in Reading like ... and dog-sitting and like ...

Rebecca Toal 48:21

What's winning-ful about it?

Stuart Beard 48:23

It's just like that feeling of managing like, to get away a bit.

Rebecca Toal 48:29

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 48:29

And like, I'm still practising and all that kind of stuff, so it doesn't feel like it's a holiday.

Rebecca Toal 48:35

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 48:35

But it's nice to have a bit more open space and like...

Rebecca Toal 48:41

Cups of tea.

Stuart Beard 48:42

Yeah, lots of cups of tea like, whenever I come home, like whether my parents are here or not, it's unbelievable the amount of tea that I drink.

Rebecca Toal 48:54

No water, only tea.

Stuart Beard 48:55

Yeah, no... Ooh, acoustic change.

Rebecca Toal 48:58

Ooh. Welcome.

Stuart Beard 49:00

So we're in the kitchen now. Yeah, every kind of break is filled with ...

Rebecca Toal 49:07

Sponsored by tea.

Stuart Beard 49:09

Sponsored by Clippers original.

Rebecca Toal 49:16

So what have you been listening to?

Stuart Beard 49:18

Hold on.

Rebecca Toal 49:20

I have!

Stuart Beard 49:24

An EP by Miner. Headwaters.

Rebecca Toal 49:28

Oh, yeah. [sings]

Stuart Beard 49:30

Like 'tomorrow,' the last track, is ...

Rebecca Toal 49:37

[singing]

Stuart Beard 49:37

...from Becca's vocal rendition, you can tell, is just a really lovely track but the whole ... the rest of the album is beautiful. I've been listening to my Liked Songs a lot.

Rebecca Toal 49:38

Yeah.

Stuart Beard 49:40

A couple of sadboi favourites at the moment.

Rebecca Toal 49:55

You're a sadboi.

Stuart Beard 49:55

Oh, is the Caroline Shaw a version of "Lay All your Love on Me".

Rebecca Toal 50:02

[singing]

Stuart Beard 50:02

"Hot Mess" by Dodie.

Rebecca Toal 50:08

[singing]

Stuart Beard 50:11

I'm sure that comes across really well on the podcast. "Pancakes for Dinner" by Lizzie MacAlpine.

Rebecca Toal 50:19

[singing]

Stuart Beard 50:20

And "To the Bone" by Sammy Copley. Yeah, been really enjoying ...

Rebecca Toal 50:26

Being a sad boi summer.

Stuart Beard 50:27

Yeah, being a sad boy.

Rebecca Toal 50:30

Well...

Stuart Beard 50:30

It's like, being really in touch with my emotional side.

Rebecca Toal 50:33

But only the sad ones.

Stuart Beard 50:34

Oh, yeah, like no happy emotions here.

Rebecca Toal 50:39

Anywayyy, it's been a joy to have you on the radio/pod.

Stuart Beard 50:43

Cheers mate.

Rebecca Toal 50:44

Because I own the whole radio.

Stuart Beard 50:47

The radio with a capital T.

Rebecca Toal 50:50

And a couple of

Rebecca Toal 50:50

R-.... Oh!

Stuart Beard 50:50

I think that's a sign.

Stuart Beard 50:55

Goodbye.

Rebecca Toal 50:55

Oh dear, it's time to go! Goodbye!

Rebecca Toal 50:57

... and see you the next second Monday of next month, and also on the main feed.

Rebecca Toal 51:05

So in true chaotic style, I didn't know how long we've been recording for and we still had 10 minutes more of our slot left. So I thought it'd be a great opportunity to tell you a little bit more about how you can support the podcast and also future endeavours. So we currently ... Well, we figured out recently that it costs about 13 grand for us to run the podcast every year. Although to be fair, that was with one day of wages for me and Hattie. So it's quite a lot of money, obviously, so we've been running a Crowdfunder - which we'll link in our show notes - to help with costs. We have a lot of subscription costs and editing costs and we really do believe that having these conversations is making a change in the industry, however slowly, however, small those changes may feel. So we do feel that it's kind of vital to keep it going, without trying to toot our own horns. So we have our Crowdfunder, we also have a Patreon that you can join for three pounds a month. We have a monthly kind of 'off the record' episode on there, we're also thinking about doing some monthly reflection/journaling prompts. We also have discounts for our upcoming merchandise for our patrons. It would mean a lot if you could join our community and also just means that our patrons are kind of paying for people that aren't able to pay to keep supporting the podcast. It's kind of a 'pay it forward' system. We also have a Buy Me a Kofi website if you feel like just doing a one off small donation. Basically, any of these are really, really appreciated. And we are always looking for sponsors to help us with ongoing costs. If that sounds like something you'd like to be a part of, or, yeah, if we could create like a partnership going forward and you feel like maybe being a sponsor would be something you'd be interested in, just get in touch.

Rebecca Toal 53:12

In terms of future endeavours, I thought I'd do a little shout out because I am looking into doing an episode about beta blockers. I know that a lot of classical musicians use them and it's very under wraps. It's kept kind of ... swept under the carpet, because people ... well for a host of different reasons, but I think people feel ashamed that they have to rely on something to perform. I think as artists were expected to experience all the crazy emotions, the highs and lows, and actually taking something that either numbs those emotions or makes it a little bit more manageable, I think, yeah, people are ashamed of it. There's also a big problem that people don't necessarily get their own prescriptions for them and take other people's medication, which as a ... it's a heart medication, you know, this is pretty dangerous stuff. So if you know anybody, if you are somebody that's taken beta blockers, that ... it would be really helpful if you feel like you'd be interested in being interviewed for the episode that we're going to produce.

Rebecca Toal 54:27

Yeah, I've taken beta blockers before. I actually was prescribed them for a bout of just general anxiety that I was feeling. And I thought, "well, you know, I'm taking them anyway when I'm anxious, and when am I more anxious than when I'm performing?" So I tried it a few times. And to be honest, they did help,

I think partly because I was using it for ... the first time I use them was when I went up to Manchester for a professional orchestral gig. I was experiencing quite a lot of travel anxiety at the time. So it felt like it wasn't just the performance anxiety that I was worried about, it was just general social anxiety, travel anxiety, being away from home not having my usual coping mechanisms available. So in that situation, it did help. But then I felt a very deep fear of becoming dependent on them. I think, when you have experienced coping mechanisms from therapy or anything like that, that, you know, is a healthy coping mechanism ... I ... Yeah, it's hard for me to separate out when something becomes a bit of a crutch and when it's just a healthy coping mechanism, and I still don't know where the threshold is between them. But I knew that, you know, a chemical dependency would probably go under the heading of 'a crutch'. So I haven't taken any since then, I don't think, although because of just having some recent, like, just well, not recent, all of my audition experiences have just been terrifying and really traumatic, and I, yeah, definitely would consider taking them for future auditions just because I know that my performance anxiety is getting in the way of my progress as a musician, like career progress. And it really sucks to think that, yeah, anxiety in auditions, mostly, is really holding me back from performances that well, yeah, like if I got onto the extras list for an orchestra, I know that in the actual performance, my anxiety would be a lot less than in an audition situation. So it feels like the audition is a gate between me and actually performing well. And I just can't get through that gate, no matter how many times I try doing auditions it ... I guess it is getting better slightly, but I still never play to a level where I'm happy. And I know that part of that is just perfectionistic tendencies but I also still do get the shakes, I get dry mouth in most auditions that I do. And I thought that other people had this all the time, but actually talking to the people that get through the first round or get to a trial situation in an audition, they don't have these experiences. Yes, they might not always play how they'd really wanted to, but they don't get the extreme anxiety that I'm experiencing. So who knows? But yeah, that's my personal motivation for looking into beta blockers. I think there was a documentary a while back that I have yet to check out that was recommended to me. But yeah, if you know anybody ... it doesn't just have to be from classical music as well. Like this is widespread across all music. I mean, even if you're not music-related I guess, like any performers that take beta blockers for any type of performance, I would be really really grateful for you to get in touch. It can be anonymous, doesn't have to be a direct recording in the episode, could just be a quote anonymized but also would be great to hear some other people's voices on the episode other than mine. I do worry sometimes that you know, an hour of me talking basically is quite a lot especially when I've got my hay fever, my little noz ... You can hear it going there. All right, I'm gonna sign off now. But thank you so much for listening and I'll hand over back to you Rebecca and Stuart in the garden to sign off.

Rebecca Toal 59:20

This has been Things Musicians Don't Talk About with me, your host, Rebecca Toal and also my guest... guest? Host/guest? Stuart Beard. And Jennie, Freebie, Matty and Morag the dogs!

Stuart Beard 59:36

Cheers mate.

Rebecca Toal 59:36

Alright bye!

Stuart Beard 59:38

Bye!

Rebecca Toal 59:46

Music was composed by Katy Erlich. Editing was done by me, Rebecca Toal. This has been an episode for Voices Radio. If you'd like to follow us on any of the social media, we are @tmdtapodcast on all of them. And our email address is thingsmusiciansdonttalkabout@gmail.com. See you next time.