

## Margaux Wosk Pt. 2 | Discover Stories Episode 82

### **Announcement** 0:09

The Strong Sessions are back. The Vancouver Adapted Music Society's flagship event celebrates musicians with disabilities, featuring performances from four talented artists and bands from our community. Join us on August 25, at the Roundhouse Community Centre from 5pm to 8pm. Tickets are by donation. For more information, visit the Vancouver Adapted Music Society on Facebook, @vamsociety on Instagram, or on our website [www.vams.org](http://www.vams.org). We hope to see you there.

### **Tanya Griffiths** 0:43

Yeah, for sure. Yeah, actually applying for grants is something that you are quite familiar in. And you've already expressed some of that almost frustration and sadness that you see. And then I'm wondering, like, what insights have you gained through the process, whether like about yourself or the systems and structures in place.

### **Margaux Wosk** 1:04

So, um, I do want to mention that one of the things that curil do to help people is I run a cohort with an organization called Curiko. And we aim to help people start and run their own, you know, creative, small business from conception, all the way through, you know, marketing, selling manufacturing, it is a free cohort, we hoped to do to get in the fall for our third iteration. And unfortunately, like, there's no grants to go along with that. So I wish that could be a thing. But I've spoken to a lot of organizations who have programs that help, you know, neurodivergent, or disabled people get hired through jobs, and there's so much funding available for very profitable businesses that already exist to hire these groups. And they don't need that money. And yet, when you talk about the programs that I think, need to have funding, there's no money for that. And so there is a really big disconnect. And I also think that it's sometimes threatening for these organizations to possibly think that a disabled or neurodivergent person could be self employed and could thrive in that, because that could remove their funding. And depending on how those businesses are structured, they've found ways to you know, get tax rebates, or to say that they've become more profitable because of this, these finances that they're getting, and they don't need them. And it's something that it really breaks my heart because any business has a legal obligation to not discriminate to accommodate until undue hardship. And that is part of I think, like the BC employment code or something like that, and I just, I can't understand how those, those are the ones those are the people, and those are the organizations that

are getting funding. And yet sometimes it feels like nobody will listen to me. So it's a really big wall to have to try to climb over. And, you know, I've spoken to even pertinent, you know, small business organizations, and it hasn't really gone anywhere. So it's just really devastating to me that people just, I don't think believe enough, in disabled or neurodivergent people being self employed. And they just won't fund it.

**Tanya Griffiths 3:43**

Yeah. Yeah, I'm hearing that there's money there. It's just about using the money to really empower the people that need it the most.

**Margaux Wosk 3:55**

Exactly. And I mean, that's not to say that people who strive in you know, inclusive employment aren't valid, they are. But you can hire inclusively, you're, you have to hire inclusively. And you should be able to do that and accommodate people without a bunch of money being thrown your way. Like, it's just a human thing to do. It's just the right and legal thing to do. I have no idea how those funds are allocated. But I don't think it's necessarily above board.

**Tanya Griffiths 4:30**

Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah. No, I hear you.

**Margaux Wosk 4:34**

I would love to be able to get, you know, to request seeing financial statements and see exactly how that's being allocated. So I have a better idea, but I don't even know if I if that is part of the Freedom of Information Act or how I would be able to get that but I think it's something that really does need to be investigated and, and looked into so if we're talking about job equality, and we're talking about income collusion when it comes to employment, which all of these organizations tout, they exclude self employment. So how are you truly being inclusive when you're talking about unemployment? If you're excluding us? Even BC Disability Employment Month in September excludes us. So we need to do better as a community and as a whole.

**Tanya Griffiths 5:20**

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Like, what would do you have any sort of ideas of, of how that would look like?

**Margaux Wosk 5:32**

Um, essentially, what it needs to do is they need to have the financing is available to help fund pre existing employment programs, you know, or people that have applied for, you know, self employment programs, because there are organizations out there that I can think of that have had their funding cut, or have applied for funding in this space and not received it. So like, as a whole, there needs to be a specific amount of money that the government, either federally or provincially is allocating to this, because we need it and when they start to see how people can thrive, and it's even supported self employment, you know, having a mentor, having a employment guide, you support us through that we could give back to the community so much more like we could potentially get off of government assistance. And I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with receiving government assistance, and needs to be more to be honest with you, but they should be empowering us and they're just not so the money if it's ever going to, you know, supported employment in another, you know, in a retail sector or whatever, they need to be matching that dollar for dollar for self employment.

**Tanya Griffiths 6:48**

Mm hmm. Yeah, I think you spoke to quite a bit right there. And I think it really brings to light like the urgency of of this and how important it is for folks who are self employed to receive that support from the government. And, and I was just wondering, just in case any of the folks who are tuning in want to learn more, can you just speak a little bit into Curiko? And, and what you what you like how you're involved?

**Margaux Wosk 7:20**

Yeah, so it's spelled C U R I K O, they're based in Vancouver. And they are an organization that helps to provide like free experiences to people. So they've done things like I think like poetry nights, art journaling, going to museums, like there's all kinds of stuff. And it's also a great way to get into the community and make friends find something to do learn something new. And they've just been really behind me in terms of helping me get my message out there and develop almost like a curriculum with slides that we go over, you know, weekly when we do our cohort. And so I'm still in, you know, communication with them to see what's going to happen next. But check it out. And if the cohort does happen again, it will be all the information will be on their website, which is [curiko.ca](http://curiko.ca).

**Tanya Griffiths 8:18**

Wonderful. Yeah. Thank you for sharing about that. And the next question, you've actually spoken, I'm sorry, you've actually spoke about this a little bit already. But there are many, many barriers that disabled folks experience when applying for jobs or entering a new work environment. And because of that, many of them turn to self employment to support their

livelihood. So this question comes in two parts. The first part is what changes would you like to see in the hiring process and within the work environment?

**Margaux Wosk 8:57**

Um, well, I can't speak too much to like the hiring process, if we're talking about like, being hired in terms of like by somebody else, because it's been a while that I've actually like worked. And on paper for me, I'm just a retail employee. I don't have the qualifications to even be, you know, even to go to business school or to take, you know, higher education math, because I dropped out in 11th grade and got my GED. So it's hard for me to speak to that. But what I do you want to say as again, it is an employer's legal obligation to not discriminate to hire inclusively to accommodate until undue hardship, which I don't even know how that gets proven or anything like that. And there are organizations out there that can help. I think like Neil Squire helps with, you know, technology and stuff like that there are third party you know, employment supported employment programs that can help people feel like they have somebody to fall back on or somebody to check in with when they get hired by somebody else. But for me, I've been out of that space for a number of years that I don't even know what it looks like right now. But I know for me that being employed outside my home for somebody else just caused me a lot of anxiety, grief, stress, depression, and yeah, I don't experience those things being self employed.

**Tanya Griffiths 10:24**

Mm hmm. Yeah, yeah, for sure. And this is sort of this is tied into what you were just sharing. But I'm actually also going to be interviewing this woman named Alice, and she headed the Youth Leadership Initiative, which was this research project that looked into essentially, the anxiety around applying for jobs and work and being in this environment for youth. So Canadians, I believe, aged 19, to 29. And this will be a different interview with her. But there is actually like, that research available for folks if anybody wanted to look into it. And it essentially highlights all of the feelings that you were also just sharing right now about that anxiety as well. And it's not about not wanting to work, but it's just about feeling supported enough. And feeling like they have complete autonomy over their time and that flexibility to, you know, for example, like, I don't think anybody really wants to feel micromanaged, right?

**Margaux Wosk 11:45**

It's not good. It's not fun. And I mean, I was in a grocery, grocery clerk kind of position where I was, you know, stocking in the back, and the manager would always be like, down my throat, like, she would always be after me. And that's just not healthy. So that's why these things need to change. Because whether or not you disclose you have a disability,

whether or not you have a disability, everybody deserves to be treated with respect. And I find that that is so lost these days, because there's deadlines, there's financial, you know, goals to meet, and it ends up trickling down to the retail employee who oftentimes doesn't get much more than minimum wage. And so even though that recently went up, it's still not, it still doesn't match the living costs. So when you're at work, making, you know, X amount of dollars every hour, that is stressful, because you still don't know if you're gonna be able to make ends meet. And you're also sometimes putting yourself out physically, like, it is physically laborious to do a lot of these jobs. And so whether or not you even have a physical disability, it's exhausting. And, yeah, I just, I think that the landscape needs to change. And because it didn't change around me, I was the one that had to change it for myself.

**Tanya Griffiths 13:11**

Yeah. Oh, that's so powerful. Yeah. Yeah. And, and also, it brings to light to the power of community, and how, how empowered your business is to do it, it does, because it has the support of many folks. And I also have to honor of course, all the other stories of folks with different disabilities who don't receive as much support. And that's also part of, of that reality, right?

**Margaux Wosk 13:51**

Yep. It is a really sad reality. And you hear about that so often. And you hear about people, you know, getting fired or losing their job, and then not knowing what's next and not knowing where to go or who to turn to. And it's just unfair, because I think a lot of the time when we talk about inclusive employment, it's really how the disabled person is going to benefit the employer, not the other way around.

**Tanya Griffiths 14:19**

Yeah, yeah. I hear you. Yeah, that is a huge issue because it it is performative to its core.

**Margaux Wosk 14:29**

It's incredibly performative. Especially when they're using buzzwords like, oh, hiring disabled people is good for business and it increases our bottom line like that. That's not okay.

**Tanya Griffiths 14:41**

Yeah. Like we want authentic forms of social justice.

**Margaux Wosk 14:48**

Exactly, exactly. And that's just, that's not it. That's why I think, like I said, if I get to that point where I can start hiring people who are like me, that isn't that's what what inclusive employment looks like? It looks like a neurodivergent disabled person running a business hiring other people who are like them, not allistic able-bodied people hiring disabled people and expecting to know what our needs are like. And when we need to take breaks. And what that looks like, it's completely different. It's, it's differently structured, than in the normal job, like, I sometimes can't work certain days. So I'll wait for a day that I can work, work on those orders and go take a nap if I have to, I wouldn't be able to do that anywhere else. Mm hmm. Yeah.

**Tanya Griffiths 15:33**

Yeah. Yeah. Because the power dynamics is so different when when you're in a workplace that doesn't accommodate your needs.

**Margaux Wosk 15:43**

100%, 100%. And yeah, that's what I strive for, I strive for something different.

**Tanya Griffiths 15:50**

That's a beautiful, Margaux, you've talked about some of your long term goals for your business, for being in a position to be able to hire folks. And to really give that experience and that feeling and sense of community and belonging to folks within the workplace setting. But I'm also wondering what your long term goals are for your advocacy work?

**Margaux Wosk 16:15**

Yeah, so for my advocacy, I really want to be able to be a keynote speaker at an event because I feel like my story really aims to just not necessarily inspire, but reduce the barriers that a lot of people mentally put up for what you know, autistic people are capable of. And I want to use my story as a catalyst for change, I want to bring light to the things that really need to evolve further than, you know, again, allistic, non-disabled people hiring disabled people in retail positions, because that's a lot of the time, what is presented to us as this is like, the be all end all, in terms of what it's gonna look like for employment for you, or for you know, many other people just in general. And I want to change things, you know, I want to lend my voice to helping organizations whose views align with mine, and if that means, you know, like hosting an event and being the person behind the microphone, and, you know, engaging with people like, it's something I love to do. And public speaking, just gives me a real thrill. It gives me just joy, I want to do more of it. I'm hoping one day, I'll get

some recognition for the work that I do, I would love to get an award someday. And I'm going to just keep pushing forward until, you know, one day maybe I'll get recognized. But even if I don't, the recognition that I get from the community is so like, beyond my wildest dreams, and that alone feels like an award. But unfortunately, in certain spaces to get taken seriously, they need to see those things and need to have those on paper. And I'm just honestly grateful. And maybe I can help other people pursue their advocacy journey. And when they asked me, you know, I tell them, like, get involved with a nonprofit. If you want to do public speaking, find a nonprofit whose views align with yours. And chances are if they see what you're capable of, they'll utilize you to help get their message further. And if it aligns, then it's so wonderful. And that's kind of how I got started with my speaking.

**Tanya Griffiths 18:43**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh, boy. I hear lots of things. And I but I hear just like we've shared in the beginning of the, this, this talk, that it's so important to live for others. And it's and also to receive that recognition because I get you like sometimes to be to be accepted into newer spaces. And usually these spaces hold a little bit more power over, let's say, policymaking or decisions or just wider community impact, it's also important to get that acknowledgement like of your work thus far, and give only if only like community could also just give you this award, right? Like if that was enough, then you wouldn't need bigger recognition. But no, I hear you and it does sound like there's so much determination behind what you do and that I have no doubt you're going to be breaking down more doors.

**Margaux Wosk 19:58**

Thank you, you know, I think I think when people see what I do, it makes them sometimes realize that, you know, they can do something that they've dreamed of, you know, and I do some one on one mentoring or coaching occasionally. And I always want the person that I'm working with, they're supporting to feel like, there are so many ideas out there, we just need to explore them and see which one sticks. And that's exactly how my journey kind of led me to this, you know, I was trying different things, I got fired. And then I pivoted, and then I figured out, okay, like, what's gonna work and then you just try different things until something sticks, and this is stuck. So, you know, I'm fortunate for that. But if I can use the experiences that I have, knowing that nobody really helped me to help other people, then I guess I was meant to learn these things, in my own way, for that purpose.

**Tanya Griffiths 20:56**

Yeah, and to share it with others. Yeah. So as we're coming to the end of our talk, I was wondering if there was anything that we didn't get to talk about that you'd love to share with folks that are tuning into today's episode?

**Margaux Wosk 21:13**

Hmm, nothing that I can exactly think of. But, you know, if anybody who's listened, wants to reach out to me and wants to talk or anything like that, you know, I'm always happy to do so. And they can find me on the links that you are going to provide. And yeah, I just, ultimately, at the end of the day, I want to use my skills and my talents to help people and, you know, things are possible. And sometimes, yeah, there's barriers to entry, but we need to work together as a collective whole to try to remove those barriers, because unfortunately, the organization's are just not going to do it for us until we really push and who knows, I'm gonna probably have to start a nonprofit one day when I can really have the energy behind it. And it's gonna be dedicated to disabled and neurodivergent small business owners and entrepreneurs and you know, self employed people. And that's, that's the goal. Because, for me, it's like, if nobody else is doing it, then I guess I have to. And so that's kind of how I've led my life. And it's okay to be that way. It's okay to find your voice and your strength and move forward with what you're able to do. And if you're not able to do it, there's so many things that we can still learn.

**Tanya Griffiths 22:33**

Yeah, yeah. From the stories that you just shared, it's such a it's such a, like a true example of taking complete ownership of your narrative, even when you've been told that you can't. And you've embodied the "I can, and that I will make this possible in one way or another. And I have a community to back me up and to support me through this."

**Margaux Wosk 23:09**

Exactly. But one thing that I learned that's so important is you cannot please everybody. So at the end of the day, if you're making sure that you like it, and that there are people that support you. That's cool. Like, not everybody understands my pins, and that's okay. They don't have to, my pins are not for them, then, you know, so we can't expect perfection because it doesn't exist. So that's also something that's been a really hard lesson to learn, but also really important one.

**Tanya Griffiths 23:40**

Absolutely. Yeah. Is that the people that need to find you will find you.

**Margaux Wosk 23:47**

Exactly. And they'll find themselves in the work that I'm doing.

**Tanya Griffiths 23:52**



Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's a beautiful. Well, thank you so much, Margaux, for this beautiful conversation and honestly very inspiring to hear about the work that you're doing and that you're committing yourself to in your own ways, you know. So yeah, thank you for making the time. Thank you for coming on here and for sharing all of your wisdom with us.

**Margaux Wosk 24:17**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Announcement 24:21**

This podcast is brought to you by the Vancouver Adapted Music Society. Since 1988, vans has been supporting and promoting musicians with disabilities in Metro Vancouver through various programs, including music lessons, recording projects, and live performance opportunities. To learn more about us, visit our website at [www.vams.org](http://www.vams.org), [@vamsociety](https://www.instagram.com/vamsociety) on Instagram, the Vancouver Adapted Music Society on Facebook, or email us at [info@vams.org](mailto:info@vams.org). Thanks for listening.