

## **sylvi macCormac Pt. 2 | Discover Stories Episode 84**

### **Announcement 0:11**

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 0:44**

I'm also wondering, because I noticed that in some of your works you incorporate multiple languages, so what called you to create that and to include that?

### **sylvi macCormac 0:56**

Well, I love different languages and the sounds and people talking. And so I want to honour that and express the beauty. And so in Little House Big World, Bahay kubo, malaking mundo, I wanted to have it, have the English and then the translation in Filipino, Chinese, Cantonese and French and all of the languages. It was so fun to work with and create that piece. So that's why, to honour people.

### **Tanya Griffiths 1:45**

Yeah, to honour people.

### **sylvi macCormac 1:46**

You know, it's like, I call the community health workers. To me, they're superheroes, human superheroes. You know, the people in the front line, the firefighters, the police, they're, they're all human superheroes, you know, and people like yourself doing what you do, that's it's just, we're human superheroes when we just try our best at what we do.

### **Tanya Griffiths 2:16**

I think really, I have also just huge respect for artists and creatives, because their contribution to human culture and the enrichment I find that life giving. I find that to be

something that initiates us to go deeper with ourselves and to really see what is it about this piece of work that either activates me emotionally, or is there a resistance that I feel? And what is it about this resistance? Where does, where does this resistance come from? And I, and I, and I, and that's why I love the work like folks like you do, where you also allow and imagine a new world of possibilities. And I think that because creativity is not bound to boxes or limits or boundaries, it's free flowing and and that also inspires people to continue creating and imagining new ways of thinking and being and loving.

**sylvi macCormac 3:50**

Yes, yes. That's why music industry, it's oxymoron, in a way, those two words, music is so feeling and fulfilling and spiritual and insightful. And then there's industry, and it's a difficult field, you know, because everyone has to make a living at it. But I know when they say, you know, with your music, don't quit the day job, right?

**Tanya Griffiths 4:21**

Yeah.

**sylvi macCormac 4:22**

And it's hard. It is hard to make a living as a musician. What is there? You know, hubs, you know concert halls. It's really it's even harder now. But you know there are fields that allow a musician to carry on. Teaching, I would have been a teacher if MS hadn't sort of taken over my life. Yeah, it's such a special thing. It's really fulfilled me very much in my life. And I hope, given people like yourself and others, you know, fulfillment, and I love doing the portraits, because it allows me to listen to other people, to amplify their voices. So I don't, you know, I don't feel like it's mine so much as I'm the conduit, you know, working on the editing, it's their voice that I want to push forward like that's why I wanted this piece, the Brother Bear piece, to go around the world, not to hear my own voice, but hear Brussels my my voice is not in the portrait. It's, it's clearly Russell. I'm the composer, but it's Russell's music. It's Russell's voice, my questions, but you know, and our birds, our water here, from this land, right?

**Tanya Griffiths 5:53**

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

**sylvi macCormac 5:56**

And you're blessed to live.

**Tanya Griffiths 5:59**

Yes, yes. Yes, we are blessed to live and and, and we're blessed to love and to honor people. I love your use of like honoring of honoring languages, honoring people, and allowing your work to be a landscape for that.

**sylvi macCormac 6:21**

There's one, one piece I did. And Butterfly, butterfly is that the Filipino and my Filipina caregiver said that, and I put that in that so beautiful, that word. So pretty,

**Tanya Griffiths 6:44**

Oh yes, and oh i It's so interesting. Sometimes I heard somebody talk about how a lot of Tagalog words sound sound like what they're supposed to sound like. And I thought that that was such a funny way of seeing it and seeing the words and and, yeah, I just like that, sort of like onomatopoeia, of of the words. And actually in my one of my mother's languages, so we speak Tagalog, but my mother and my family also speaks Ilocano, which is a language from Luzon. And for, for the word butterfly. Our word is kulibangbang. Yeah, and it's just like the repetition of syllables, you know, it's very big as well. Yeah, exactly, exactly.

**sylvi macCormac 8:01**

What's that song? You know the song, [SINGS A SNIPPET].

**Tanya Griffiths 8:16**

Yes! All the food, all the veggies. Oh, yeah, I love that you put time into learning about this.

**sylvi macCormac 8:29**

That was the when I was swimming at the Westin at the health club there, one of my friends who worked there, Lenny said, make make my my colleague blush, tell her, "maganda ka pa sa umaga," you're more beautiful than the morning. And I thought that was the most beautiful words so that I put into the song [SINGS A SNIPPET] And it just, it just came, you know, the whole song then. And that song then, too, was, you know, beautiful garden that we all share. And so I was really influenced by the Bahay Kubo song. beautiful.

**Tanya Griffiths 9:27**

Oh that's beautiful. that's little house, big world, yeah. And I think something you just brought up is also how, like, a lot of the creativity that we produce is also the result of other creation and how, a lot of, yeah, a lot of what we create in the art that we produce is because of community, and it's because of what's done before us, and how, yeah, like for you, it sparked. This, just this new composition. And, yeah, that, yeah, just so beautiful to hear about. Wow. So earlier you talked already about Bryden from VAMS, but I'm also very curious, how did you first hear about VAMS and what drew you to it?

**sylvi macCormac** 10:26

I read something in the Georgia Straight. They had put out a in the back of the Georgia Straight, there's just comments section, you know, of things that are happening. And they mentioned this studio. So then I went there, and it was combination of being at SFU at the time, where they were talking about the radio ballads, and then I had the idea to do the real soundscape. And I met with Sam [Sullivan], and I said I had this idea. And he said, Go for it. And I started to do it. And I been doing it since '97 and I just finished the 12th one being The Brother Bear. And one of the very special times was when I went into the studio as a client, and I started working with Dave Symington on The Feather, Feather album, and that was taking my older songs and redoing them in a kind of jazz, like symphonic feel. And that was such a fulfilling project. We finished that in 2016 and then Bryden now has just remastered it, and I released it Feather 2.0 just this year. So the whole experience at VAMS, it's been a significant part of my life, and a very important part so meaningful of people I've met through it, and the creativity that I was able to do the wheels being supported in that having access to people with disabilities, getting to know people. And yeah, I just, I loved working there, and I would highly recommend anyone who feels, you know, well, come and see what's what's there at the Music Studio. You know, VAMS is not music therapy. It's, it's to support music creation. So you could do anything you imagine in the studio, whether it be a rock album, a heavy metal or a soundscape, you know, the sound of elephants, you know.

**Tanya Griffiths** 12:50

Yeah, yeah. It sounds like a vehicle to to birth your dreams.

**sylvi macCormac** 12:59

It really is, yeah.

**Tanya Griffiths** 13:01

Yeah and, and you did mention the Wheels Soundscape, and before, I was just wondering if you could just tell us a little bit more about it.

**sylvi macCormac** 13:15

First one was with Anastasia Briggs, and she was a woman, and she was an opera singer. I don't know professional, but she was one of the first people. It was called Sound compassion. And then Daniel Hunt, and I interviewed him, and he'd say things like, I was called the Mick Jagger of the Northwest Territories, and Robert Plant in Kelowna, and then it happened singing and talking. And it's an abstract piece. My My work is more abstract. It's color color. It's not electro acoustic. It's not so much like rhythm and chords. It's more like colors of sound and everything. And then the third one, wheels. Wheel journey got chosen by Canadian Electroacoustic Community put on one of their albums. The number four Penny process was chosen by the Canadian Electroacoustic Music Centre to go on to their album as one of the best of 50 years of electroacoustic music in Canada. And then I just kept making them. And then wheel number seven had Dow Richards and his friends and some of his music I was getting permission to work with, and a lot of lot of people's voices, and they're over 100 People I had interviewed, or had some of their sounds, voices and and they could find it all and it, you know, you go on a journey. It's like taking a journey. Sometimes, the field that I'm in is called cinema for the ear. So, you know, you could just imagine it. It's used in dance and in theatre and in film. I love the techniques we use. Yeah, so, and like I said, wheels will come up this year will be combination album of all of the pieces I've done over since 1997 how many years? Oh, my God. 27. Oh, yeah, yeah, 27 years. And that then the folk rock album, 40 years. Bryden says 42. You and Bryden weren't even born then. And it's so funny to hear those pieces because they're so young, like the folk rock you know, [SINGS A SNIPPET] It's very like, idealistic, right? I still have that, but you know, it's kind of like, okay, yeah, more realistic.

**Tanya Griffiths** 16:37

Yeah, yeah. It really sounds like music, and going into soundscape composition has really brought a lot of meaning into your life.

**sylvi macCormac** 16:55

Very much so, yeah.

**Tanya Griffiths** 16:59

Yeah, oh, that's so beautiful. That really is so beautiful. And as we come to to the end of our conversation, I'm also just wondering, well, well, I know the current project that you're working on is, is bringing together the the the old cassette tapes, and creating, like a mix of that. But I'm wondering, what else? What else are you working on? Or, or where are you right now and in this career, I guess?

**sylvi macCormac** 17:38

Well, I just finished the Brother Bear, composing that. So I'm sending that out to different calls for sound art and electroacoustic music around the world. I have one called now for Argentina, so hopefully I'll accept it, and that'll be another continent, and, and, and the compositions with Bryden. Really, that's my focus right now. It's going, you know, I go every Friday. It's quite lovely working there.

**Tanya Griffiths** 18:13

Oh, lovely.

**sylvi macCormac** 18:14

I guess more of the same.

**Tanya Griffiths** 18:17

Yeah, oh, that's beautiful. And is there anything else you'd like to share with us today?

**sylvi macCormac** 18:25

No except to say salamat po.

**Tanya Griffiths** 18:29

Walang ano man, you are so welcome, and thank you for for coming on here and sharing your story and just sharing this vibrant light. It was such a pleasure to talk with you today and to get to know you more and your work, especially through your eyes, because I'm sure it's different experience if I were to experience it on my own, but it's always nice to hear where it came from.

**sylvi macCormac** 19:03

Thank you so much. It was so nice.

**Announcement 19:05**

This podcast is brought to you by the Vancouver Adapted Music Society. Since 1988 VAMS 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 on Instagram, the Vancouver Adapted Music Society on Facebook, or email us at [info@vams.org](mailto:info@vams.org). Thanks for listening.