

Clíodhan Ryan

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felt, people, life, experience, conversations, podcast, sharing, orchestra, ireland, musicians, busy, create, panic disorder, bittersweet symphony, concert, incredible, dublin, thought, chamber orchestra, completely

SPEAKERS

Clíodhna Ryan, Rebecca Toal, Hattie Butterworth

H Hattie Butterworth 00:03
Hello and welcome to Things Musicians Don't Talk About with your hosts Hattie Butterworth

R Rebecca Toal 00:08
And me Rebecca Toal.

H Hattie Butterworth 00:10
Within our vibrant musical world, it can often feel that the struggles and humanity of musicians is lost and restricted.

R Rebecca Toal 00:18
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.

H Hattie Butterworth 00:28
No topic will be out of bounds as we're committed to raising awareness for all varieties of struggle.

R Rebecca Toal 00:34
So join me, Hattie, and guests as we attempt to bring an end to stigma by uncovering the

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

H Hattie Butterworth 00:48

Hello and welcome to Things Musicians Don't Talk About, coming to you this week with an awesome episode with the wonderful violinist Clíodhna Ryan, who is a violinist in the Irish Chamber Orchestra, and is just the most fantastic person. She also runs the podcast Bittersweet Symphony which ... hold in your mind and make sure that you go and check it out after this episode, because it's just so, so great. It's basically reflections on the pandemic, with other musicians. And just asking questions about that time. It's very beautiful, very vulnerable. And it's just such an important witness to that point in our lives and the difficulties that people experience and also what they learned through that time. So in this episode, we are thrilled to be talking to Clíodhna about her experiences as a freelancer, as well as moving on to talking about more difficult elements to Clíodhna's life, such as her experience with panic disorder, which is one of the most debilitating and terrifying disorders possible. And we'll also talk about an accident she went through last year, and how this has impacted her playing and mental health. But she's just the most wonderful, life-giving person and I've been thinking about this episode an awful lot, and especially today, actually, when I had to advocate for my mental health in a work setting. And I was thinking about Clíodhna and yeah, her bravery to communicate her struggle. Anyway, we are thrilled to share this episode with you and thank Clíodhna from the bottom of our hearts for sharing her beautiful journey with us. And please go and check out Bittersweet Symphony on all podcast platforms and also on social media after this episode. Clíodhna, it's so lovely to have you today. How are you doing?

C Clíodhna Ryan 03:05

I'm doing good, thank you very much. But ... getting used to playing again and working again and ...

R Rebecca Toal 03:14

It's exhausting!

C Clíodhna Ryan 03:17

Well, it's ... I'm juggling now, and juggling more than ever before. So I'm having to get accomplished at that all over again as well.

H Hattie Butterworth 03:26

That's exactly what Rebecca said before you joined us. She was like "I'm doing too much."

C Clíodhna Ryan 03:30

Yeah, I know!

H

Hattie Butterworth 03:32

"I don't know... I don't know how to stop!"

R

Rebecca Toal 03:35

Because there's always that point where you gotta like ... because you take on too much, because you're like, "well, I need to take on this, whatever." And then there's always a point where you have to let somebody down. And you know it's coming, because you know you've taken on too much. And it sucks. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. Yeah. Yeah, we first came across you because of your awesome podcast, Bittersweet Symphony. But just for our listeners who may or may not know you, do you want to just give a brief overview of you, your life and then obviously, we'll delve deeper into it, but just bring us up to speed on who you are and how you got there.

C

Clíodhna Ryan 04:10

Sure. I come from the border between the north and south of Ireland. So at the time when I was growing up, yeah, it was like interesting times ... let's just say that much. And I began playing music, probably when I was about five or something like that. And ... and it was always something really important to me, I think as a young person, in order to kind of ... I think I used to ... I remember often feeling like overwhelmed with the world with how incredible it was with how beautiful it was. And music really helped me find a place for those thoughts and those feelings. And also I absolutely loved literature and poetry always from when I was very, very young, and art and theatre. Erm, I ... I also loved school and all that kind of stuff. But anyway, I went to London when I was 18 to study, and I ended up staying there for 18 years. I did a couple of years in America. I went, I went to the Royal Academy and Guildhall and I did a couple of years in the States as well, kind of in the middle of my time at the Academy. And my life in London ... I loved it, but it felt like, it felt like I was in a long-term relationship and I was really slowly kind of having longer periods of questioning, like why I was in this relationship. I felt like full of like, life was full of like, promise and hope, but I started wondering, was it a false promise? And I, you know, scheduling coffee with friends that also had really busy musicians' lives, you know, it would take six weeks to arrange to meet someone just for a coffee! Just like the simplest thing, you know? And I wondered, what would happen if all the time I spent just surviving could be wasted on just lolling about the place, or doing creative things or whatever. Um, I did a few long residencies supported by the Arts Council of Ireland in Banff in 2007 and 2008, I was there for full kind of winter residencies from January till April. And it really kind of solidified that idea that possibly London wasn't the place for me anymore to try something different. I mean, my musical life was really busy and really satisfying and really rewarding. I was a member of the Irish Chamber Orchestra, so I was travelling back to Ireland for amazing projects with incredible artistic directors, and the work always felt different and challenging, and interesting and exciting. And then I was freelancing, you know, in the various orchestras in London, you know, Newcastle, you know, the usual schlepping about the place and doing contemporary music as well, quite a lot, which I really love. Because it's a different relationship with your instrument and it's very exploratory and creative I find and challenging also,

mentally. And, yeah, I mean, I was very sa-... I had a very busy string trio for many years as well, so we were, you know, had a busy performing schedule with that, too. But it was just all the other stuff. You know? The 'being a person' stuff. I didn't feel connected with the environment or nature anymore. And those moments of magic and flow and spontaneity that can happen in your life that are so beautiful, there wasn't much space for them. And then also, my ... there was very little diversity of people in my life, you know? I thought about people I knew from my little village. And like, there was more diversity in that group than there was in my life as a musician. Everyone was kind of around my age, everyone had a similar kind of educational background. 99.99% of people were white middle class, you know? And, and I wondered, I was asking myself questions about what that meant for me as a person and my experience and my relationship with the wider world, you know, so I left. I moved, I left London, I moved ... I did move to Dublin. But it didn't feel like I was moving home kind of thing. It was just like, "well, this is where I'll go", you know, it wasn't like "I want to move home to Ireland" or anything like that. It was just, "I don't want to live in London anymore." And I had had this idea for a music salon for a good few years, and I never ever would have been able to start it in London. I moved back to Ireland ... we were in the middle of like the most awful recession. And I was like, "okay, maybe I can make this happen here." You know... "I can create this beautiful experience and present classical music as ..." because, when I say 'classical music', for me that means everything from Baroque to experimental, contemporary, everything. Like I think that's a really broad term. And I kind of wanted to reclaim it. And I wanted to create intimate kind of visceral experiences for performers and audiences and break down boundaries and have beautiful, welcoming, convivial, open-hearted spaces. So I asked my friend to ... who I used to play music with a lot, to ... like if she'd be on board to do this thing with me. And so we started Kaleidoscope, then in 2008. And it was a lovely way to come back to Ireland. And I discovered an incredible community of musicians, and it very quickly became something that didn't belong to Kate and I anymore, but belonged to our community, and Dublin, and then the country. And yeah, since then, I suppose and since I've been living here, there's just feels like there's a breath and a kind of a space in my life for exploring lots of different things...Yeah.

H

Hattie Butterworth 11:21

And obviously, a big part of what you created eventually with the Bittersweet Symphony, is to do with, you know, finding this space and I suppose respecting musicians as humans and as complex people, but in that time, since moving from London back to Ireland find ... I don't know, this sense of like, space and time and just like lolling around as you ... I love that you say that, because it's so true. In London, there's so little time just to like loll around you know.

C

Clíodhna Ryan 11:55

Be creative?

H

Hattie Butterworth 11:56

Yeah. Did you find it was more difficult to do that than you expected? Did you find you were still very busy?



C Clíodhna Ryan 12:05

It's ... what are you busy doing? You know, I guess I would ask, when you ask me that question, that's, that's a question that pops up for me. Because busy, busy for yourself for, for creating something, or for doing a class that you really want to do ... busy doing that feels different to busy schlepping about the place to pay your rent, right?

R Rebecca Toal 12:33

Yeah.

C Clíodhna Ryan 12:33

I dunno. Definitely really busy, like Kaleidoscope was, you know, when we started it, we had no clue what we were doing and it was literally seven days a week for hours every day, and huge amounts of time spent on Arts Council Applications, and, you know, programming, curating and creating creative partnerships between different people and ... but it was sooo exciting and so much fun. And it was for us, you know, and it was for audiences. And it was for our friends and our colleagues and ... so that felt different to busy going to do a muddy field, and you're just like, going, "I hate my life! What am I doing?!" you know?!

R Rebecca Toal 13:21

And I'm getting like 20 quid for it.

C Clíodhna Ryan 13:23

Oh, God, and you end up dumped on a motorway somewhere on like near IKEA. And you have to try and figure out how to get home. And like,

H Hattie Butterworth 13:31

It's always near Ikea.

C Clíodhna Ryan 13:32

I don't know!

H Hattie Butterworth 13:36

That's so interesting.

C

Clodhna Ryan 13:37

Like it's, but I think it's like, I definitely was really, really, really busy. And actually, that kind of, you know, with the whole pandemic, that really ... like having that not-busyness was just amazing. And I think it's something that I've learned how to do .. that I hope I won't unlearn. I do think like we're probably conditioned to always try to be productive from really busy lives schooling and then fitting in practising and doing competitions and audit-... like all of that, like there's always something to be done right? And ...

R

Rebecca Toal 14:22

Everybody says take a lot of pride in being so busy but yeah, not the kind of busy for yourself, busy like "I've got so many gigs" or "fitting in all my teaching". Like as soon as you say, I don't know, "I spent all day yesterday planning this thing for me" or taking this class, people are like, "Oh, that's so nice that you have the time to do that." And it's like, "no, this is ... I'm still busy, but doing the right kind of busy for me. And ..." yeah, it's really interesting that you kind of recognised that difference in ... you can still be busy but doing things that are for you. Like you said.

C

Clodhna Ryan 14:58

Yeah. Like for me, in a way, like when I was thinking about doing the podcast, I said to myself, "D'you know what?" Like, well, I didn't know if I'd enjoy doing it, for starters. You know, I had to like find out if I'd enjoy the whole process like beginning to end. And it ended up that I absolutely loved all of it, every last bit of it. Except maybe the social media side of it. Umm, but umm sometimes I really love that as well, and sometimes it's like, "uurrrrgghhh!". Yeah, I mean, for me, it's a kind of a... it can be real extension of the storytelling, and I absolutely love that side of it. But sometimes it can feel like, "urgh God, I have to do this thing." But I said to myself, you know, and like creating the podcast, I was incredibly busy. But it was a hobby. I mean, I said to myself, "I've never had, I've never really invested serious time in a hobby. But this is like, this is something I really love. And I'm learning so many new skills, and like, I'm having a great time doing it." So don't like ... you know, to try and remind myself of that, sometimes, if I'm feeling like, if I start using language to myself, that's like, "I have to do this and I have to do that." It's like, "No, you don't have to do anything. You don't have to do anything. This is your life, you're making the decisions. You're in control here." And to stop ... like, if I start using language like that with myself, I try to catch it because there's, it'll just suck the joy out of everything, you know.

R

Rebecca Toal 15:30

It feels a bit overwhelming.

H

Hattie Butterworth 15:47

It never ends! Yeah.

C Clodhna Ryan 16:38

To recognise that I have choices, that I have autonomy. And I'm doing this because I adore it. And because I love it. And it's my choice. You know.

R Rebecca Toal 16:54

That's so empowering. And I think a lot of people see taking on extra projects, or like yeah, doing hobbies... I dunno, I feel like a lot of musicians and creatives try and turn that into another, like string to their bow. They're like, "Oh, that's so great that you're doing the podcast, like, where are you going to go with it?" And it's like, "it's my hobby, like, essentially, like it would be great..." Well, maybe that's a bad example, because we are kind of working on it. But ...

C Clodhna Ryan 17:16

Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 17:16

So many hobbies, people are like, "Oh, great. What are you going to do with that? Like, are you going to incorporate it with your music?" And it's like, "no! It's a hobby, like, it's not work! Leave me alone!"

H Hattie Butterworth 17:25

Let me be bad at it I'm bad at it.

C Clodhna Ryan 17:27

Yeah! Yeah, like, and so so many people have said to me, you know, I've got another kind of six conversations of the podcast to put out, and I just do like a schedule of every two weeks. Umm, for me, that works, because just that structure is supportive for me. I know you guys don't do a schedule, right?

R Rebecca Toal 17:48

It's a bit random, yeah.

C Clodhna Ryan 17:50

Yeah. And that works for you. And for me, like having that schedule...

R Rebecca Toal 17:53
Yeah.

C Clíodhna Ryan 17:54
...It's a rhythm, you know, that rhythm kind of helps me. And then so many people are like, "and then... and then what?" And I'm like, "Well, I don't know!" I mean, you know, again, you need that lolling about time, right? I mean, I, that ... the ending of this season - if it is one season, and if there'll be another, I don't know... That'll be in 12 weeks. And then I don't know, I don't know what I'll be thinking or feeling in 12 weeks. And maybe I'll want to just do something completely different for a few months. And then if something, if there's a seed, like you need space to, you need to ... like one of my interview guests, actually Katrina Frost, and it's like one of my favourite interviews. She said, you know, "you have to scatter seeds, like just scatter seeds and see what grows." But you have to do that bit of gardening, don't you? Like... You know, because...

R Rebecca Toal 18:47
And waiting.

C Clíodhna Ryan 18:48
And waiting! And nurturing and that comes with time.

H Hattie Butterworth 18:51
Things under the surface. Yeah, that people don't necessarily see or that isn't performative.

C Clíodhna Ryan 18:57
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 18:58
You know, but it's still doing things towards whatever. But I just love how, you know, when we spoke last week, you talked about how this podcast was ... you didn't even know if it was gonna be a podcast.

C Clíodhna Ryan 19:11
No!

....

H Hattie Butterworth 19:12

Yeah. I just think, "Wow, that is so free!" Like, to have these conversations just because you wanted the conversations.

R Rebecca Toal 19:19

Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 19:20

And I'd love you to talk to us about what were the conversations you needed to have with people, you know, what was this pull towards talking about in the recovery of the pandemic?

C Clíodhna Ryan 19:34

Well, I mean, for me, like language, and communication and talking always have been really, really important and really powerful. Um, I think, telling our stories, speaking our truth. Well, I mean, I guess I would say, telling my story, speaking my truth has always been very impactful for me and important. And I mean, I've had therapy for many years. I, yeah, yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 20:14

Woooo!

C Clíodhna Ryan 20:14

Rebecca's

R Rebecca Toal 20:14

Hype up therapy!

C Clíodhna Ryan 20:18

The impact of like, talking and communicating, but also the power of listening, and a holding space...It connects us as humans, I think with ourselves and with each other. And, and, you know, authenticity, authentic ... you know, courageous communication can can be really impactful, and I think can have the power to change your culture. And I guess ... there was a, I mean, I was very isolated during the pandemic. And from someone whose... I guess, the years

leading up to March 2020, my whole life was my work, really, I mean, I was playing, performing all the time. And I took it really seriously always prepared, always practised. And from that, and that sense of, I think, I also love the feeling of belonging, and community that my work gives me. And from being so ... because also, like, my freelance work here in Ireland, I feel very much like, like, a part of those orchestras. You know, which is really lovely, I don't feel ... you know, I never take that for granted. But I feel very much like, I'm, you know, I might ... I'm a second cousin, I'm a first cousin, maybe even, you know, I'm a part of the family, which is really lovely. And, you know, the time over the last few years, like those relationships have stood the test of time. And those orchestras have been there for me, as well as my own family of ICO, which is really lovely. And I don't think that would be the case in every country...? I don't know. But it is the case here, which is amazing. I was just so in my own experience. I had a really, really difficult time with huge panic that just came from nowhere, that completely bit me on the ass. And I had no idea what was happening to me. And it was really, really, really hard and, like recovery from that. And I see it as recovery because I think when you've had an experience of panic disorder, it's so traumatising, that it kind of imprints itself upon you. Biologically, mentally, emotionally, and, and it wasn't a linear recovery from that, so I would think I was okay, and I'd have a few months okay, and next thing I'm having to get taken off the edge of the motorway by police because I'm throwing up and nearly blacking out, you know. And at the same time, I was experiencing like, huge freedom and really, I mean, it was a such a paradoxical experience, like it was heaven and hell at once. I couldn't make any sense of it really. And because I was exploring, like my, you know, we had a long, long time in Ireland where you could only be within two kilometres of your home, and then five kilometres of your home. We had the longest lockdown in Europe here. And I live alone and so like getting amazing neighbourhood connections, friendships, communities, you know, street cocktails, sun-...sundowners, picking wild garlic along the canal. I'm so lucky that I live really close to one of the main canals that runs through Dublin, but also the River Liffey. So I had these like water connections really close by me. And then Phoenix Park, which is like acres and kilometres of like incredible parkland. They were all within my two kilometres. So as I was experiencing this huge freedom I was having...I won Arts Council awards to do like study Baroque violin with Rachel Podger. I was having this incredible mentorship and exploration. I was doing a post-grad in Trinity College, Dublin on creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship and having ...

H

Hattie Butterworth 25:03

Wow.

C

Clíodhna Ryan 25:03

...an amazing time doing that, like, that was an intense year of academic study. And at the same time, there was this absolute nightmare thing going on as well. I mean, I've always loved radio. I mean, I've loved language, I've loved words, I spoke to you about poetry and theatre, and like I learned to read before I went to school, and I think language and words were even music before I even knew what music was, you know, for me, and they had texture and ... I mean, poetry is always where I go, when I don't understand how I feel, you know. It's a huge solace to me. And then I fell in love with radio, I was always in love with radio, and like, I was addicted to podcasts before there was even a podcast app and ... because I connected with radio when I was living in America, and when I moved back to the UK from America, like I was, I

used to be addicted to This American Life. It started the year I went to Dallas. And then I discovered that I was able to podcast it and ... so I'd always thought about doing it, but like, you never want to say it out loud guys, do you?

R

Rebecca Toal 26:18

No. Everyone's like "ah great."

C

Clíodhna Ryan 26:20

Like, you sound like a dick!

R

Rebecca Toal 26:21

Yeah, "you want to talk about yourself more?!"

C

Clíodhna Ryan 26:25

"You want to make a podcast?" Like who isn't making a podcast, you know? So I had that thought, there and I remember the first time saying it to a friend, we were walking in Phoenix Park, and I remember saying it out loud. I knew once I said it out loud, that I couldn't take it back. So I was almost like choking on it. Like, I knew I wanted ... but I had to see what it felt like to just put it out there into the world.

R

Rebecca Toal 26:56

Even if you can't take it back.

C

Clíodhna Ryan 26:57

Yeah! And then I remember like, I remember the first time asking someone - it was like in a rehearsal break. We were, it was with the Chamber Orchestra. I remember going up and kind of going, "I'm thinking of ... you know, and I don't know what it is, but would you be open to talk?" And, and I had the idea of Bittersweet Symphony and ... because I kind of like that structure gives some shape. And it can make ... it can hold people, you know? And I do think memory and recollecting is really significant. And that's the person that's been in therapy a lot speaking, I guess, I think like forgetting is as much a dismantling of something as remembering is a storing of something, so I think it's an important process. And with our freelance lives, we can be so slippy, right? With like, our, our experience can feel like it's always slipping away from us. Like, we can't hold on to it, like the only time I would connect with what I had done in my life would be when I'm doing my tax return. And then I'm like, "oh, right! Oh!" From your failures, to your achievements to the things you can be proud of, the moments that meant a lot, you know, they all kind of come... become one mush, as you're just living in your diary and one gig to the next. And it's just the music that you're playing is it the Messiah, is it Christmas carols or whatever it

that you, you know, connect with what's going on. So there was a part of me that wanted to really, to answer your question in a very long, long way, there's a part of me that really wanted to connect with my community. I was having such an extreme experience, and I wondered, "what are other people... like, what are other people going through? Like, what are we going through?" We don't have a place to gather and talk and share and we so often just bring our professional selves to work. You know, leave your emotions at the door, game face, showbusiness, invincible, you know, eternally grateful, no ambivalence ever, only positivity, no pain, no injury, no fear, all of that kind of stuff. You know, I thought what would happen if I just had a ... created a holding space for connection, and I didn't know if anyone would be really open. I had no clue. And I thought, I still have the thing that I sent to people... I asked 16 people in the end ... well, I asked more people, but like, a lot of, you know, not a lot of people, but some people said no, because they weren't comfortable with it. And everyone that I asked I said, "Please..." like I told them all the reasons why they shouldn't talk to me as well. Because I did really want like an honest exchange and an open exchange as much as people felt comfortable with. And...

H Hattie Butterworth 30:09
It's so brave though, like...

R Rebecca Toal 30:10
Yeah, so brave.

C Cliodhna Ryan 30:11
I was, I was, well, I was really ... I was so moved. Like, I remember, you know, after the first few conversations, just kind of like being like, "Oh, my God, like, people are being really... like, these people that I've known for years, that I've worked with for years, they're completely opening themselves up."

R Rebecca Toal 30:37
Yeah.

C Cliodhna Ryan 30:37
And being so like, brave and honest and vulnerable. And choosing to use the space in that way. And I just, you know, I just thought it was incredible. I was ... I found it so moving. So moving.

R Rebecca Toal 30:59
How did you...um? Because I find, well, I, yeah, I'd be interested to hear about your experience of holding the space for so many people that are opening up and being vulnerable. How did

that leave you feeling afterwards? Or was it...?

H Hattie Butterworth 31:16

In terms of your own sort of self care? Or?

C Cliodhna Ryan 31:19

Yeah. Well, I guess I was in therapy at the... no, was I in therapy? Oh, God, I wasn't.

R Rebecca Toal 31:32

I always have this moment.

C Cliodhna Ryan 31:33

No, my therapy finished ... because I had a year with the community mental health, like after the whole panic disorder thing started until June 2021. But I had done, I actually did, um I did a really good coaching training. So I was still connecting, I made a really, really good friend. Actually, we were on a zoom last night. People still Zoom for hours. Me and Hannah Zoom for hours. We were saying like, we've never actually met each other, we've never met each other, but we're such amazing friends. So we were talking a lot while I was having these conversations. And then yeah, I was, I guess I was, you know, getting support from friends and family. But also, like, I found, I found I got such comfort and solace, actually, from the conversations and from the openness, like we all do I think when we hear another person's experience, another human being's experience. It's, it's so comforting, and because it creates, yeah, that sense of connection, that identification. There's things that you recognise about your own experience and what people are sharing. And that's comforting. So it really, it felt very soft in me, you know. It felt very soft and gentle and loving. And it felt like a real privilege. Yeah. So it didn't feel like I was carrying anything, really. Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 33:24

I mean, after the weight of suffering from a panic disorder in a time of isolation. ...You know, I mean, I don't know about you, but I feel like sometimes talking to other people, openly, I think what you're trying to say is like, like it ... I don't know ... your experience, it can be so dark that actually hearing someone else's experience brings a lightness to your own.

R Rebecca Toal 33:31

Yeah.

C Cliodhna Ryan 33:51

C Clíodhna Ryan 33:51

Yeah, no, it definitely illuminated. And I guess to add to what was happening for me at the time...

H Hattie Butterworth 33:58

Yeah.

C Clíodhna Ryan 33:58

I had...So I recorded all the conversations in August and September 2021. And didn't make any decisions about what I was doing with those conversations until they were all done. And I took a break of about two weeks and how to think about it. And then I was like, "Okay, well, can I edit? What's editing?" No clue. YouTube. But after the first conversation, I was cycling home one evening, and I got knocked down by a car. And my left hand, I was like, the car completely went ... like it...If I had been going any faster, it literally would have mowed me down and I probably wouldn't have survived. My left hand was trapped was like under the handlebar of my bike. And I mean, I got bruised and scratched and scraped all down my right side, and I had like a whiplash injury for a couple of months. But my left hand completely was bugged. One finger was broken, but then all the other joints and finger is completely, you know, got massively swollen, so like my thumb was hugely swollen, like first finger... every finger except my little finger, which is my most useless finger! And always has been! And usually is for string players! It's the one we hate! So I basically, and I, you know, I had to go to the police and all this kind of stuff, and, and then, you know, consultants and hand physios. And until the end of November, when I saw a hand specialist that works with musicians called Mark Phillips in London.

R Rebecca Toal 35:58

Oh I got him!

C Clíodhna Ryan 35:59

Mark Phillips!

R Rebecca Toal 36:01

He's great.

C Clíodhna Ryan 36:03

Oh, my God, and he gave me hope. But until I connected with Mark at the end of November ... so it was August, September, October, November... three months. I basically, either couldn't or was told not to use my left hand at all. So I couldn't use it at all for about two months, because

it was so swollen. And I didn't have like a pinching motion. And, and the finger was like gross, but all the other fingers were also completely swollen except the little guy. And I couldn't tie my shoelaces, I couldn't, you know, change my bedsheets. I mean, it was absolutely awful. Like, and I couldn't, I had to buy lots of devices to open my, you know, to open jars to... you know, I had to buy all these kinds of disability devices from these, like websites that had people that were in their 80s in their images like...urgh! And, and I didn't know if I'd ever be able to play the violin again. And every time ICO played in Dublin, like the first performances back for people in Ireland were in September 2021, we weren't allowed play to audiences until September 2021. And I remember going to that concert. And, like, from when the orchestra walked out on stage until they left the stage at the end, I was in pieces, crying, because I didn't know if I'd ever make sound again. If I'd ever be that ... you know, when you become like, when you're not even yourself anymore, you don't know what your name is? You don't know who you are, you are no... you're nothing, you're you have no ego. You are just sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, phrase, texture, you know, I didn't know if I'd ever feel that again. And at this time, I was having these conversations, and then creating and editing. And it was, it was like, because that was very, very dark, and incredibly difficult and incredibly hopeless for many months. And again, I was completely isolated, because we were in lockdowns here. And so this connection with my community, and with these people that are like, every conversation I'd have, I'd be like, there's so much beauty and humanity and vulnerability in these people. And I never took the time to have those conversations and make those connections in my real life and that I you know, in like real life: before COVID life! I said to myself, "this was right in front of you." What's... like, how have you been living that you haven't allowed time for this? Like, you know... Would you have released the episodes if you hadn't have had your accident? I think I possibly would have felt compelled, yeah, to like, that it was ... again, that thing of it not being necessarily mine, but like being a custodian of some sort, or repository, like a custodian of this repository of human experience. You know, everyone that spoke to me wanted to tell their story. And so, I think, yeah, I think I would have ... but I think, I don't know how I would have, and if it would have looked different. You know, I don't know what that would have looked like but I think, yeah, because I think after a few conversations it felt like, "Ahh, do you know what, like, this has nothing to do with me. This has nothing to do with me. This is about our community. This is about also connecting with the people that come and watch us." You know, like I said, in one of those pieces of writings, you know, we go out, in and out a different door to the people that come in the front. They don't see the, you know, our lives, people eating out of Tupperware. Um, you know, teaching between the rehearsal and the concert, running home to put kids to bed... I don't know, they, they don't they don't see that, you know. And so I wanted to tell them that as well. Yeah.

H

Hattie Butterworth 40:29

Would do you have an idea of maybe ... What your... I mean, I can't, I'm feeling so emotional listening to you. What, what was going through your head about maybe, if the violin wasn't possible, again? What would you have turned to? Or was communication maybe the thing that you that you thought, "right, I can really do this because I'm so passionate about it."

C

Cliodhna Ryan 40:57

No, I think what was what I really was surprised to find within myself was some kind of trust. Um, I don't think I would have necessarily felt that. I really feel ... and it's interesting, because I've literally just gone back to work three weeks ago, since August, so I was not working for

eight months with this injury, and now I have arthritis in my hand permanently in those joints. Which is fine actually, it turns out, because if you talk about that, it turns out other people tell you about all their arthritic bits and bobs they have that they've never talked about before. You know, some people did say to me, "don't tell anybody. Don't tell anybody that you have arthritis. Don't tell anybody that you've had this injury."

R Rebecca Toal 41:51
Wow.

C Clíodhna Ryan 41:52
Because it'll affect how people see you. It'll affect how people judge your ability as a violinist, you know, but it turns out when you name it, when you say it, then other people go, "Oh, yeah, this joint that and this arthritis and look at this wobbly, this crooked-y bit..."

R Rebecca Toal 42:08
This bit's falling off!

C Clíodhna Ryan 42:09
I guess I was worried financially, of course. But I had, I think I had a kind of a trust and a faith that everything would be okay. And I didn't know what that meant. But I kind of knew it, somehow. Whether that meant not play, I think the thought of not being not experiencing that sound thing, because for me, resonance, harmony, like when you create a perfectly in tune kind of chord, or the energy, like the energy of like a rhythm, a baseline... Like to not be in that again, that was pretty heartbreaking to think about. But I so enjoyed creating the podcast, and I learned so many skills. And then, you know, I was having to, I was having to take so many risks. I mean, you guys I'm sure know this, like you're having to put yourself out there the whole time and get comfort...get comfortable with such extreme discomfort. Get comfortable with just that "yeah, I got my imposter syndrome coat on today. That's fine! You know, this is a familiar coat, it's not going to stop me." You know, to kind of walk alongside all that discomfort, that fear, that imposter syndrome stuff, and all that risk that you take when you create something, you put it out there and you don't even do it for a job. Like "who are you to do it? You didn't go to college for it, you don't get paid for it. You know, who do you think you are?"

H Hattie Butterworth 43:50
You're not sponsored by anyone for it.

C Clíodhna Ryan 43:51
Yeah.

R

Rebecca Toal 43:52

And you don't know if it's gonna affect like, even though it's nothing to do with your job, you don't know if it's going to affect your job. I would have that where I'm like, "Are people going to hear this and be like, 'Oh, we shouldn't hire her?'" And then I'm like, I'd rather just keep doing this and not get that work.

C

Cliodhna Ryan 44:07

Yeah.

R

Rebecca Toal 44:08

But easier said than felt.

C

Cliodhna Ryan 44:10

So I think like I had got used to that. I think as as performers as musicians and you know, we're schooled from such a young age you know, you get so used to doing ... you only do something if you're ... if you know you're really good at it or you know to do something for the enjoyment of the process as opposed to the outcome is something that we we don't get, you know, because we don't have time for hobbies and learning and stuff. You know, we don't have time to go to that pottery class and discover that we're shit at it but we love kind of exploring clay. You know, we're just doing this one thing that we're excellent at, you know, that we dedicate our lives to and that we spend hours and hours and hours and hours every-... doing every day from when we're children, that we get ... we can be very cautious about taking those kinds of risks. I've found that in myself, you know, and this was a really good exercise for me. And I think it taught me that you know what? I'm going to be okay. I don't know how, I don't know why, but I can... I can just put myself in places where, you know what? I'll learn. If I'm not good enough, if I can't do it, that's okay, as well. Like, so what? Find out, discover, explore, you know, and I learned to do all of that. And I think that in itself is a skill, right? Getting comfortable with the discomfort. Were there any similarities between when you started out as a freelancer? Did you have that kind of hope and trust that your career would ... or was this is a completely new kind of trust? Oh, it's completely new. It was trust in myself as a person. I think I never even trusted myself as a musician. You know, despite, you know, winning, you know, competitions, you know ... I remember my trio getting a glowing review in the Strad for like, QEH like thing. And again, it was that slippery connection. Every achievement every ... everything just kind of vanished. And and it always felt like I was starting from zero. Am I good enough? You know, how am I meant to be in this context? How do you want me to be how do you need me to be in a culture that wasn't mine as well, you know, there's, there's a lot of cultural differences between, you know, the UK and Ireland, well, between England and Ireland, particularly, I think. And trying to navigate that and figure that out. All the unspoken stuff.

R

Rebecca Toal 46:58

But you had a trust in your body somehow that it would pull you through? Or is it trust in the music?

C Clíodhna Ryan 47:05

I have felt very let down by my body actually, I felt very angry with it for a while. And that was difficult. Like, I was very, very angry, for, for a good few months at my body. It was a trust in myself in, in that I'd be okay. Not necessarily music, because I didn't know if I'd ever be able to have anything to do with music again. But I was like, "Do you know what? You're gonna be alright, you've got this, like you're you know..." and I knew that I had loving friendships and loving family as well. I wasn't alone. I wasn't alone. I had to be, you know, I would allow myself to be carried as well. That I didn't have to do alone ... that I didn't have to ... that I could lean on people that I could let the people that love me, care for me. You know, and I think that's not so easy to do, either always.

R Rebecca Toal 48:01

I read a quote ... well, I was reading a book yesterday, and it was saying how I can't remember exactly. But it was by Rebecca Solnit and she said that asking for help is a generous act, because it allows others to help you.

C Clíodhna Ryan 48:17

Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 48:18

And it doesn't negate the fact that it's hard to do. But I think the generosity goes both ways. Yeah, it's so true. And I ... it was something I didn't do, I don't think before the pandemic. And it was, I mean, probably a defence mechanism. Because when you allow people help, when you ask for help, there's so ... there is a vulnerability in that. You know, you're saying, "I need you, help me", and people could just go, "Urr, no," You know? But then you're allowing people to connect to you and hold you. and hold you up. And we all know how good that feels, you know? And so it ... I totally, totally, that that quote really chimes with me. Did it chime with you as well, when you heard it? What did it mean for you? I was like, "Oh my gosh", because I guess because I've always been a people-pleaser. And actually, part of that has been like not allowing people to help me because I didn't want to cause them any trouble or I wanted to help them. And I wanted to help them that way. But actually, that doesn't end up very well. So actually, I took a lot of solace in actually yeah, like, I know, it's okay to ask for help, but it was like, actually, this kind of resonates with me of like, I'm allowing people to kind of come into the same space as my vulnerability and that in itself.

H Hattie Butterworth 49:49

Practise their love.

R Rebecca Toal 49:50
Yeah, that's a gift in itself.

C Clíodhna Ryan 49:52
Yeah. And have you practised that?

R Rebecca Toal 49:54
Urrrrrrr, yeah. Like now and again, I think I could be better at it for sure.

C Clíodhna Ryan 50:02
Yeah, well, it's a learning isn't it? It's like anything. We're just learning these things. How about you, Hattie, would you...?"

H Hattie Butterworth 50:10
I think it's harder for me, but just because, to be completely honest, I have had experiences where opening up has backfired. And not always, and I'd would probably not... That's not the rule. It's definitely the exception that someone feels uncomfortable. But it makes, you know, it definitely stays with you when you get met with sort of, "why are you telling me this?" Or like...

C Clíodhna Ryan 50:38
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 50:39
And I think maybe that comes down to me not always sharing with the right people. Or...

R Rebecca Toal 50:45
Or at the right time for you.

H Hattie Butterworth 50:46
Or the right time. Yeah, yeah. For me. Yeah. And ...

C Clodhna Ryan 50:49
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 50:50
You know, not thinking, "Oh, maybe the best place for me right now is therapy to help me through this, because nobody else maybe is either qualified properly for it, or will... You know, there's a risk, they might misunderstand me or something." So I love, I love the quote, because I do think it gives people power to, to feel that opening up doesn't have to be this one way experience. It can actually show other people that you, that you want to share with them, or you want to connect with them.

C Clodhna Ryan 51:21
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 51:21
But I don't know, I keep thinking, Clodhna, about when we spoke on the phone about your experience with anxiety and panic, because obviously, or maybe not obviously, but that's a very, very big part of my experience of my whole life pretty much since I was like seven or eight, I've, I've had periods of panic disorder. And you spoke about experiencing it on stage...

C Clodhna Ryan 51:50
Oh God.

H Hattie Butterworth 51:50
And, if you don't mind ...

C Clodhna Ryan 51:53
No!

H Hattie Butterworth 51:53
...I'd love you to talk about that experience because.

C Clíodhna Ryan 51:56
Oh, my God. It's so awful.

H Hattie Butterworth 51:58
Because you actually like you shared, like with your orchestra about what's going on. And that's something I've never had the courage to do. And like when you said that, to me, I was like, "right, I need to hear like how this went."

C Clíodhna Ryan 52:12
I mean, I again, like I do feel ... I really feel and I've really noticed that since I've gone back to work that I am not the person that I was in March 2020, like I have been changed, I have been irrevocably changed by the last couple of years. So while I mightn't have ever had a panic attack just before going on stage, I might not...also may not have asked for help, that thing of asking for help. I might not have trusted to ask for help. I might have just ... I don't know what I would have done. But both those things... they're the kind of two sides, I suppose, of the coin, you know. Umm but it was, it was my very first gig back since the beginning of August. And I was in one of my freelancing roles umm with the RTE Concert Orchestra, and we were doing a concert in the National Concert Hall with an incredible pianist, soloist from here called Finian Collins. And it was such a lovely gig. It was absolutely gorgeous. It's a small orchestra, so it's small sections, which I'm very comfortable with. A Mozart, overture that I've played millions of times before, and a couple of Beethoven piano concertos, right? Like, you know, absolutely gorgeous, amazing, great conductor, everything wonderful. And the first few rehearsal days felt ... they felt fine, they felt comfortable. I mean, it was amazing to be in that sound, again. Absolutely gorgeous. And I loved it, and the leader, Mia Cooper, umm said to me, on the first day, she said, "you know, if you'd be more comfortable..." because I think I was sitting...They were they're still sitting...They've just started sharing stands again. But I think I would have been sitting like, the third desk back on the outside. So like (*under breath*) 1,2,3,4,5... Number five? In firsts, I think. Yeah. So she said "if you'd be more comfortable sitting on the inside..." and I was like, "Oh, not at all," you know, because I've always been comfortable front to back, side...You know, I, you know, wherever. Put me wherever. I could, you know, sit number two or sit you know, number 12. I'm happy anywhere I am, you know? And each has different challenges and I enjoy that. Umm so there I was, fine, two days' rehearsal, great. It felt lovely to connect with people again. Also, I hadn't been in real life since I launched the podcast, so people were saying things to me, because I hadn't had much of that kind of feedback, you know, and it was, that was lovely as well. And next thing: concert. We have done our rehearsal. Fine. So we were in the concert hall. You know, obviously, the microphones are there, you know, the streaming cameras are there. And, you know, that changes the nature of, you know, it's something to overcome, in your mind anyway. But I was grand, and I had been in, I think, what was I doing? I was getting something from my car, which was at the front of the hall, and I started seeing people arrive for the concert, and it was a quarter to eight, and the concert began at eight. And I started walking around the back to the stage door. And next thing, whoosh, my whole body, head, like, started from my feet and just went whoosh through my whole body. And anyone that's had anything like a panic disorder, knows this feeling, because there's no anxiety. There's no warning, it's just zero to 100 in a second. Suddenly, you're there, you know? And so shaking, numb hands numb feet, tingling, my vision started going. And then I get kind of, you know, also kind of, as well as kind of tiny, tiny tunnel vision,

like where you're just like, looking through tiny little, like, as if you put little holes in front of your eyes. And I also get kind of like flash, like flashy things, like a lot of distortion in my, in my sight. And then I get auditory stuff as well. With like ringing or things sounding really far away. And really sick. And I was, I was just, you know, this all happens in that one second. And I was like, "Oh, my God, oh, my god, what am I going to do?" And I, my whole body is shaking, and I'm walking around the stage door, and it's like, a quarter to eight. And I don't know what I'm going to do. I...It's absolutely awful. I just ... like, if someone had just come and like vanished me, I would have been very happy. And I went in and into the like, through the stage door. And I opened the dressing room, you know? Like, I mean, what are you supposed to do when you're having a panic attack? You know, you're supposed to get grounded, you're supposed to do all the counting, you're supposed to lie down or sit down or be quiet and be and you're in a really, really busy dressing room just before a concert, where everyone is chatting, everyone is bustling around makeup, chats, bathroom, blah blah blah blah blah. You get... there's nowhere to go, like, where are you going to go? And you don't have time to get yourself right again. Like, you don't have time. I didn't know what to do. And I saw my friend, who knew that I had been in a really, really bad place and knew the extent of how bad things had been for me. And I called her into the corridor. And I said, "I'm in the beginnings of a really bad panic attack. Can we swap so that I'm on the inside so that if I need to leave the stage I can?" And she was like, "No, I'm really sorry, I'd just be too uncomfortable." And she went back in, and I was like, "holy shit. Like, what am I gonna do?" I know, I know. So I went to the bathroom, I threw up, urm came out. The leader was there and the co-leader, Brona Cahill, who I've known since I was a child, actually. And I was like, "I don't know what to do." And I was actually having intrusive thoughts as well. Which were really, really frightening. And, and I said...

R

Rebecca Toal 58:58

Was that the first time you've had those?"

C

Clíodhna Ryan 58:59

Urm, I had just started having them a few months before but they had been fine for a long time. And I said, "guys, I don't know what to do." And Mia just ... they both looked at me. They were like "Clíodhna, are you okay?" And I said "I'm having a really bad panic attack. And I don't think I can go onstage." Because for me, I was just imagining being trapped, like with the cameras, with the live broadcast, with this packed hall looking at me, right by the soloist, I was going to be really close to the soloist. And what if I started like, it just that ... just it was absolutely awful. And Mia just spoke to me and she said "Clíodhna, we're here to help you. How can we help you?" And they were just both so understanding. She went, she was like ... I said "maybe if I sot right at the back by the stage door so if I need to leave," and they were like "this is completely understandable this is happening. You've been through such a huge trauma. You haven't played for months. We're going to do everything we can to help and support you." And she went, and she asked a lovely guy who was sitting at the back would he swap with me. She went on stage, she changed our pads, and this was at like five to eight. And I went on, and I got through it. It was really, really difficult. And I was having intrusive thoughts the whole way through. And I was having full body experience the whole way through. And I didn't... I wasn't right physically until - that concert was on a Thursday - and I wasn't right physically until the Sunday, because I had that hangover thing that you get after bad panic attacks with headaches and aches and nausea and everything. But since then, I've done... I did a concert that weekend,

the following week, with like TV cameras and everything, and that was fine. And then I was back in the concert hall, and I was co-leading second violins in the symphony orchestra with a sold out Messiah performance. And I got through the whole thing, and I really enjoyed it. "Ah! Guys, like I'm back, I'm back!"

R

Rebecca Toal 1:01:09

Yep.

C

Clíodhna Ryan 1:01:09

Every gig I've done since, like, I've been able to enjoy my instrument. I was right by Martin, he's principal cello, and he was playing, you know, the continuo part. So I was able to connect right into the baseline, which always really calms my body and grounds me, you know. And I just had a brilliant time, sharing the experience, asking for help, allowing myself to be helped, but then also the fact that the next gig I did with them, they still put me close to the front. You know, they still trusted me. They didn't kind of go "okay, well, what do we do now with this one?" You know, they were like, "you're going to be fine. We know you're going to be okay. If you're not, okay, ask us for help." But like, you know, because I was thinking "I'm going to have to quit performing." But they trusted me. And they saw it as a process. They said this happens once. Maybe it'll happen again. Maybe it won't, you know?

R

Rebecca Toal 1:02:07

But it's things like your podcast and you talking about it and raising awareness that helps. The inconsistency of it is what ... is what really struggles when there's no awareness, is that people, them not trusting you, or ... we've talked about this quite a lot, Hattie and I, but like people assuming your limits without you telling them. Or ... but yeah, it takes them to create an atmosphere of 'you can ask us for help if you need help, or if and when you need help. And it won't be every time and we trust that you will ask us'. That is such a huge thing.

C

Clíodhna Ryan 1:02:46

Yeah, yeah, and even like, I mean, I have to admit that like talking about it here that feels difficult for me, you know. Talking about it with you guys so publicly, and part of my conditioning is going, "but what if people think you know, I can't do ..." like, you know, because I've got some big chamber music gigs coming up. I know, I'll be fine. I know, I'll be fine. I have so many skills. I mean, like anyone that's had these kind of experiences, you are given such an array of tools and skills. And it's an massive education as well. And I know, I'll be fine. But there is a part of me that is going "be quiet, what are you doing? What are you doing?" You know, I have to acknowledge that, because it wouldn't be truthful for me if I didn't acknowledge that, that there is a part of me, that feels frightened of sharing this with you in this.

R

Rebecca Toal 1:03:41

Thank you.

Thank you.

H

Hattie Butterworth 1:03:42

Thank you so much, because I don't think we've had someone share, like an actual onstage experience of panic. And it's real, it happens. Like it's happened, it's happened to me and...

R

Rebecca Toal 1:03:56

And me.

H

Hattie Butterworth 1:03:58

Yeah, like, but it's like, what do you do? And I, I don't know, I just, I can't tell you how much I just know that, that you that you opening up is, it's just gonna ... it's helped me so much just to like, know that it really doesn't discriminate on who you are, how successful you are like,

R

Rebecca Toal 1:04:19

And that you went to, like, the leaders helped you. That's what I would always be worried of, is like going to the ... I would want to like maybe tell the people that either side of me, maybe. But apart from that, like I wouldn't... But yeah, knowing that they helped you is like.

C

Clodhna Ryan 1:04:34

Nut guys, they ... like the conversations in the dressing room that happened because of that, you know, because also like I was aware that the whole orchestra saw, that like in the rehearsals and everything I was sitting close to the front and the outside, suddenly I'm there at the back. What am I doing there? What am I ... why am I there? Like the whole orchestra see that, know that? What, what's happened? You know, and the conversations that were had in the dressing room and the sharing that people from front to back did about their own experiences and how they had overcome them. You know, through psychological work, through, you know, different medications at different points. There was, there were conversations that had ... that were had, because of what happened. You know, it is interesting why we don't talk about it. But, I, you know, but I know why, because I can hear that voice in my head right now, you know.

H

Hattie Butterworth 1:05:35

I still get it every time I post anything, release any episodes with an ounce of truth.

C

Clodhna Ryan 1:05:43

Yeah

yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:44
To be honest.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:45
I think because it's not just a voice... It's not just a voice in your head, like, we've all heard somebody say something similar to that, of being like, "Oh, you shouldn't say this, or you shouldn't...."

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:05:56
Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:57
And I think, usually, I think in music education, and I feel, as much as these conversations are happening in workspaces, I've never heard any ounce of it...and I know, it's hard, and I know, it's a whole minefield, but I just, yeah, that voice isn't just in our heads, which...

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:06:19
Yeah. But like, from from being so angry with my body. And, and with a panic attack as well. You can feel very...

H Hattie Butterworth 1:06:29
Down.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:06:30
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:06:31
Yeah. Betrayed by your brain.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:06:33

Completely. Completely and powerless also, you can feel quite powerless at times. Then at the same time, when all this stuff was happening for me on stage, all my training was working. You know, it's amazing. I didn't even have a bow shake. Like, what?! You know, I was, like, I don't know how, but it was, everything worked. Like I don't think ... I mean, I, I don't think I played a wrong note. D'you know? I think it was absolutely grand. But it was ... but what was awful was what was happening for me. And the impact on my body for the days afterwards, like the toll that it took, and how ill it made me for, like, those few days afterwards, but I was completely able to perform. And that, you know, that's training, that's discipline. And that's, you know, that kind of said, "Okay, you can trust this skill, that whatever is happening, you can still this, this will make it happen, you might be going completely, you know, you know, thinking the most difficult things, but..." That's true. We often kind of worry about our brain and our body kind of disconnecting, but actually, in some circumstances, it's pretty good. I know!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:07:58
For sure!

R Rebecca Toal 1:07:59
"Yeah, you go on ahead."

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:08:00
I know, the next gig I had I actually brought my colouring with.

R Rebecca Toal 1:08:03
Aw yeah!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:08:06
Yes!

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:08:08
I have this, because I find it very calming and urm, and it makes, it brings me completely into the present. So I actually even though this was like out in the west of Ireland, you know, I actually in my suitcase, put like, a few colouring books and on like, different coloured markers and stuff like that. And I brought them to the rehearsal and soundcheck and stuff and like between the ... like the rehearsal and the gig, I just sat there colouring.

R Rebecca Toal 1:08:36

That's incredible.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:08:37
You know, yeah!

R Rebecca Toal 1:08:39
Why not?

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:08:39
Like I thought, you know, just, just mind yourself, like, why would this ... you know, just mind yourself the way that you do, that you have been minding yourself, you know, so, but yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:08:49
That's amazing. I mean, I would love sort of to finish if you could tell us a bit more about how people can follow your podcast, you know, any kind of upcoming episodes to listen out for...? Or anything else you'd like to finish sharing?

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:09:11
Urm, well, I, um, let me see. Well, the podcast, Bittersweet Symphony, is on all the usual spots. You know, yeah. All the usual podcast platforms, I think, I hope. Yes, it is. Yes, it is. And then I, what I love doing actually, is well I say I don't love it 100% of the time, but 99% of the time, I do love doing it. That all the people that I have on the podcast, share loads of photographs with me. I get them to go back through their phones, back through 2020 and 2021. And share a lot of the photos and experiences that they talk about in the episodes. And so then I share those on social media. So that might be associated with their bitter, their sweet, and their bittersweet memory because that's something we talk about. But there's also like general kind of experiences that they've had. The way their lives were, things that they enjoyed, all that kind of stuff. What matters to them in their life and what, what they think ... you know what they're taking away and how they want to live going forward. So I share all of that on my own Instagram, which is Ryan.Clíodhna. And my first name is spelt CLÍODHNA. It's an Irish name. So that's Ryan.Clíodhan on Instagram. And then I have a Facebook page called Bittersweet Symphony podcast. And then I have my own Facebook, which is my own name. And then I have Twitter as well, which is ClíodhnaViolin. Um, I actually remember like Googling, the first week that the podcast was coming out, I actually Googled, "how does Twitter work?"

H Hattie Butterworth 1:11:05
I still don't know.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:11:06
That's in my search history. How does Twitter work?

R Rebecca Toal 1:11:10
I love that. I mean, I don't know.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:11:13
It's so weird.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:11:14
I still think I don't know.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:11:15
So weird man, but it works.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:11:20
Yeah, we ... well, I have six more episodes coming up. And they're with um ... let's see ... Steve is next. He's a percussionist in the RTE Concert Orchestra. Then Anita, she's a violinist, freelancer, also plays with Irish Baroque Orchestra. We have Dan Bates and amazing oboist. He lives in London. He's our principal oboe in Irish Chamber Orchestra. And Emma Roche. She lives in Glasgow. Elaine Clark, she's the leader, like what's actually cool about the podcast, what I love about it is that I have people from the UK and Ireland living in both countries, whatever. So a lot about like, emigrant and immigrant experiences, being away from family, that kind of thing. People had babies during lockdown. People couldn't see ... travel to their country for many, many, many months. I kind of spoke to people from every section of the orchestra.

R Rebecca Toal 1:12:28
That's great.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:12:29
People that had jobs, as well as people that were freelancers, and, you know, front to back as well. So like the leader of ICO talked to me, and one of the leaders of the National Symphony Orchestra talked to me, and they were equally open and brave in what they shared, as ... you know, you know, everyone kind of took risks, actually. And then there's a huge age range as

well. And huge ... I mean, what's interesting was how different everyone's experience was, as well as being the same, you know, and um... And it's not just really about a pandemic experience. It's about people's lives and what they discovered about who they were. And then and yeah, and how they want to live. Because I think it was a time of reevaluation for everyone. Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 1:13:19
It'll be interesting to follow up with them and see ...

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:13:22
I know!

R Rebecca Toal 1:13:23
Whether they're still living like that.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:13:24
Yeah. And if they've honoured their experiences, and it's been nice, actually, to be back working again, because I'm talking a lot to people that I had those conversations with. And they're, they're sharing my kind of, yeah, they're sharing those pieces. And for them, like the when their episode is released, it sometimes reconnects them with, like, where they were, and they were kind of saying "never again this" or "I want to make sure to do that." And it's kind of reminding them, "oh, wait a minute, you're getting pulled back into this freelance life" or whatever and, you know ... So they ... it's an anchor for them as well, which is really nice. Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 1:14:06
It's so amazing that you've done it.

C Clíodhna Ryan 1:14:09
Thank you!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:14:10
And it's really great to talk more about it and learn more about you and your journey, which has been ... I don't know, bittersweet really sums it up.



C Cliodhna Ryan 1:14:23

It definitely does. And I actually, I felt, kind of, it's been nice, to um... It's been lovely. well, and it feels like a leveller, actually to talk to you guys, because, of course, you know, there was so much sharing that the people that I spoke to did, and I didn't really do that. You know?

H Hattie Butterworth 1:14:45

Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 1:14:46

Yeah.

C Cliodhna Ryan 1:14:47

And I felt bad about that in some senses. Because yeah...

R Rebecca Toal 1:14:55

It's tricky providing a space for someone and also make ... you want to be like "yeah, me too! Like, I want to share mine as well!" but you're providing them with a space, and then, like you said, it's not about you.

C Cliodhna Ryan 1:15:07

Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 1:15:07

So you realise so much about yourself through these conversations that you almost want to have like a follow up solo episode after every single one.

C Cliodhna Ryan 1:15:16

Well as well, it's just that bit of like, you know, they're kind of standing there, like naked and you're in all your clothes, and it doesn't feel fair! So this feels like, you know, like I've corrected ... I've been, you know, you've given me an opportunity, actually, to kind of correct that a bit. You know, because, you know...

H Hattie Butterworth 1:15:34

Well we're so grateful I can't tell you like your story definitely needs to be heard because

Well we're so grateful. I can't tell you how in your story, definitely needs to be heard, because it's going to help so, so many people, like I can't tell you. Like I've been, I feel like I've gone through every emotion listening to you...

C Clodhna Ryan 1:15:49

Well, I would really, I would really encourage ... yeah, I think, I think, I think also like giving sometimes, you know... allowing people to ... giving people the benefit of the doubt as well, like, that's proven to be ... like people rise up. I don't know, like when I've asked for help, you know, not knowing what would happen with that, you know, it's just our like, providing a space for people to talk and not knowing what would happen with that. People will just constantly amaze you, really, if you allow them to. And you're right Hattie not to say that, like you can't receive like knock backs or, you know, end up like disappointed or hurt by how you share something and how that might be received. And that is difficult. But I think being true to yourself.. it's all we can do really isn't it? Just to be honest and true to ourselves and honour that and allow people to help. Yeah. That act of generosity.

R Rebecca Toal 1:17:02

You're so, right.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:17:04

Thank you so much.

C Clodhna Ryan 1:17:05

Thank you guys.

R Rebecca Toal 1:17:05

Thank you.