

# Olivia Da Costa

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, musicians, college, feel, photos, practise, olivia, musician, realised, play, music, bit, instagram, hattie, life, thought, practice, friends, gigs, cello

## SPEAKERS

Olivia Da Costa, Rebecca Toal, Hattie Butterworth

### Hattie Butterworth

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

### Rebecca Toal

And me, Rebecca Toal.

### Hattie Butterworth

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

### Rebecca Toal

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

### Hattie Butterworth

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

### Rebecca Toal

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

Oh, hi, everyone. It's me, Rebecca. You are joining us today for our wonderful chat with Olivia Da Costa, which we recorded a few months back actually. It's very sunny here today where I am but when we recorded this, it was I remember it was very dark outside, very wintry. Anyway, so we talked to Olivia about her life now as a photographer ... she followed the classical cello route, as it were, and then all of a sudden, she just seemed to be super successful and like this mega photographer that everyone was using for their musician headshots. And we just wanted to ask her how she got there and

how it felt and all this kind of stuff. Um, what else? Oh, yes, I'm an idiot. I hadn't realised that there's a back and a front to microphones. So many of the previous episodes, I've been talking into the back of the microphone, which is why the audio quality on my end might have sounded a bit bad. So I have actually been re-recording my lines as it were from this episode over the past day or so, in my tiny room. It's been such a weird experience, like essentially having to listen to Hattie and Olivia, and then kind of laugh along. But know ... I don't know, just alone in my little room. So yeah, hence why some of the acoustic might be different. Apologies. I've learned my lesson, maybe. So I was gonna say, I hope you enjoy, but I command you to enjoy because we shouldn't say "I hope you enjoy." Apparently. That's what I always got told. So, enjoy this episode with Olivia. We had so much fun talking to her.

**Hattie Butterworth**

We're so excited to be here today, joined by the beautiful Olivia Da Costa. How are you doing?

**Olivia Da Costa**

I'm good!

**Hattie Butterworth**

Good! Thank you so much for having us over and for taking some, what I'm sure are going to be just beautiful pictures.

**Rebecca Toal**

We're so sorry that we're so silly.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Oh it's fine!

**Hattie Butterworth**

We have been so silly oh my god.

**Rebecca Toal**

It's definitely mostly me.

**Hattie Butterworth**

It's mostly you with ... being egged on by me now and again. Anyway, um, for people that kind of don't know who you are, I feel like, if you're on our Instagram, you probably have a high chance of also following Olivia as well. But can you just give us like a brief overview of who you are and like what you do?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, so I do photos for musicians, generally. And I do portraits and event stuff. And yeah, it's just stuff for promo websites, whatever you want, really?

**Hattie Butterworth**

And how long has this been ... like, how long has this been like your thing?

**Olivia Da Costa**

I've been doing it since about September 2020. So however long that is, I don't know. I'm really bad at maths.

**Rebecca Toal**

I mean, nowadays, especially what even is time?

**Olivia Da Costa**

I know. Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

So it's like...

**Olivia Da Costa**

I guess like about a year.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Wow.

**Rebecca Toal**

And what were you doing before that for anybody that doesn't know you?

**Olivia Da Costa**

I was teaching a lot of teaching. I was doing about 30 hours a week of like beginner piano.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Oh my goodness.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah. So not my fav.

**Rebecca Toal**

And you played cello?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah. I'm a cellist. Yes.

**Rebecca Toal**

So can you tell us a little bit about your background in cello and kind of what led you to here?

**Olivia Da Costa**

And so I started playing cello when I was three. My mom is a cellist as well, so she had me when she was at college, dunno if she wants me to say that but she had me when she was at college.

**Hattie Butterworth**

At music college?

**Hattie Butterworth**

Wow!

**Olivia Da Costa**

At music college.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah. And apparently I just kind of saw her playing and I was like, "I want to do that."

**Hattie Butterworth**

Awww!

**Olivia Da Costa**

So that's what I did. And then yeah, I went to junior college, went to Purcell School, ran away from Purcell school. And then I had a bit of a break for two years and just didn't really do much. I had a nice normal ... "normal" teenagerhood which I was really craving actually, I think that's why I wanted to stop for a bit because I didn't really know anything else. And I just thought that's what I needed to do. And then I started learning again, practised really, really hard. And did a solid like six hours a day for a couple of years, which, I don't know how I did that. I just don't know how I did it with school and everything but ... and then I went to Academy and did my undergrad there. So, yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

Like, it strikes me as quite conscientious that a teenager can realise that they need a break.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah, I thought that as well.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

Like, even between undergrad and postgrad for me, I was like, "I think I need a break, but I'm not sure." And, you know, that kind of thing. For you, was it clear when you came back from that break that, you know, music college was the path for you?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Umm...

**Rebecca Toal**

Or what was that...?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah that mean, that was never really a question I don't think, cos I guess like growing up with specialist music education, that is just what everyone appears to do. But also like, I don't know if that's a specifically a music thing, because I think everyone at school kind of is geared towards uni anyway, so like, everyone, well, everyone appears to have some kind of goal of like, uni, or music, college or whatever. So yeah, I guess it was something that I didn't really consider. I just knew that I was going to... going to do it. I went a year early, because I'd had enough of school.

**Rebecca Toal**

Fair enough.

**Olivia Da Costa**

So yeah, and I was practising really hard. I made a lot of progress quite quickly. I don't know if it was in the healthiest way because I was sacrificing like socialising with my friends and all of that. But I was so determined, like I really got myself into a little rut of like, "I've got to practice, I've got to learn pieces in a week, and like memorise them and impress my teacher" and all this stuff. And I just really thought that that's what I needed to do to kind of like, make it.

**Hattie Butterworth**

I relate to that so hard. And it's nice to hear someone explain that later teen experience who has actually moved away from it.

**Rebecca Toal**

Mhmm, that's so true.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Because there's a part of me that sort of sees that as like, something I wish I could get back to almost? Do you know what I mean?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I definitely had moments of that during college because I just didn't really practice.

**Olivia Da Costa**

I'm not gonna lie. Didn't really practice at college, I was having a great time being an adult, like a young adult for the first time, and just kind of learning about how to be a person, especially after practising for so long, like I'd kind of culled my socialising time. So then when I got to Academy, I remember thinking, "right, I've either got to go all with the practice or nothing. And just like live..." and I guess I just, yeah, I just didn't practise.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Do you think it's like part of kind of your personality is quite all or nothing in terms of how you go at projects, or...?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I think, I think I have ADHD. I think I've got ADHD. I haven't been diagnosed with anything, but I do tend to kind of fixate on things really quite hard. And if I'm not interested in something, I will just drop it. I can't bring myself to kind of motivate myself, so I think, yeah, once I kind of had a bit of settling in time at Academy, I think I was like, "oh, no, I'm not doing very well. And like, I really need to get back to that six hours a day thing." Sort of weird, specific...

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

I think I'd read about it somewhere?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Or like, in one of the maybe like a [...] book, or something, like a cello book about technique, I think it said like, must do 75 minute chunks of practice, which is way too long! And doing that like, I don't ... again, I'm really bad at math so...

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Four times a day or whatever.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, four times a day... Yeah, great maths.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Because I think I've read that too.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, you can fixate on a number so hard. Yeah. And I know it's different for brass players. But I and I don't have ADHD, but I do feel like I had a similar feeling of "I've got to be one of those people who like really practices or there's like no point." And because I'm more of a depressive person, I have depression, I tend to avoid things like especially if I'm not doing well at something, I'm more likely to avoid it and go into complete underdrive. Or, occasionally I'll go into overdrive, but I'm more likely to avoid it. Yeah, so it is interesting to hear that from you, because I feel like I'm similar to Hattie in that I should get into doing that many hours practice a day, probably not six for a brass player but ... but because in my head I'm like, "well, that many hours equals success." And not necessarily because practising that many hours equals success itself, but because I'm like, I will become successful if I practice that many hours.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

And the reason I haven't been successful so far is because I've never been one to practice in that way.

**Hattie Butterworth**

What you said about like reading it somewhere like that number like I, I had that experience too. And it got to a point like, I'm sure you probably understand this too where like, if you didn't do that, it was as if not doing the amount ... not doing this number that you've been told equals success will mean, therefore, you're gonna fail or you're not as committed or I definitely have felt like at that age, I wanted a number so badly to like, put my worth on and to like...

**Olivia Da Costa**

I think I started doing it more because I felt like I had to catch up cos I'd had a break. So I was like, "I must, like everyone else is probably doing like three or four, so I need to miss that ... like, catch up on those years that I missed out on by doing like, double." And I did make loads of progress, as I said, like, it's something that did really help ... not that it helps for everyone. But it did for me and like, I loved that structure. And I guess that's just like, yeah, that's kind of my 'all' side of my personality where I'm like "Right, I'm gonna do it." And I did it really well. And yeah, went to college, and, you know, that was great, but kind of once I got to college, I didn't really have anything to aim for anymore. So I didn't really have the motivation. And I ... Yeah, I remember like, trying to really trying to get it back. And kind of kicking myself, I was like, "Why ... why am I not doing it?" Like, there was just a block where I just didn't want to ... I just didn't want to do it to be honest.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Because you were saying earlier as well, that when you were at college, you realised, "oh, I'm not going to make a career out of this, like, this isn't gonna be...Can you talk about that?"

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I didn't really know how to make a career out of it. I think there was a lot of professional development stuff at college, which I don't remember going to very much of to be honest... A bit of a running theme here. Yeah, but the stuff that I did go to I didn't find particularly inspiring, to be honest. And there was a lot of pressure to kind of be a certain type of musician, so it was like, "oh okay, you need to work on a chamber group and kind of really go crazy with that", which I actually did in first year, but I didn't like it. Just didn't like it. And I was like, "Well, this is not for me," you know? And then kind of getting to that point where I was like, "it's not for me. So what is for me?" And also being ... like trying to be an orchestral cellist, like, again, it's not really my thing. And those two kind of worlds were quite pushed at music college, for me, I found anyway. Probably, because it's maybe the easiest way to like measure...

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

But it's so alien, and then you never actually ... you all feel a bit embarrassed and then that kind of puts you off doing it again.

**Olivia Da Costa**

...measure progress. So it's, I think that's more of like a kind of fundamental system thing that's an issue. There was... you know, there were some opportunities that were like, oh, you could do ... we, I think we did like a jazz session in string orchestra one time, where we all improvised for five minutes?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Oh yeah, it was humiliating, it was horrible. I remember it like literally going round every single person and they all had to have a go. And then afterwards, it was like, "right, so you can maybe come and have lessons with this guy, if you want to. See ya." And that was it, and like nothing else was kind of said about it.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah, yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

So yeah, not really a lot of scope for other stuff.

**Rebecca Toal**

It sounds amazing to me that you could recognise that "I don't like this thing" and like in comparison, for me, I always found it so easy to say, "well, maybe I'm not vibing with this thing, but the problem is me rather than the actual subject or content or whatever." The problem would be me, particularly if I was in a music college environment where I would be around other people that were enjoying that thing. It just strikes me how strong and empowering that is that you could say that you didn't like it, and eventually come to terms with that.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah. I think I'm talking about it with more hindsight than I had then obviously, because hindsight is hindsight. But yeah, I think it's easier for me to kind of be so strong about it now, now that I've kind of come out of it. But I remember at the time, thinking, yeah, again, that I had something wrong with me. I was like, "Why...why don't I fit in here?" Because this is something that I've trained for forever. And it's quite a big identity smush I think.

**Rebecca Toal**

I love that.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Well I don't want to say crisis because I don't think it was a crisis. I think it was just more like a, "I don't understand why I'm here." Maybe I should have just carried on having lessons and just kind of made my own path but it's just what you do, isn't it?



**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

You just go to music college and then either really enjoy it and find it like the perfect thing for you or not. And I think a lot of people don't really.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Mhmm.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, and actually in the same way that you just kind of go to music college, you just kind of go to music college and love it and it's the best time of your life. And if you don't, you're left feeling a bit like well, "what am I doing? Why aren't I enjoying it? You know, this is supposed to be the best time of my life, but this sucks."

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I mean, I was quite lucky and I had friends that also weren't enjoying it and I think we were one cool little club like... of like not really enjoying it. And maybe that was also detrimental to actually enjoying it. Who knows?

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's quite good that you had that though, because I kind of wish I'd have had that a bit more. Whereas I feel more like you, like I was always surrounded by the people that seems to be thriving.

**Rebecca Toal**

I also just never made an effort to go in and would be like alone in my dorm room like, "I'm so sad. I'm the only one that feels like this."

**Hattie Butterworth**

You don't want to hear about our music college experiences, honestly.

**Rebecca Toal**

So, when ... because everybody knows you as, yeah, the musicians' photographer...

**Hattie Butterworth**

I was gonna say that.

**Rebecca Toal**

When did photography come into your life?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Well, I think just around locked down really?

**Rebecca Toal**

Quite recent.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I mean, I've always been very visually orientated as you can maybe tell from my flat.

**Rebecca Toal**

For listeners, Olivia has a beautiful apartment that Hattie and I are obsessed with. And we will not be leaving.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Like, imagine...

**Rebecca Toal**

Go on?

**Hattie Butterworth**

I want to say Country Living but I really don't want to say that.

**Rebecca Toal**

It's not country living.

**Hattie Butterworth**

It's way better.

**Rebecca Toal**

Just imagine the best apartment ever.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Imagine Pinterest.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Oh yeah, it's very Pinterest-y. Yeah, so like visual stuff is my thing. I think that's what I've always kind of, not necessarily to make a job out of it, but then I thought, "well, I don't really want to teach anymore." And I was really lucky because we weren't paying any rent over lockdown, so I just saved up my teaching money, bought a camera, did a week of free ones, and then that was kind of it really. It's a new thing, but I have done a lot. I've done probably about 300 over the last year or so, so I feel like I've squished in quite a lot of experience into a short space of time. I've learned a lot.

**Hattie Butterworth**

And what kind of ... what kind of had the idea of like, "I want to support musicians in this way" ... I suppose it's supporting ... Is that how you see it? Like, "I want to create a space where musicians feel comfortable having their photos taken" or is it just because you know musicians you know?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I think that's something that's come with time rather than something I set out to do. I really wanted to take portraits. And I was like, "Well who do I know? Musicians." So yeah, that's just kind of how it started. It wasn't any, like, morally amazing reason. But I think as it's gone on, I've kind of figured out how people work and how musicians work. And I did want to make sure that it was a comfortable experience from the outset, kind of as soon as I got started, because I remember having photos when I was younger, and just absolutely hating it. Like, this guy asked me to hold my bow in the wrong hand and I was like, "that's not right!" But I just remember feeling so uncomfortable and then actually hating the photos afterwards. And I don't know ... I really tried to work with people so they get photos that they actually like because there's no point in having some boring photos that you just don't really like and that you feel like you have to get because we're paying for them like, we don't have ... musicians don't generally have like heaps of money. So, yeah, paying for photos should be like a nice experience that you come away feeling good about yourself, and that you've got something that really shows who you are as a musician, I think, so yeah, that's just something that I've learned over the course of doing it.

**Rebecca Toal**

It's really refreshing to hear that you didn't necessarily plan your brand right from the start. I think we often assume that when somebody has such a clear brand or concept that they had it right from the beginning, and it's similar for us when we're applying for funding, that we feel like we have to have everything figured out right now. But you're right, it's a journey, and you just find what you're good at. So when a musician comes for a photo shoot, and, I mean, I presume that most people aren't that comfortable having their photos taken, what ... what is it that they can expect? Or what do you do to help them feel more at ease? Obviously, you don't have to disclose any secrets but ...

**Olivia Da Costa**

Well, I tend to just have a chat with people beforehand. Um, I think that really helps. I'm quite an open book person, I think ... I don't really hide anything, to be honest. And maybe that's a bit overbearing for some people. I think it does actually scare some people into being more nervous.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Well, welcome.

**Rebecca Toal**

Join the club.

**Olivia Da Costa**

But generally, I think it helps and then people often kind of open up with me and that's quite a nice thing. We tend to often exchange stories of our experiences of music college tends to be a good starting point. Yeah, I mean, if anyone's like super nervous, I will just kind of give them more to do. I think that's something that can help rather than feel like they have to know how to pose or whatever. I don't tend to go for like super posey stuff anyway. It tends to be quite unnatural and most photos that look posed aren't it's normally just from having a big old chat and me taking loads of photos.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Wow.

**Olivia Da Costa**

So, yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's, that's really surprising to me because you look at them and they look so, as you say, like natural but so professional, and to imagine that that's a moment in a chat that you've managed to capture, that says a lot about the chat as well as your skill as a photographer.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

And I think that's something that maybe I wasn't totally understanding of. But now it makes so much sense that actually to be a good photographer, you have to be good with people, like there's no point, being good at taking the photo without actually knowing how to get them in a space where they're comfortable.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, it does strike me that you're very good with people. And I wonder whether turning to this career has been more in line with who you are, being good with people rather than sitting alone in a practice room, not around people just alone.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I get what you mean, I think when I was doing the practice, I didn't care. I just didn't care. Like I was so set on practising that socialising wasn't really coming into it. I think, over the course of college where I was kind of not quite understanding why things weren't going so well, I think that's when I became more withdrawn. So even though I was around a lot of people, I wasn't necessarily enjoying that. And I think I kind of got more and more shy, and I'm not, not really a shy person, I think I can come across as a shy person, if you don't really know me, but I am quite chatty. And I think, doing what I do now, because I enjoy it, I think I've just been able to kind of come into myself again. And I feel like myself pre-college. So I think four years of college kind of kept sort of shutting on me, as it were. And I just kind of got less and less confident in what I was doing and where my life was going. And I mean, no one knows what they're doing. But there was such a big pressure to find out what you are doing by the end of college. And so you can go and have a job and all of this stuff that doesn't really happen to many people like it's not, it's not about like the amount of work you do that gets you a job. It's often the people that are really good at talking, and really good at socialising and like going to the pub and chatting with everyone afterwards, and mixing like that... I know that's something that we're told to do but sometimes you can't, like sometimes you don't have the money. Like I had to work through college to be able to pay for stuff and I didn't have bags of spare time to be going and socialising and doing like free gigs because that's what you have to do to get experience as well. And you get called up for something, like I didn't have time to do that.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, or sometimes I don't want to go to the pub because I don't want to drink.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

And it often can feel like there's not any space for people that don't want to drink at the pub. Or maybe I'm feeling like I don't want to be in any more crowds or any spaces.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, maybe it just doesn't feel like there's an outlet for those types of people,

**Hattie Butterworth**

Or those types of times in your life when maybe you're having a harder time.

**Rebecca Toal**

Like all the time.

**Hattie Butterworth**

You alright today, Rebecca?!

**Rebecca Toal**

So, do you play the cello anymore?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Urr, not really. No.

**Rebecca Toal**

Do you miss it?

**Olivia Da Costa**

No, no. I, I think I'm reluctant to say anything, because I don't want to damn myself into not ever being jealous. I play when I want to, which is not very often. And I feel like I could do if I tried but I don't really have any pull to do it. I'm also quite busy. I don't really have loads of time to practise and play and I just don't have a pull towards it at the moment. But I'm not kind of ... I'm not closed to that ever happening. But I think I'm ... I'm a lot more accepting of it now than I was a couple of years ago. I think like, yeah, a couple of years out of college is ... and a pandemic, has done me some good in that I've kind of just been more up for like, just going to make a life that I want to do. And cello doesn't matter. And I think it was a big old kind of realisation thing of like, and an identity thing. Kind of coming to terms with the fact

that being a cellist isn't me, like it's not ... being a musician isn't actually you. You are you, in and of yourself. So it's not ... Yeah, being a musician isn't about ... it's not your entire life basically.

**Rebecca Toal**

I feel like, as musicians or creatives, we place so much emphasis on our callings in life without actually stopping to find out whether it makes us feel okay.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I mean, it's romanticised a lot as well, like, being an artist like, "Oh, this is my destiny," you know? But yeah, I think it, for me, it was more just that I'd always done it. And I remember when I first had a break when I was about 13, I remember thinking, "what have I done? Like, I've been doing this for 10 years. And I don't know anything else. So who am I?" And then kind of coming back to it, it was fine. But I think this time around, I was more confident in stopping, because I'd already done it. But I think the identity thing was just as powerful, if not more, because I'd done it for even longer by then. And then all my friends were being musicians.

**Rebecca Toal**

That's huge.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, it was it was a big old identity...

**Hattie Butterworth**

To me, that's really inspiring. Like, just to know, because we all know that I'm always battling with exactly that, of how much do I really enjoy it? How much do I really want it? Bla bla bla bla bla. But to hear like that, you ... I don't know, I'm really curious, actually, when you do play, there's all this stuff about you know, you lose a certain amount when you don't practise all the time, but I just want to know, like, quite nosily what does it feel like when you play again, after having not played for a few months or whatever you do? Do you feel like "shit! I'm so bad now!" or do you just feel like "oh, okay, whatever."?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Well, I know that it's not as good as it could be if I'm playing, but I don't really care about it. I'm just more like, "Oh, I'm just gonna play." And then I'm amazed at myself at how much I can play.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah!

**Olivia Da Costa**

I'm like "wow! My fingers can do this?!" And I've memorised like, Elgar ello Concerto and I've still got it in my brain, like, it's so cool.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

It's so cool. So I think yeah, it's not ... when I play, it's not necessarily like to feel good, I just feel like doing it. It's not to make myself feel bad or make myself feel good. It's just, just to play.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, it's like the other day when you picked up that piece and ...

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

... played it just for fun. And it was like, "holy shit! This can actually be enjoyable."

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's the thing. Yeah, cuz I was saying that, obviously, I've now got a full time job so I've kind of got this slight thing in the back of my mind where like, I should be practising all the time, I should be. But I've really tried to let go of that and say, "You don't have to." And I was saying I barely practised for a few months and then the other day, you know, I was in the shop and I realised I didn't have a music stand, and I really wanted to buy a music stand because I was realising, "oh, there's this piece that I really want to learn." So I was just like, kind of just really casually bought a music stand, bought the piece, and went home and just had a nice little play.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

But I just hadn't had that experience for so many years, but it's like that should be more frequent, I think.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

It should, it shouldn't always have felt like a, like a serious piece of work to practise, you know. Practice is work to me, and it's never something I want to do on a day off, you know, but I don't like that idea of like having to have my day off as a freedom from the cello. I feel like it should be more organic than that.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah, freedom from practice, maybe but not necessarily from playing. It doesn't mean...

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

... you have to, like, play intensely or something. Yeah, I remember when I was trying to get back after having a big break, when I had COVID, and I was just ... I kind of went back to the trumpet. And I was like, "I should do some technique because I know that's gonna be the first thing that's gone." And then Aaron, actually, trumpet player, he was like, "why don't you just like..." because there's loads of these, like, trumpet play along tracks on YouTube of like...

**Hattie Butterworth**

Oh yeah!

**Rebecca Toal**

... the concertos but just the piano part and that kind of stuff. And it was so fun just to play through concertos that I didn't know, hadn't learned or like, kind of knew. And I was like, "wow, this is so cool." And then it made me really sad when it got like a few days later, and I was like, "oh, now, I have to practise my stuff again instead of just doing this."

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

Olivia, I was wondering ... so most of the people that you know now, are they still musicians? And do you hang out with a majority of musicians still?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

Is there any element ... because before we were talking ... Hattie and I were at least, we were talking a bit about jealousy. And we're due to go to a gig together on Tuesday, technically. And it'll be the first ... oh, no, I did go to one with my brother a few weeks ago. But, at the moment, I'm in a very much in a place of, "I don't want to go to concerts because I'm feeling really bitter and jealous about not having work" and in a very fragile place. Does any of that resonate with you and hanging out with musicians at the moment?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Not my friends, I don't think. It's something that I have come to terms with over the last couple of years. So ... and even like during college, a lot of my friends were gigging all the time and gigging with their friends and going on tour. And I was like, "Oh, why am I not doing that? Like, I really want to do that." And not...Yeah, just not being in that world was quite difficult, I think. But my friends now, I'm always happy to see what they're doing and very supportive of what they do. It's just not my life anymore. So I don't feel like I'm missing out on something because I'm living a life where I'm doing something I do like, that's mine.

**Rebecca Toal**



Yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

So, but I think, I mean, I think I have probably been jealous, just of like, looking on Instagram and...

**Rebecca Toal**

Classic.

**Olivia Da Costa**

...seeing stories of people playing in different things. But like, also, I actually did a ... I did a Star Wars tour recently. Very hard music, and ...

**Rebecca Toal**

Star Wars is so hard!

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, really hard. And I hadn't played in ages. And I was like, "Oh, this'll be a really fun thing to do." I did it, and I was tired the entire time and I wanted to be at home the entire time.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Really?

**Olivia Da Costa**

So, you know, it's not all that really. Some people love it, but it's funny that that's something that I have previously been quite jealous... Also, by the way, that was like one of my first things of ever doing that sort of thing. So I was, I didn't really know what to expect. I thought it's gonna have a great time. I did have a great time. But I also didn't have a great time by like, with all the travelling and just like, eating really badly and...

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's so good to know.

**Olivia Da Costa**

You're staying in crappy Travel Lodges, and you know...

**Rebecca Toal**

Being around everyone all the time.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, it's a lot. You know, it's a lot. And I think it's funny that that's something that I was previously jealous of. Because now I'm like, "Why are you jealous? You've got..."

**Hattie Butterworth**

Kind of good that you experienced what you thought you wanted.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Like, to know actually, "what I've glamorised isn't..."

**Rebecca Toal**

The truth.

**Hattie Butterworth**

...Isn't the truth." Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

It's just Instagram isn't it? Like...

**Rebecca Toal**

Or like hearing stories from people, and you're like, "oh, that sounds so fun." And then you realise that, I dunno, if I ever tell stories about gigs, like, I don't want to come across as like a Debbie Downer and be like, "oh, yeah, I just really didn't, didn't enjoy all that." You want to tell people ... you want to be like, not the life and soul of that party, but you don't want to be somebody that's always like, "Yeah, I'm not sure if this is for me," because everyone's like, "Well, then why are you doing it?" And you're like, "it's not that simple."

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, I guess also, that reminds me of like, orchestral stuff, because I never really wanted to do it. I think I thought I wanted to do it, because I was like, I had some family friends who were both in LSO and I was like, "Oh, they have such a great life. They have family, and they've got, they've got a nice house in London, and they get to go on tour and all this stuff." And I think I've glamorised that a lot and was like, "Oh, I really want to do that." And then when it came down to it, I actually don't want to work my ass off to do something that I don't actually want to do. Like, it's so competitive, and it's pretty soul destroying. You have to play in very, very specific way, which is not my style at all. And, and then you might get a job, or you might get a seat. But you also have a very high chance of not getting one and then ... I don't know, it just seemed like an awful lot of work and stress for something that isn't all that.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

I think also musicians are incredibly good at balancing things because they have to, so you often see people that do have a family, a house, like they have all these things, but actually, their enjoyment of those things is totally compromised by the fact that they're doing all those things.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's a really good point. But I've got a question for you.

**Rebecca Toal**

Do you?

**Hattie Butterworth**

I do.

**Rebecca Toal**

Wait for me?

**Hattie Butterworth**

Not for you, no. I'm sick of talking to you. You know, if someone listening is going through a period of like, "oh my gosh, do I want to... you know, this doesn't feel right."

**Rebecca Toal**

What, every musician ever?

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah. But they feel like the voice of "oh, but it's what I've always done. Oh, but I put so much money into it. Oh, but people are rooting for me," you know? How did you kind of get rid of that sort of negative voice where you know, for you, this is wrong, but all these outside influences are still kind of really difficult to ignore?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Just time. Honestly. It's just just time like, it's not something that I easily have worked through. It might appear that way. It might appear that way, if you kind of, like look on my Instagram, and you see "oh, I went to college" and "oh, I'm a photographer." It's not... It's just not like that. And I had, yeah, I had like a really horrible couple of years being like, "I don't know who I am", and really kind of struggling with that, and I was always quite good at what I did and like, I found things quite easy and it was hard to kind of face up to the fact that being a cellist might not actually happen for me. It just didn't really fall into place as being something that I wanted for myself. And I think as soon as I kind of took out the element of what I thought everyone,...

**Rebecca Toal**

We understand what you mean.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, the element of like...

**Rebecca Toal**

Expectation.

**Olivia Da Costa**

...Expectation and what I should be doing, because I've always done it. As soon as I took that out, it made it a lot easier and just kind of thinking about what I really want. And then building up from there, I think that stopping teaching, even though it's obviously nothing to do with music college, but it's also something to do with music college, because a lot of people do it, taking that leap of faith of being like, "I'm gonna stop teaching." I was really lucky, like I had, I had the opportunity to do that and I don't know, if we haven't had a pandemic, I don't know if that actually would have happened. So who knows? I think it's just pure luck that I've kind of got to where I am now. But I think it probably would have ... I think it probably would have come to it at some point, maybe later down the line. But yeah, there's no ... I don't really have any golden nuggets of advice about it to be honest. I think, I think it is just just time and getting to know yourself and what you want. And hard work. Like, it takes a lot of work to, to do that. And I don't mean hard work in the sense of... "go to work!"

**Olivia Da Costa**

I mean...

**Hattie Butterworth**

The real hard work.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Or like "you must practise".

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

No, I mean, hard work in the sense of actually being honest with yourself.

**Hattie Butterworth**

That is the hardest thing to do. Like, that feels so risky doesn't it?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

"Oh, my God, I don't want to find out who I really am,"... like.

**Rebecca Toal**

And also the fact that it is ... so much of it is luck. And I don't know if you meant to say it, but you said something like, it didn't fall into place, that I it was something that I wanted to do. And I think that is so true that you can put in all the work, be around all the right people, be amazing at something and love

it, and then at some point, you just fall out of love with it, just due to luck. And that is something completely beyond your control sometimes.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Exactly.

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's a really good way of putting it actually,

**Olivia Da Costa**

I guess, with music as well, you ... if you start specialising in it quite young, you don't necessarily see that, because it's all set up for you. Like every single stage is like, "Oh, you've got to get your grade eight."

**Olivia Da Costa**

Your awareness of it...

**Olivia Da Costa**

Or "you've gotta get your diploma, and you've got to get into a music school, you've got to get into college," Like all of these things... And then you've got to graduate and you've got to find a job, like all of these things kind of are set out for you. And there's no kind of room of like, "maybe I don't want to" or like "maybe there's something else that I can do as well". And I think that's why I really like doing photography, because it wasn't a conscious decision. Like, it was very much something that, yeah, that fell into place. And it wasn't... it wasn't something that I had to, like, study for and pass an exam. I just have learned to do it myself.

**Rebecca Toal**

Yeah. So can you see this being a long term career for you now?

**Olivia Da Costa**

I don't know.

**Rebecca Toal**

That's great.

**Hattie Butterworth**

I love...

**Rebecca Toal**

I love her!

**Hattie Butterworth**

I know ... she knows how to answer the questions.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, maybe. I mean, it's not, it's not something that I'm planning for, because I didn't plan for it in the first place. So I think that makes it more exciting. So you can kind of find other things. And yeah, I'm totally open to like anything ... anything coming my way really, like, who knows, maybe in five years, I'll be a bus driver. You know, might be passionate about bus driving.

**Rebecca Toal**

Someone told me that if you don't crash on your shift, you get bonuses.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Really?

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's the bare minimum, isn't it? Bloody hell. That's like, if you turn up to your teaching, you get a bonus.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah, that'd be great.

**Hattie Butterworth**

So if someone's really interested in having a photo shoot with you, and wants to get some photos done, but, I don't know, they're worried about what to do, how to be, what to wear, you know, can you kind of just give us a bit of an overview of what is it...What is it like to get some photos done by you? You know, what's the process?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Okay, so first thing to do is send me a message. Instagram tends to be my main thing, but email is also great. I'm actually trying to start having kind of a phone conversation with people now because it just cuts out a lot of time and kind of back and forth. So yeah, so we just kind of discuss what sort of vibe you want to go for, what sort of location you want, whether you want it inside or outside. And then in terms of what you wear, it's honestly totally up to you. I'm never going to be like "oh you need to wear this because that's what you should wear." It's always very much like "bring what you feel comfortable in but also what you would normally wear" because I think if you try to ...if you try to kind I wear stuff that you don't normally wear or like, I don't know, if you have glasses and you don't wear your glasses, you're probably not gonna like the photos afterwards.

**Hattie Butterworth**

I had that battle with myself today.

**Rebecca Toal**

Really?

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah, I do have lenses, but I basically never wear them anyway.

**Olivia Da Costa**

It was nice to see you bring your glasses.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Thank you.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Because they feel like part of me.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Exactly. And I think some people feel like they should present themselves in different way, which I actually kind of get like, I think sometimes if I'm trying to do something for myself, I like to dress up and kind of make myself feel nice.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Yeah.

**Olivia Da Costa**

So maybe there's part of that, which is also totally fine. But I think on the whole, it's probably better to show up as you are. So yeah. And I guess if you have any specific ideas, I'm always really, really open to them. And I try my best to make it work.

**Hattie Butterworth**

How long does a kind of session normally last would you say?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Can be between ... probably about 45 minutes to a couple of hours. Um, it just really depends on what you want to do and kind of how many locations you want to do and stuff like that.

**Rebecca Toal**

And if you're slightly less silly than us.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Nah I like the sillies.

**Hattie Butterworth**

You like the sillies do you?

**Olivia Da Costa**

Yeah.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Aww. Any more questions?

**Rebecca Toal**

No, I was just gonna say thank you so much for talking to us after Olivia very kindly took our photos for us.

**Hattie Butterworth**

It was so fun. Honestly, just come see the house like ...

**Rebecca Toal**

No, we can't invite people to her house!

**Hattie Butterworth**

Well, thank you so much. we are so just, yeah. thrilled.

**Rebecca Toal**

If people want to find you on the web.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Oh, yeah.

**Rebecca Toal**

Where do they find you?

**Olivia Da Costa**

instagram.com/oliviadacostaphoto. That's probably that's the best place to find me.

**Hattie Butterworth**

What did they don't have Instagram?

**Olivia Da Costa**

It's also on Facebook.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Okay.

**Olivia Da Costa**

Same thing. Olivia Da Costa Photo.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Cool.



**Olivia Da Costa**

I do have a website, but it's a free one, so I don't have a, ... I don't have the...

**Hattie Butterworth**

Domain

**Olivia Da Costa**

Domain. Should probably sort that out.

**Hattie Butterworth**

That's alright. That's perfect.

**Rebecca Toal**

And if you want to follow us, we're @tmdtapodcast on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and our website

**Hattie Butterworth**

We DO have a domain.

**Rebecca Toal**

Our website is [www.thingsmusiciansdonttalkabout.com](http://www.thingsmusiciansdonttalkabout.com). Please buy us a coffee or our stickers or sponsorship. Amazing.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Wow. You've been practising that.

**Rebecca Toal**

No, I just been listening to our last episode where we did it quite well.

**Hattie Butterworth**

Did we? Brilliant.