

Sound Expertise

Season 2, Bonus Episode – Our Pandemic Year

TRANSCRIPT prepared by Andrew Dell'Antonio

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Will Robin 00:01

Welcome back to Sound Expertise. I'm your host, Will Robin. And this is a podcast where I talk to my fellow music scholars about their research, and why it matters. Many of us haven't done much research at all since March 2020. Like everyone else, we've been in emergency mode, working remotely, caring for friends and family, struggling and grieving. I wanted to honor what this pandemic year has been, while acknowledging that it is far from over. So I put out a call in May for music scholars to give us a call, we set up a voicemail so that anyone could leave us a message about their experiences during the pandemic. The rest of this episode is devoted to their contributions. And I'm grateful to all of those who shared with us. As always, you can learn more about the podcast at soundexpertise-org. And as always, I am extraordinarily grateful to my producer D. Edward Davis for his work. Let's listen now, together.

Ravi Krishnaswami 01:03

Hi, my name is Ravi Krishnaswami. I'm a musician, composer, and now scholar in early stages. And I was definitely affected by the pandemic and the timing. It happened to coincide with me starting my first year at Brown University as a musicology PhD student. What that meant for me was meeting my whole cohort over zoom, and taking eight classes over two semesters all on zoom. It was really wonderful to finally meet some of my classmates, in the last month or so. I can only describe the feeling as -- Wow, you exist in three dimensions. One of the things that the pandemic really amped up for me was screen

time, and using my eyes, between three-hour seminars on zoom, and then receiving all the readings as PDFs and any other things I was looking for, if I needed something from the library, they would scan it and send it to me as PDF. I was so grateful for this podcast, because it gave me an opportunity to extend some of my time thinking and engaging with scholarship without actually looking at a screen, I could put something in my ears and get outside. So thank you, Will, for everything you're doing here.

Unidentified Speaker 1 02:53

Hi, Will, I'm a musicology professor at a college in the Atlanta area that serves mostly first generation, non-traditional and full time working students. I have been nothing but impressed by my students this last year during COVID. They've been finding ways to experience music that moves them through difficult days, through creating and sharing collaborative playlists with their classmates or making music in person during class when we meet outdoors, we've only been meeting outdoors. So this has really been our focus these last few months, I haven't been so worried about test scores and attendance. And the students have actually stepped up to an even greater engagement level than I've ever experienced in my eight years of teaching. They want to be in the classroom, and they want to be experiencing music in person. And I think most importantly, and what I've been most honored by, is that students have been more willing than ever to speak up with me about their personal lives. They want to share their struggles and hardships from COVID. And also to share their tramp through this time. So if I could say this in all caps, I AM SO PROUD OF THEM. And all I feel is even greater hope for the future. So thanks, Will, for offering this place to share. Take care.

Unidentified Speaker 2 04:33

I don't really feel I have the right to share my story or take up space. Because I've had it so much better than so many young academics at my stage. And I'm privileged in many ways. I'm a white, able bodied woman, I did not get COVID nor did any of my family members. And I've worked at the same institution since I graduated from my PhD in 2017 and have benefited immeasurably from the many opportunities that that affiliation has brought with it. And I've also had health insurance through my employer all the while. I also feel apprehensive about sharing my story because of how it might reflect on me professionally as a woman that I might come across as indignant and unhinged, disqualifying myself from future opportunities or collaborations down the line. And yet, part of me feels strongly that my story deserves to be told in the hopes that other academics in similar positions might feel seen and affirmed. Last April, at the end of my three-year postdoc, I was informed that I had landed one of the tenure-track positions I had interviewed for as the finalist, but that it couldn't ultimately be offered due to a campus wide hiring freeze. It was a loss. I've literally grieved all year. At around about the same time, my father was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo urgent invasive surgery to have a tumor removed from his chest that was pressing up against his heart. I wasn't able to travel home to be with him because of the Canadian US border closure. And in fact to date, I haven't seen him since December 2019. Fortunately, my department and department chair were very sympathetic, and my department chair was able to offer me a one-year lectureship that would ultimately see me through the pandemic, and I am eternally grateful to her and to them for that opportunity. So I worked tirelessly on my teaching all year and forged ahead in my job search, determined to give it another shot. But as the months rolled on, I felt a loss of hope in the face of ever dwindling job prospects. By the 2021 interview season, I had descended into a deep depression, and preparing for interviews was more emotionally taxing and pressure-filled than before, because of the previous year's gut-wrenching loss. The very real possibility

of continued rejection was unbearable to me, particularly given that I was nearly four years beyond my PhD, I was already grieving the loss of jobs to come. I would wake up at night with feelings of dread, and the only thing I could do to soothe my anxieties was to open up my computer and mindlessly scroll through my social media. I woke up on the morning of an interview with a pounding headache and told my partner, I don't want to live like this anymore. I don't want to live this life anymore. My time in the virtual classroom with my students was always a bright spot in my weeks and kept me going. I felt I had to be strong for them and took great care to affirm their insights and exercise large amounts of compassion and make great affordances. But underneath it all, I felt alone and despairing, unsure of what I might do once my lectureship ran out. Because academia was all I had ever known. My relationship also suffered, I grew distant from my partner, irritable and prone to angry outbursts. I could only pull myself out of the negative headspace by numbing the pain through intense daily exercise, but the effects were only ever temporary. Perpetual job instability is the death of mental health, living in full time fight or flight mode when you are your sole provider, not knowing what the next year might bring, if anything at all, despite your very best efforts and achievements, comes with a loss of professional dignity and sense of self-worth. For me, it was a pain during the pandemic that mostly went unspoken until now, out of necessity, concealed behind a professional polish and gracious deference but daily tugged at my heart and mind, obliterating any fleeting moments of peace and calm. People on the inside would invoke the brokenness of the system in response, like it was just a normal part of the struggle — like structural change, and labor reform is out of reach.

My story ultimately has a happy ending, in that I wound up landing a spectacular tenure track job at a fantastic school in a beautiful city. But that's only because I got damn lucky. I have no illusions about that. And it was a hard-won battle, and a long time coming. I wouldn't wish my struggle upon anyone. But unfortunately, it's so pervasive. As I settle into my new role, I'm consciously taking steps to heal myself, to recuperate my sense of self-worth and inhabit my expertise, to feel worthy and deserving for a change.

K Goldschmitt 09:49

Hey there, I'm K Goldschmitt and I'm a music scholar at Wellesley College. The most difficult thing about the pandemic for me as a scholar was suddenly being cut off from the research I most like to do. I love libraries. And I love learning about the social meaning of music by going to places where the music is happening, and then talking to musicians about it. In 2019, I was lucky enough to have a sabbatical to do some preliminary research in Portugal, and stretch myself as a scholar. That is no longer possible. I was also planning to spend some of last summer digging around in an archive in California to tie up some loose ends on an article I've been working on for a few years now. But both of those projects are now in limbo. But you know, I think I'm a bit lucky or even privileged, the whole thing about being cut off from the things I love most about research was really difficult for me, but I had a regular income. And so my stress was strictly psychological. So, I tried to learn some new skills. I started doing crossword puzzles, sometimes more than one a day, and I rode my bike all the time, I even learned a new instrument. And as a teacher, I completely dove into it, I started making podcasts for my courses, because the results were tangible. I could hear them, I could share them with people who weren't in my classes. And I think that focus pushed me into some fun, new ways to stretch as a teacher, to even be better. I actually think I'm better as a teacher in remote formats than I am in person these days. And I'm starting to think about completely different projects that don't require going places

to do the research. The one thing I'm most hopeful about moving forward is that maybe we'll all be more generous with each other in our research, teaching, and just, you know, being human. So thanks for asking.

Laurie Stras 11:53

Hi, Will — Laurie Stras here. I guess the way the pandemic has affected me most is that I got sick with COVID in the middle of March, and really started to manifest the symptoms on the last day of March. And so everything that has happened to me since then, during lockdown, and to my group, and to my scholarship has been colored by having got sick and having developed long COVID. That slowed me down, it slowed my mental processing down, particularly; and whereas physically, the effects have been hard on my voice, as you can hear, and hard on my joints, the main thing that I've been left with is kind of brain fog. And it's been really hard to string together big thoughts. [laughs] And — but one of the best things about the pandemic was that I've been able to participate and chat with people. And if I rest enough, then I can keep my head together long enough to talk to people like yourself, and for podcasts, and doing workshops and things online. And my group, Musica Secreta, came to a standstill. And in fact, it is not emerging from the pandemic in the same shape that it went into it. My co-Director, Deborah Roberts, has decided to leave the professional stage as a singer and has stepped away from the group in order to concentrate on other things. I would say that that was a — that's a big change. And it required some grieving and thinking about what to do, and did I want to do this on my own. But in the end, Yes, I do. I still feel like the group has things to say. And I want to use the group as a way of building ... that it's legacy time now, I don't have any more pyramids to build or mountains to climb as a musicologist. Done that, been there, got the T shirt. So now it's about really ensuring that the work that we've done as a group and that I've done as a scholar can really feed in to the next generation of performing groups and scholars. And that's really what I want to do. I want to get the message out about women's voices. I want to stay engaged with that and we'll see what comes. Retirement beckons next year and [laughs] I'm looking forward to being more active than ever. It was a great pleasure to talk to you earlier on the year, thank you so much for reaching out, because that was a big spur for me to get my brain back. And I feel like I've been on an upward curve ever since. So sending everyone huge wishes for continued health, and good scholarship and joy in anything and everything that you do. Thanks a lot, Will, bye.

Sara Haefeli 15:39

Hi Will. This is Sara Haefeli. I'm a musicologist at Ithaca College. And before I talk about how this last year has shaped my life as a musicologist, I should note that, for the first 10 years of my career, I was an adjunct professor with one foot at school and one foot at home, with two small children during that time, and this past year reminded me a lot of those early days with my boys, we had a lot of home cooked meals, we had a lot of time together. And it was frankly very sweet. My oldest is now 21. My youngest is 18 and headed off for college in the fall. And I don't know that we would have had that intensive time together, had there not been a pandemic. I did a lot of teaching this past year on Zoom, which was difficult, and also quite worthwhile in many, many ways. Finished a book, wrote most of a book, made a lot of art. And I just think that those early years as a quasi-stay-at-home-mom musicologist really prepared me for a year of solitude during pandemic and helped me shape my work during this past time. Alright, hope that helps. All right, talk to you later. Bye.

Unidentified Speaker 3 / Dan 17:15

Hi Will - just wanted to say thanks so much for the show. I think it's really fantastic. My name is Dan, and I'm a music scholar based in Ohio. When the pandemic hit, I was working at Miami University. And the main impact that it had on me was that I lost my job. That's not very unique, of course, since so many of us have also lost work in the past year. But the reason I wanted to call in is because I was then, and am now, a contingently employed academic, along with the vast majority of scholars working in the United States. So when upwards of 75% of professors are contingent or precarious workers, it makes me feel that any conversation that we have about scholarship has to include a conversation about who can afford to do scholarship in the first place. The divide between tenure track faculty and everybody else is one of several structural inequalities in academia that affects research and has been exacerbated by the pandemic. I fear that at the rate we're going there won't be many people left to study the humanities, music included. This isn't a new problem. But the pandemic has added some kind of urgency to all these issues, I think. Anyway, thanks again. And thanks for opening up the phone lines. Take care.

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 18:37

Hey Will, this is Andrew Dell'Antonio. So, this last year — on a large scale, I'd say the events of the last year have solidified my awareness of my own privilege, in terms of identity as well as position. Throughout this pandemic, the economic and financial and political turmoil, the freak Texas storm that left us without power and water for several days, my financial and employment stability put me in a position to work from home and keep my family safe. This is something that so many people in precarious positions weren't able to do. And it's also brought me to feel increasingly responsible for using my privilege ethically, for being an accountable gatekeeper, removing barriers to access equity, and passing the mic to those who seek platforms for justice. More specifically, I've been fascinated by how many elements of academic culture that used to be, well, that used to require accommodations that were only earned through official medical diagnosis — so many of these shifted to an assumption that everybody should have these accommodations, these adaptations available. Remote learning didn't suit everyone, didn't suit all bodyminds. Both my Autistic kids had a less fulfilling school year, to say the least, because their schools were not able to adapt their resources to remote learning effectively. But several students in my classes clearly benefited from the kinds of flexibilities that our university told us faculty to provide. University even decided that students could choose up to three classes to change from letter grade to pass/fail, with no academic penalty, even after final grades had been submitted by their instructors. So I doubt this last grading flexibility will survive the pandemic. But it was both humane and sensible. And I think it reveals how aware even the administration is of the toxic effect of grade competition on learning. So the pandemic has made me even more determined to implement ungrading, and similar course design strategies to entrust students with greater agency over their own learning. Back to a more global level, I think everything that's happened in the last year has given me a greater sense of urgency to facilitate progressive change, using the strength, authority, and privilege I have gathered over the years. I'm involved in several projects that connect in multiple ways to musicology and pedagogy and Disability Justice. And [chuckles] I know my ADHD brain will induce me to overcommit to more. And I am excited and maybe irresponsibly optimistic about the future.

Siv B Lie 21:59

My name is Siv Lie, and I teach music at the University of Maryland. And for me, one of the silver linings of the pandemic has had to do with teaching, which is somewhat surprising. And I think about how so many of us, myself included, have had to make a lot of adaptations to teaching online, and how that's taken so much time out of our days, which is especially frustrating since many of us are going back to teaching in person very soon. But for me, the positive side to all of this extra work has been that it's really forced me to dig deep into my pedagogical approaches, and to figure out which ones really do help students. and then which ones may not be so helpful. And I think the fact that we've had to go through or that I've had to go through all of my materials and reformat them in some way or another has meant that I paid extra close attention to my pedagogical approaches. So I think that doing this has been a really important way for me to ensure that my teaching is accessible in a lot of different ways, accessible to students who have different skills and abilities, and also the students who just have different access to resources. So now, during this summer of 2021, I'm really trying to take all of the adjustments that I made, and all the things I learned about my own teaching methods. I'm trying to take these things forward in whatever ways I can as I prepare to teach in person this fall. And I think this is probably the case for a lot of people, which can mean not only a better integration of remote teaching methods that we've been working on so hard this past year, but also a better use of our in-person time. So that's my glass half full take on how the pandemic has affected me, and I'll spare you details of other ways in which it has.

Cecilia Livingston 23:53

My name's Cecilia Livingston, I'm composer-in-residence at Glyndebourne and a postdoc in musicology at King's College London. And I was living in the UK, in London, when the pandemic started. I ended up coming back to Canada partway through the year so I've experienced the pandemic on two continents. I feel like I've enjoyed all the lockdowns, the BBC says Toronto has had one of the longest lockdowns in the world. I guess I'm still waiting for my sourdough and yoga pandemic experience. To be honest, I'm not sure really how much perspective I have on this last year plus of the pandemic. What intrigues me is that in the initial moments of quiet, I did what I think is my best compositional work. The best piece that I think I've made came directly out of that very tense stillness. And I've really savored how Zoom opened up these democratic spaces both for creators and producers and between academics. I've been grateful that we seem to be better at giving each other consideration, I guess, or compassion — both our students and our colleagues in performance and in academia, there's been more openness and understanding in these communities, I think, of accepting that some people have complicated lives. But I'm worried that this compassion, this empathy won't last. I'm hesitating about being joyful about that. Because I've also noticed this really insidious “hurry up” culture for creators in these last months, there's been so much content generated so quickly, and this at times overwhelming expectation that we're all just sitting around waiting to make something — anything — now! And the academic in me wonders, what will stick and what won't, what new works, what new ways of making will endure and what we'll get away from as quickly as possible as soon as possible. I wonder if institutions will be as profoundly changed by the conversations and the social unrest that arose during the pandemic, or if it will just snap right back. Maybe the grief of the pandemic will be followed by grief for the tremendous opportunity for change that we had, that perhaps we're just too burnt out to really take up. I've been thinking a lot these days about Robert Hughes's documentary, *The Shock of the New*, he makes this wonderful comment, which I think is a better way of saying what I'm trying to say. So I'll see if I can remember it. But he said that “We have had a gut full of fast art and fast food. What we need more of is

slow art: art that holds time as a vase holds water; art that grows out of modes of perception and making, whose skill and doggedness makes you think and feel; art that isn't merely sensational, that doesn't get its message across in seconds, that isn't falsely iconic, that hooks onto something deep-running in our nature.”

Jesse Rodin 27:09

I'm Jesse Rodin, professor at Stanford University and the director of the vocal ensemble Cut Circle and of the Josquin Research Project. I'm writing in with some reflections about COVID. I'm always wary when people overemphasize the opportunities — so called opportunities — that COVID has brought, since overwhelmingly what it's done is make all of our lives so much more difficult. But I will say something about one silver lining, which pertains to a graduate seminar on the composer Josquin Desprez that I taught at Stanford this past spring. It would have been a course for just a small number of interested students, but thanks to Zoom, turned into what I referred to as a weekly international conference, with scholars and students joining in from the west coast all the way to mainland Europe. And because of the particular group we had assembled, it was really a ton of fun and very productive, as we worked through a whole range of long-standing issues in Josquin scholarship, and new questions. I think the main things I'd emphasize were some pretty stunning discoveries about the music, and real progress on the canon, which is going to have -- show its fruits in an article that I'll have coming out in Early Music this fall. So this was a case where it was possible to connect with people I would otherwise have seen in person only after a very long time, and on a zoom call, where a normal seminar would have been something completely different. Again, just a silver lining. But one nice thing to point out in this crazy time.

Unidentified Speaker 4 / Paula 28:55

Hey, Sound Expertise. I'm Paula, and I'm a musicologist who studies music, sound and the internet. If we're talking about pandemic experiences, I want to shout out something that has given me a great deal of joy during the pandemic. And that is finding virtual ways to share scholarship. In the past year and a half, I've gotten to meet lots of new people and hear a lot of rich academic work, some of which I probably wouldn't have gotten to encounter via standard in-person academic conferences and colloquia because of issues like geography and expense. So, virtual conferences, virtual colloquia, they've all been really, really valuable and beneficial and joyful for me, this pandemic year, even if that's something deeply nerdy to admit to. A particular source of joy for me at the beginning of the pandemic was a specific virtual colloquium series that I put together with one Will Robin -- Yes, *this* Will Robin -- Hi, Will! -- and our virtual colloquium series was called Music Scholarship at a Distance, MSAD or #musiccoloq for short. Looking back, it's wild to me that we threw it together so quickly -- we got it up and running by the middle of March 2020 -- and that it went so relatively smoothly. We had presentations every weekday for almost two months, with only a few hiccups of technology and early on -- Yep, a couple of Zoombombers. During the many weeks of #musiccolloq we had great and varied individual presentations, roundtables and workshops, we had a few scholars give their first ever conference papers. Those were really, really special days for me, and I hope also for the scholars in question. And above and beyond all that, we had this ad-hoc musical/musicological community, folks who showed up every day or almost every day, and folks who showed up once or twice, but those folks kept up productive and rowdy and punny commentary in the zoom chat. They showed off their pandemic sourdough or cats or dogs or kids, they danced along to our outro music. The pandemic was

a hard time, it's been a hard time, it continues to be a hard time for lots of folks. But those afternoons of #musiccolloq, they stand out for me as bright spots. So I just want to give a shout out to the MSAD / #musiccolloq fam, the music scholarship at a distance crew, and my fingers are crossed that musicology and academia can enfold more of the benefits of virtual conferences, from things like increased accessibility and affordability, to things like joyful collegial chat raucousness, I hope that we can enfold those more into the practices and standards of our field going forward. Looking forward to the episode as always -- thanks, Sound Expertise!

Will Robin 32:22

I'm Will Robin. And I'm a musicologist at Maryland, and I host this podcast -- and I normally heavily script out the intros and outros that I do for Sound Expertise and read them a million times, and mess them up a bunch and I hate recording them. But I wanted to do this off the cuff. And I knew the one thing that I wanted to talk about was my son Ira. Ira is a COVID Baby. He is about to be one year old, I'm recording this in the end of June, he was born on July 5. And yeah, it's pretty strange and amazing to be a parent, a new parent, this is our first kid, during a pandemic, it's been a way to mark time to be immersed in watching someone grow older every month, and new things are happening every month. And it's been incredibly hard. The isolation of parenting, especially in those early months of the pandemic, we were incredibly lucky and incredibly fortunate to get to see one set of Ira's grandparents fairly often. But there are a lot of people we didn't get to see. And we're finally seeing them now. And it's just so amazing and weird and beautiful for this kid who's now a fully formed kid with his own personality to meet his cousins, and his aunts and uncles. And he met my wife's father, his Zayde, just a couple of days ago for the first time. And the thing I'm constantly going back and forth about is this whole ... I feel incredibly, incredibly lucky and incredibly privileged. So much privilege that I do not know anyone personally who died, of all the thousands and thousands of thousands of people who have died, that we were insulated from that kind of grief. And thinking about that, versus the collective grief of what this has done to our communities and to our country to our world. And in the conversations that I have with people, that's the first thing that we talk about. We're so lucky, we didn't lose our jobs, I could teach online, I could be a musicologist or whatever it was, at home, and be a parent. But I also feel like, when I foreground that kind of thing, like the luck and the privilege, it's also a way to bury the stuff that I don't want to think about. Or that I don't spend enough time processing -- of what it was like to be in March 2020, not knowing if COVID was the kind of thing that would hurt or kill my pregnant wife, or her baby, the beginning days of the pandemic, not knowing what the effects were on pregnant women, or by the time we got to the hospital in July to give birth, it was safe, it was a routinized thing to give birth in hospital during COVID -- But it was still wild and crazy and intense, and then just the whole thing playing out of just becoming a father without knowing other fathers, my wife becoming a mother, a new mother without being able to experience what that's like in the world. And Ira -- Ira seems totally unfazed by all of this. He's an incredibly social, kid. I mean, he's just perfect in every way. And loves people, loves being on the road. We've been on the road the last week visiting family, and he just seems so happy to be in the car, going from one place to another place. And it's just -- I don't know -- I think I've hit the time limit that I was hoping for. And I don't have any big conclusions, really. But yeah, I was just thinking about how lucky we are, but also thinking about how much we've lost, and how much that is nothing compared to what other people have lost, and just being grateful for our son. I made the call to say, how did you experience the pandemic as a scholar, but that's how I experienced the pandemic, the teaching online was fine. The scholarship was fine. But this was the thing. So um, yeah.

Unidentified Speaker 5 / Rob 37:19

Hi, there. My name is Rob, I teach English for a community college in the Boston area, and also composition. And my experience is interesting, because just before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was approved to teach a course in the English department on hip hop as literature. And that course has been put on hold, because I wanted to teach it in a face-to-face classroom for a lot of reasons. And it's interesting, because it has given me an opportunity to reflect on what it will mean to be a White professor and scholar teaching a course on African American music in an institution that serves a lot of minoritized communities. And it has given me a lot of time to reflect on that, and think about that. So I think when I finally get to actually teach the course, I will still teach it, but I'm going to teach it in a way that has a lot of areas where I'm thinking about what that means, as far as my students' experience, and what they could learn and what I'm learning as I am teaching. So we'll see how that turns out. Looks like the course will probably run somewhere in about a year or two. Thank you! Bye.

Emily Abrams Ansari 38:55

This is Emily Abrams Ansari, calling in from Canada. Yeah, it's been an interesting year, hasn't it? For me, as a parent of a seven-year-old, the main challenge of the year has been juggling my academic career with homeschooling, and the need to constantly trade off childcare and homeschooling with my husband, juggling our busy meeting schedules. I'm an administrator as well, so there's so many meetings, and that feeling of constantly rushing from one thing to the next, constantly being interrupted, only being able to really put out fires rather than ever make meaningful progress on anything with my work. And at least in the beginning, that feeling that I wasn't really doing anything in my life well. I wasn't parenting well. I wasn't advising well, I wasn't teaching well, I wasn't fulfilling my administrative role well. And that really took a toll. I think in more recent months, though, my son's been homeschooling for quite a few months now, his school's closed here in Ontario. In recent months, I don't know, we've reached this point of -- I want to say equilibrium, but that's probably too much. We've adjusted. And in some ways, it's been a real joy to have all that extra time with my son. And it's really forced me to prioritize with my work, a great deal of things have had to fall away. And mostly, of course, what that's ended up meaning, as I think for everyone, is that my research has really suffered. And that's been -- I found that hard, not having the mental space to write. In the early days, that provoked a huge amount of anxiety, feeling like I wasn't getting anywhere with my work. Now I feel much more calm about it. And I'm much more accepting of the fact that this has happened. And it's happened to me, it's happened to many people. And I think too, because having reached that point, has been in part too about coming to terms with what I *can* usefully contribute in the pandemic. And if I'm not churning out articles, or books, instead I'm really focusing on my service role, and focusing on the needs of my colleagues, and especially the needs of my students, and really trying to put them first and put my family first. I don't know, it's been a wonderful experience in a way to just put away the normally quite selfish pursuit of writing. I mean, it is a wonderful thing that we get to do, those of us that have academic positions, especially those in tenure track, and especially tenured positions, that we have this -- we're paid to write and work and contribute to our fields. But it is at the same time... in some ways, now, it feels quite an indulgent activity, which is an interesting outcome of all of this. And certainly too, both the pandemic and the political activities in the US and Canada, around Black and indigenous rights. All of these things have made me really reflect on my work and what I want to achieve with my

career. The ways in which my work may or may not be useful to society, I've been thinking a lot about whether I'm really contributing something meaningful that matters to people broadly, beyond our small group of scholars, with my work. And I'm thinking a lot more these days about social engagement, about public musicology, I'm devoting more time to projects that involve working with one's research subjects in a much more horizontal way, to try to achieve meaningful outcomes for them, rather than prestigious publications for me, and that means less publications, in the traditional scholarly formats, but it feels much more useful, more important. I also wrote a piece for The Conversation this year about music, trauma, and the pandemic. And that was also a very interesting, meaningful experience. First time I'd ever done that. And of course, that piece ended up receiving far, far, far more readers than any piece of academic scholarship I've ever written will, so that was also an interesting learning experience. And now something that I'm encouraging my graduate students to come to contemplate, too. I learned a lot about writing as well in the process of receiving feedback from the editors at The Conversation, who do a marvelous job. So yeah, an interesting year. Thanks for the opportunity to share on this. Take care.

Jake Cohen 44:01

Hi, I'm Jake Cohen. I'm a musicologist. I was teaching at a school in Ohio during the pandemic. And I'm currently located in Greenfield, Massachusetts. I had a really fantastic moment, teaching during the pandemic, which was that I had already come back to Massachusetts, all of my -- this was back in April of 2020. All of my students had gone home from the Conservatory, I had come back to Massachusetts, to my home as well. And everything was being done through Zoom. It was back during those early days of the pandemic, during spring 2020, when everyone was just sort of trying to get through and make it to the end of the year, and stay as sane and as grounded as they could. And so I was teaching a course -- an American music history survey course. And I was teaching about Tin Pan Alley song form, verse refrain form. And when I teach that topic, I like to use an example of a modern song that uses a Tin Pan Alley style verse refrain form. And so the song that I like to use for that is the song Tonight We Are Young, by Fun. featuring Janelle Monae. And so we're listening to the refrain part of the song, the AABA section. And I just started dancing in my chair, and mouthing the lyrics and singing along and smiling and banging my head and rocking out in my chair, on Zoom with my 15 students in their little zoom boxes, watching me. And as we got to the, the B section of the song -- na, na, na na na na, na, na, na na na na, na... we get to that. And I just start kind of fist pumping. And I'm really going for it. And gradually over the course of this listening, all my students in my Zoom Room, also start dancing, moving their heads at first, moving their shoulders. And by the end of it, they're all also dancing in their chairs. And this is this beautiful moment where, even though we were all going through this really traumatic and horribly grieving experience, we were able to just have this fun moment where all of our inhibitions that we would usually have, moving and dancing around to music in a classroom, were gone. And we could all just sort of be silly for a minute.

Imani Mosley 47:02

Hi, I'm Imani Mosley, and I'm a musicologist at the University of Florida here in Gainesville. And, wow, let's talk about my experience during the pandemic. It's been really interesting in the fact that it reflected kind of both ends of the spectrum of my life, really wonderful things and really terrible things, especially for me as a scholar. So for those who don't know me, my partner died from COVID in May of 2020. And about a month after that, maybe even less than a month after that, I accepted this tenure track job at

the University of Florida. So I was experiencing the worst grief of my life, while also experiencing what ended up being so far my greatest career achievement in the things that I had been striving for, which was landing this absolutely wonderful job at the University of Florida. And being in the pandemic distorts the way you respond to --or at least for me -- respond to or react to these big seminal moments in one's life. So, you know, grief is not a straight line, it doesn't happen all at once, it takes you by surprise. And what I realized was that the more things happened to me in my career as a scholar, so not just getting this job, but everything that kind of came after, was always -- there was always a twinge of grief and pain there, because the person who was my greatest supporter wasn't around to see this. And he saw all of the work that I put in, we started dating right before I entered my PhD. And he saw the whole process. And I'm so happy that he was able to see me defend my dissertation and graduate and get my first job at Wichita State, but this thing, this huge thing, he wasn't around for, and I was already experiencing a great deal of sort of academic survivor's guilt, because so many people... there were so few jobs. And everyone was really unsure about what the future was going to look like in academic music and academia writ large. And so there were a lot of complicated feelings about getting this job and continuing in my career. And I think that that really highlights what the past year or so has been for me, is that nothing is a straightforward feeling. Everything is complicated by something else. So the grief that I am still experiencing due to the loss of my partner has infected the way that I work, the way that I write, the way that I teach, stopping me from doing those things in the way that I would like to, I think. And also just the weirdness of being at a new job and not knowing anyone, not meeting anybody in person, no one seeing me and doing all the kinds of things that you would expect when you start at a new place. Not meeting my students in person for a long time, and then only meeting a few of them in person, and behind masks, and distanced.

Marian Wilson-Kimber 51:39

Hi -- I'm Marian Wilson-Kimber and I'm a musicologist in Iowa City. Several years ago, I wrote a book about women, music, and elocution. And when I was researching it, I spent a lot of time reading 19th century popular poetry in elocution books. And this is not the kind of poetry you would run into if you took an American literature class today. But I saw the same poetry published over and over again. And some of these poems were part of elocutionists' repertoires, even though they're now completely forgotten. Elocution books usually had a section labeled "Pathetic". And under that label there were poems about death, very often -- very often the death of babies and children. Today we think this is incredibly morbid and overwrought, and we can't imagine how somebody would want to read something like this. But these were standard themes in the poetry of the period. There are similar themes in popular song in the 19th century. And the song I've been thinking about a great deal is the song "On the Banks of the Wabash." It was written by Paul Dresser in 1897. Now, my dad hated this song. He hated how overly sentimental it is. He would say -- "Who cares about the Wabash? Where the heck is the Wabash anyway?" But On the Banks of the Wabash became the Indiana State song. So it was very well known. And it really covers all bases for the period. In the first verse, the singer is missing his dead mother. And in the second verse, he's missing the girl he wanted to marry, who has long since been buried in the churchyard. And it's actually a beautiful song, I recommend the recording by Joan Morris and William Bolcom. So I've listened to this song again recently. And I've thought about how 600,000 Americans have died. And it seems to me that as a society, we are lacking art that really helps us grieve the incredible losses that we've been facing. A hundred and fifty years ago, people would wear jewelry made out of the hair of people they loved and lost, or they would buy Currier and Ives prints,

with pictures of weeping willows, and tombstones where you could write the name of the person you were grieving. And you could hang this on your wall. So I've thought a lot about these works of art and the rituals that surround them. And I've wondered if the really deep societal denial we've seen, people refusing to wear masks, people refusing to get vaccinated, people saying "This is just a hoax." I wonder if they would think differently if when they went to the grocery store, half the people in the aisle buying soup were wearing black, as people did in the 19th century, for a year after they lost someone, if we could see it in front of us, in people's clothing, if we could hear it in the music, would we in some sense believe it more? And would we be able to cope with it more than I think as a society we have coped with it. I would really hope that composers would take the opportunity to make music that will help us to grieve and help us to process this horrible pandemic that we have come through, in a way that in the past -- people in previous centuries used art to help them with their own grief, and used art to help provide themselves with a sense of meaning and consolation. So that's maybe something sadder than you wanted to hear in this program. But that's really what I've been thinking about the most.

56:24

[To the accompaniment of a guitar, **D. Edward Davis** sings the first stanza and refrain of "On the Banks of the Wabash"]

Round my Indiana homestead wave the cornfields,
In the distance loom the woodlands clear and cool.
Oftentimes my thoughts revert to scenes of childhood,
Where I first received my lessons Nature's school.
But one thing there is missing in the picture;
Without her face it seems so incomplete.
I long to see my mother in the doorway,
As she stood there years ago her boy to greet.
 Oh, the moonlight's fair tonight along the Wabash;
 From the fields there comes the breath of new-mown hay,
 Through the sycamores the candlelights are gleaming,
 On the banks of the Wabash, far away.