

RAMPD Pt.2 | Discover Stories Episode 62

Sponsor Message 0:00

Thanks for tuning in to Discover Stories on Re-Imagine Radio. Before we get started, here's a word from our sponsor: Do you wish you had a voice in making some of the world's most popular websites more accessible? Fable is recruiting a community of paid assistive technology users who work from home to test websites and provide feedback on how they can be improved. We're currently recruiting testers who use Dragon voice control, eye tracking, switch controls and head mice. No resume, no cover letter, and no experience with user testing is required. Learn more and apply at www.makeitfable.com/community.

Graeme Wyman 0:39

So you did mention the Grammys, and in 2022, that's when RAMPD helped make the Grammys a more accessible event. You spoke about how you when you joined in 2019. Would you let our listeners know just a little bit about what the 2022 event looked like, and what you, you know, insight you gave?

Lachi 1:14

Yeah, I mean, you know, we ended up having a lot of talks and a lot of consultation leading up to it, and what it ended up looking like was we advocated for ASL on the red carpet.

Graeme Wyman 1:24

Right.

Lachi 1:24

And we ended up getting one. I think we had like, one or two ASL interpreters on the red carpet, which was great. And then we also advocated for a ramped stage. So I don't know who watches the Grammys or not, but in 2022 there's, like, this dais, so they had a stage in the back, but then there was also in front of it, a dais that was like circular, that was actually wheelchair accessible, so a wheelchair could go up and around onto that dais. We also advocated for audio description and captioning, which was provided by a third party provider. And then we also advocated for, I believe that was it, so for 2022. And we advocated for more, but that was generally what we were able to accomplish. And one of the interesting things about that is no one actually used the dais, right, but it was there so that people could see that if you did win a Grammy and you were in a wheelchair, you could use the dice. Also, we only had one or two ASL interpreters on the red carpet, and

only one person used the ASL interpreter. It was Olivia Rodrigo. She used the ASL interpreter and then she had a little viral moment of "Wow, Olivia Rodrigo uses an ASL interpreter." And even our own community, like the disability community, was praising Olivia Rodrigo. So we were running around going like, "That was us. That was us." But in the following year, we were able to be a lot more integrated into the process, and we ended up having like, 10 or 12 or something like that, ASL interpreters, and everybody was using it along the red carpet in 2023. Of course, we still, again, had captioning set up. We had [audio description] set up, there was a bit of a snafu to get that all set and done. But we also had our accessible stage, right? And the great thing about that accessible, oh, and we also had ramps all over.

Arthur Gwynne 2:12

Through the red carpet experience.

Lachi 3:23

Throughout the red carpet, throughout the media centre, all over the place, yeah. And the beauty of that was no one in a wheelchair used any of the ramps. Maybe Namel did, who was our VP now at RAMPD, he was there. But all of the women in their ridiculous dresses, they were all using the ramps. And an earlier like the heel stairs are terrifying. They were all using all of the ramps. No one even, and to the point where, like, people who weren't in ridiculous dresses were just using the ramps, because it's just easier to deal with. People that were moving, like heavy things really quick between scenes, were using the ramps. Um, also that stage with the dais, if anyone watches the 2023 Grammys, there's going to be a dance like a devil worshipping fire dance done by Kim Petras and Sam Smith for that song that they did, you know, "Body Shop." And they use that ramp. And their performance was created knowing that ramp was going to be there, that stage was going to be there, so that whole performance was made because of that stage. And the reason, I think that's great, because people are like, "Oh, but a person in a wheelchair didn't use the ramp." I'm like, "This is a testament to universal design. Yes, everyone will 100% benefit." I mean, text messaging was made by a Deaf couple, right? How many? I mean, we have the curb cut, side cuts. Everyone uses that from wheelchairs to strollers to whatever. And this is just a testament to universal design. It's always what you need to create for the disabled community that everyone benefits from. Sam Smith and Kim Petras had the event of the night, and that was with our stage.

Bryden Veinot 5:06

That's so awesome. We did a podcast a while ago with a gentleman named Alex Carey who works in the video game space, helping with accessibility, and does video game design himself. And he touched on this term that he's kind of coined, called temporary disability.

Lachi 5:22

Sure.

Bryden Veinot 5:23

And that's like, when I'm playing a video game, and maybe everything's too loud, so I need to turn on the subtitles. There's adaptations and modifications that we can make to anything to be more accessible for people with disabilities, but it also positively [impacts] able-bodied people as well, like everyone benefits from the modification. So why aren't we just doing that modification in the first place? Why did we have to take extra steps before? So it's cool that you point out the ramps that only one wheelchair user might have used it, but more able-bodied people ended up using it anyway.

Arthur Gwynne 6:00

There's an there's an integration side to it as well, right? Because, like, you can tell when something's kind of slapped on as an afterthought or because someone's making you do it, it's another when it's integrated into the whole experience, right. So, through the red carpet experience, the back media centre, where you go to get your pictures with your Grammys and all that kind of stuff, it wasn't like something that needed to be rolled out on request, right? It was integrated into the entire pathway. Having the ASL performance, you didn't have to go and ask for it. We had a corral of them at the front, and it's like, "Hey, you want a ASL interpreter for your interviews?" You know what I mean? And same with what you like, what you said. It's like if you've got captioning in there, regardless of why someone has a captioning on, right? It's like having good captioning set up is great. Same with audio description. It practically turns something into a podcast or something you can listen to while you drive, right? And so there's so many things outside of just like the specific need for it, and the more that these measures are framed in that way, the less someone thinks of it as something for like a minority population, and instead as something that can be integrated to make the experience better for everybody, regardless, and something to celebrate, right? It's like, "Hey, we have this feature, we have that feature." You know?

Lachi 7:19

Yeah, sorry. I was just gonna say one last really quick thing about your discussion of terminology. Terminology is really important. It's really funny, I recently, somebody had said that everyone who does not have a disability is just temporarily non-disabled because

they're eventually disability due to this or due to that. Another thing too is this is my own. I have a few personal vendettas against a couple of words. Anyone who knows me knows I hate differently abled. I can't do that because why? Because I'm disabled, my ability is different? Like singing is not a different ability. It's just an ability. So don't call me differently abled. The other thing that I do have an issue with is able-bodied, because I think that people are just non disabled. You're either disabled or non-disabled, because there are a lot of folks who are disabled that have able bodies, right? So, like right now, first of all, I run a five minute mile, and I stand up for pregnant people, so I'm pretty able-bodied. Or, there's the deaf community, or folks who are neurodivergent, who would identify as disabled, but not necessarily, like they're also able-bodied, right? But then also the term non-disabled centers disability, as opposed to centering able right? And so there's just this growing need to do things like, you know, have you ever seen things where they say disability and then they have the A capitalized or like, you know, let's focus on the ability. There's a growing contingent of disabled leaders that are really tired of the like capital A or the focusing on ability, because when we look at disability as an identity, when we look at the disability stories we tell as a strength and as an asset, well, why are you trying to disappear it? Why are you trying to vanish it when we celebrate it?

Bryden Veinot 9:15

Thank you for bringing that up. That's a that's a great correction to make. I appreciate that. Yeah.

Graeme Wyman 9:19

Yeah, certainly, it certainly makes sense. And to be honest, like, even, I think, like, people like Dave, all of us use that term, but never really, like, see, the connection, right?

Bryden Veinot 9:31

And the terminology changes over time. Like, and it's just learning, right? That's all it is, as long as you're open minded enough to understand where other people are coming from, and why. Like, how you just explained that now that's what I'm gonna be using from now on.

Graeme Wyman 9:47

She swayed you.

Lachi 9:48

Yay! Another one.

Bryden Veinot 9:49

You got me.

Arthur Gwynne 9:51

That's part of the cultural side of this as well, right? It's like, because, like, it's not, I don't know, how can a Canadians are with, like, "wokeism," right? But it's not like rules. It's really just more about making sure that we can continue to craft the discussions to be as inclusive as possible. Because even within the disability community, there's a lot of silos, right? There's a lot of microcultures or subcultures, and some of them are relatively, you know, circled the wagons around themselves, which you can't blame, right? But we have to be able to open this up as well. So there's the other component of that. Is like, It's the grace side of it. It's like we're all here to learn. We're all here to make each other feel comfortable, and just like any form of identity, you know, you we expect those that are either entering into it or they've been entrenched in it their whole lives, regardless, there's always something else to learn, and there's always new ways for us to make sure that someone isn't being left out. And I've been, you know, really kind of finding, at least, maybe it's because of the way we're doing it, through music and through entertainment, right? That we haven't really run into that much of a problem of, you know, pushback, right? And it really has just been something that we can learn little steps at a time and keep bringing those learnings again and again, compounding on themselves, rather than kind of getting hung up on, like, No, this is, that's it I've done, you know? It's like, you know, I don't know.

Bryden Veinot 11:37

So we've kind of chatted like a bit about the conversation shifting around accessibility and disability, and we've touched on a couple specific items. But are there any things off the top of either of your heads that you could think of that you want to change or you want in the future to be just the normal that it might not be right now?

Lachi 12:03

There's this idea of being ashamed of disability, I think, is what ultimately needs to change, the shift. So, like we mentioned earlier, I travel all over the place, doing keynotes and songs and concerts at everywhere, from Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies to universities to cultural centres to this, to that and the other thing. And there's like, a consistent through line of folks seeing someone proud of their disability for the first time. Like, consistently, they're always just like, "Wow, that's so, like, interesting. I've never seen that before." And then people just talking about their disability for the first time, or even associating what their condition is with disability, or all of these kind of things for the first time, everywhere we go all the time, like, we can't do it with one person every single time. Like, at what point do we have this as a global "it's okay?" Where's the, I want, a global "it's alright," because it

turns out that how you win, and here's the secret to winning at life. The secret to winning at life is, [muted].

Graeme Wyman 14:02

There's a community out there.

Lachi 14:04

Yeah, basically, it's really just the shame busting. That's really what I want to be able to do. And can I mention the book at all?

Arthur Gwynne 14:12

Yeah.

Lachi 14:12

The other book, maybe not too much of it. So one of my big things that I want to do is I want to publish a book. I want to publish a book that really discusses disability narratives in a pop culture setting, the disability narratives that we currently already have in pop culture that I want to lift up and celebrate. I want to be able to use the stories of disabled icons, living disabled icons that we can share, celebrate and begin to add that to our culture. Because what is culture right? Culture includes our heroes and our joined, you know, folks that we lift up, our joint stories that we can kind of pull on within pop culture. And I want to be able to write a book that uses sort of these kind of pop disability stories within our culture and celebrate those. And so that sounds like a fun pitch, right?

Group 15:09

Yeah.

Lachi 15:10

Guess who picked it up? Penguin. So, yeah, this is my first time. This is my first time mentioning this. So and you guys, if and when you air this, this will still probably be the first time it's mentioned. But we got picked up by an imprint called Tiny Reparations, and it's run by this amazing comedian, Phoebe Robinson, really, really exciting stories that that Tiny Reparations tells. So very excited to be a part of that roster that's probably going to be released in like, you know, a year and a half. The literary, like, climate is very slow. But it's going to be a very exciting place where we can finally scream from that, well, at least where I can scream from the rooftops, "There's nothing to be ashamed of. Here are some really fun, amazing tales and some amazing stories within our culture happening now that you can point at to see that you don't have to be ashamed."

Graeme Wyman 16:12

Well, we'll certainly be on the lookout for that.

Bryden Veinot 16:13

Yeah, I was gonna also mention, you were mentioning your secret to success. I heard the other secret to success was signing up as a member with RAMPD.

Lachi 16:26

Somebody wants their marketing job. Yeah? I mean, it's a good crowd, yeah, it's a good collection of folks. You know, even as a non-disabled, you know, artist or music professional, it's just hard to find other professionals working hard, right? And so to be able to couple that with, you know, passionate, innovative, creative thinkers who are also navigating the world in a different way. I mean, why not? Yeah, that

Arthur Gwynne 16:52

Yeah, that community overlays well with other communities too, right? So like, for instance, when RAMPD first started, I think it was Lachi, I think you were the only member in the Grammys. And then now about a third of our musicians are Grammy members, because, you know, other RAMPD members help them join the Grammys. And so joining professional organizations, or, you know, the partnerships and allies that we're building up and making sure that we've got that kind of like, two way street going for professional relationships, it allows us to grow a lot more exponentially than trying to do everything in our own little bubble, right? Because this really is about, RAMPD is not a disability organization, it's a music organization, right? Like we're serving the music industry.

Lachi 17:45

I like to say we don't serve the disability community. We serve musicians and music professionals who identify as disabled.

Bryden Veinot 17:55

I think that's very similar to how we like to run things like, again, yeah. Like, my whole idea around VAMS is that it's, it's just a music studio, but the people that come here identify of having a disability, right?

Lachi 18:11

Yeah.

Graeme Wyman 18:13

So we briefly talked about disability in before, but Lachi, in your lecture and performance, you said that you become an advocate for disability culture and inclusion by being yourself. This is giving you an opportunity to speak at the White House, in the UN. When you were younger, did you ever envision that this would be a path that you would take in addition to your music career?

Lachi 18:38

No. Next question. [Laughs] Well, see, the thing about it is, is that, like I said earlier, I didn't have a lot of role models to point out, right? But not only did I not have a bunch of role models, neither did my parents, neither did my teachers, neither did my friends, and so I didn't really have a collective, you know, support system for trying to become a big, I had always wanted to be a musician and a writer, and, you know, all of the things. And I wanted to move to New York. And I was, where were we? North Carolina, like the South in the U.S. And, you know, I was encouraged. And I can't blame my parents or even my teachers for encouraging me to go down the straight and narrow path, right? Oh, you already have a disability. Let's just make sure you get a job. Let's just make sure you're fine. And I was a smart kid. I was good at math, so they wanted me to, my dad did accounting, they wanted me to do accounting, and they just turned just a study just came out, a ton of accountants are just leaving their jobs. So good thing I didn't do that. Yeah. And so what ended up happening was, after I got, you know, I went through school, and I went to college, and then I went to my first job, which was a desk job, and the entire time, I just never felt like myself, right? I was hiding who I was from everyone, including myself and the music that I wanted inside of my soul, although it was always music that allowed me to express myself and to find confidence. But when I was working my jobs, I always felt like a burden, but also overlooked. Right at the same time, somehow or I always felt like I was supposed to be grateful for trying to get things that I was supposed to just have, right? You know, like, the whole thing of, like, why should a wheelchair user thank you for letting them use the bathroom, right? That kind of thing, like, a bathroom is a human right. So eventually I had to make my own decision, like I had, I didn't know the word ableism when I was working. I didn't know that that was a thing. I didn't understand that that was what I was experiencing, right? And so when I left the job to just jump headfirst into music, it was something that I did very much on my own. It was not necessarily supported by anyone other than a couple of friends, including Arthur, but I jumped out and I was like, let me just figure this out. I had a really cushy job. I was working for the US Army Corps of Engineers. So I was working a federal job. I had that means you can just endless days off, right? Healthcare, blah, blah. You know, America is with healthcare. And so I forfeited all that living in Manhattan, which is the most expensive city in the world, right? And I was just like, we're just gonna have to try it, because I'm not living right? So, yeah, I jumped in. And, you know, as I continued to

unlayer like me, like the me that was behind all these layers that I had wrapped up, the more success I found. And so I will never, you know, never regret or turn back from all of these decisions that we made, but yeah, short answer, I thought I was just going to be a desk rabbit. But, you know, someone else up there knew more.

Graeme Wyman 21:51

Glad they did.

Bryden Veinot 21:55

Maybe then that's a good shift to more of a Lachi Music question, one of your recent releases is, "Lift Me Up" mind talking a little bit about the song, kind of, what it's about, kind of the process of writing that.

Lachi 22:09

So I, um, used to, I had a, you know, honestly, interestingly enough, it was very difficult for me to find mentors, just as a woman with a disability, right? And I'm going to try to make this brief, but it's just such a good story, even the story is the art. So in 20, was it 18, or something I was like, or was it 2018? I don't know, but I remember sitting down and thinking, like, I need to really start embracing my disability. But in 20, the end of 2017 or the end of 2016 is when I got the diagnosis that I was gonna go from low vision to no vision, that I was gonna start going on this journey to completely losing my vision. And then, like, about a year later, after I got over the denial, I was like, I need to find, I need to start advocating. Maybe I need to learn more about disability. Funnily enough, there was this show called Drunken History. It was very interactive, right? You know, drink along, you know. And there was this episode of the 504 which is the Americans, like the Rehabilitation Act that was saying, no more discrimination for someone based on their disability. So I watched it. It was seven minutes of someone telling the story of Judy Heumann and how she did the sit ins and how she did all of this stuff to help get that law passed. And I remember thinking it was so well done, because it was funny. And, you know, I was drinking along, you know, and I was like, wow, that is so cool. That woman, like, 30, 40, years ago, or whatever, did all of this stuff to pass this bill. She's such a badass. Like, I want to do that. She's so cool. So I finally had someone to look up to, to go, like, that's a cool person, and I want to do that. And I that's where my advocacy started. Okay? And then in like, 20, the early 2020, or late 2019, I get like, a tweet like DM. So back when it was called tweet, Twitter. Now it's X'ed itself out, but I got a DM, and it was Judy's assistant. Judy Heumann assistant, and she goes, "Oh, by the way, Judy loves your music. She wants to use it for her podcast."

Bryden Veinot 24:17

Oh my gosh.

Lachi 24:18

I was like, "Me? The Judy from the video? So we eventually meet and we fall in love with each other. She's a badass. I'm a badass. She's in her 70s. I was like, "Can you be my mentor?" And she was all for it, and we just really clicked. She would call me at all hours of the day, just whenever she felt like it, because everything was on her time. She'd call me at like 3am and I'd be like, "This is really, really late." And she'd be like, "Oh, I'm in LA." And I'm like, "But it's still late for LA." [Laughs] But she was always traveling, always partying, always advocating. And she was such a large, larger than life person, always doing the work. One of the big things that she would do. She'd make me, she'd call me up and put me on speaker and make me sing Happy Birthday to her friends or whatever when it was their birthday was just really awkward. And then in March of 2023, which was this year, she sent, she and I were on a call, and she said, you know, who do you want me to connect you to? Because that's what she would do. And I was like, this person, that person, blah, blah, blah. So she wrote these amazing emails while I was on the phone. So I had to sit there while she was writing emails. And then she was like, "Lachi, one last question. I know you're doing this conference. I'm doing this conference that you did last year." That was Disability:IN. She was like, "I'm doing Disability:IN this is how much they're giving me. Are they screwing me over?" And I was like, "Judy, I can't answer that." And she was like, "I'm gonna call you back and you're gonna give me an answer." A few days later, she passed away, and I was really devastated, because she was my first real mentor, and I couldn't figure out how to grieve. I couldn't cry. I didn't know what to do. I've never really lost. Well, I had lost my manager, but he wasn't that. Like, close, close, you know. And so I someone said, write a song. And I thought that was corny. I was like, Yes, I get it. I'm a singer, but, like, but it worked. I started writing. I was just tears were falling onto my fingers as I was playing the piano. I ended up calling a good friend of mine, James Ian, who was also like her mentee, who she would also call to make sing and stuff. So we had that in common. He's also a RAMPD member as well, so he has a mobile disability of some sort. We got together and we co-wrote because we were just both really close to Judy, and we were both coping and trying to figure it out. So he and I wrote it together. And then Gaelynn Lea, who was also like another person who knew Judy. She's a wheelchair user and a singer and a violinist. She was like, "I hear you guys are writing a song about Judy, and I'm not part of it. What's that about?" So she jumped in. Also a RAMPD member, then another RAMPD member, April Rose.. She has epilepsy. She's like a pop songwriter. She's been placed everywhere. She calls and she's like, "So I hear you guys are writing this song. Let me hear it." We show it to her, and she's like, "You guys need a real songwriter, because this just sounds like you guys crying. Can I shape this into a song for you?" So we were like, "Okay, fine." So we bring

her on. Then Kulik, who is actually a deaf, half deaf, mastering engineer, he jumps on to master it. And then, like, obviously the song is getting bigger than us, right? It's turned into this whole community effort. RAMPD Records wants to put it out, which is disability owned and disability anrd by Namel, who is a wheelchair user as well. Then someone's like, you guys need to make a music video, right? Music video. So then the music video discussion happens Day Al Mohamed, who used to work for the White House, so she gave up being a film director to work for the White House. And then she was like, "You know what, I don't want to do this anymore." So she leaves the White House. And I was like, "Day, you have to be our film director." And she's blind, so she jumps on as our film director. We work with Cat Rubenis-Stevens, who's also a film director who's done the disability film challenges, it just, and then we bring together this whole crew. The video ends up being these ASL TikTok stars who do the ASL front and centre, while we the recording artists, are kind of splayed in the background via projection, and then so it's ASL. Then we have audio description at the top of the music video done by Ali Stroker, who is an Oscar winning wheelchair user actress.

Arthur Gwynne 28:33

And Ali Stroker who played Judy Heumann in the Drunken History episode.

Lachi 28:39

The Drunken History! Full circle, full circle. And we have, I always miss saying this, but we also had an artist who did our cover art, Genevieve Ramos, who, I believe, has CP, she did our cover art. So it was just like such a community, a ridiculously beautiful community effort. And it all started because we were just sad about Judy and we just wanted to put it down. It got picked up by BET which is the Black Music Entertainment channel. It got picked up by mtv.com which is the, you know, MTV. We ended up getting radio play on, like national radio. We got number the lowest we got was number 29 on adult contemporary radio. We got, like, a big Hollywood Reporter article. It just kept getting bigger and bigger. And I can't, I don't even know, like, it's still out there. People are calling it the Disability Pride anthem. And it's just, it's, and then it's like a beautiful song already, like it can stand alone as a beautiful video. It can stand alone as a beautiful song. But honestly, what really does it is this beautiful community effort, this community that Judy left behind, coming together for her because of what she did, is the real art. I'm like, tearing up.

Graeme Wyman 28:47

It's a beautiful way to honor Judy as well.

Bryden Veinot 30:02

You know the song was meant to happen, right. So we'll kind of shift gears here now to why you're in Vancouver in the first place. So, so you're both here for the Vancouver International Film Festival. Could you let our listeners know about, you know, why you're up here for that?

Arthur Gwynne 30:18

Yeah. I mean, we're here, so there's an accelerator program, AMP.

Lachi 30:28

We're basically here because when we talk about underrepresented music composers and TV/film composers, that's really what AMP helps to amplify. We wanted to make sure that disability was included. And I know that AMP has worked with like the CDC, which is the composer diversity. I don't know what CDC stands for, but it's like for diverse composers, and then also the AWFC, which is for women composers. And so we wanted to make sure that composers with disabilities were also included, and just the disability stories were included when talking to the broader composer community. And so that's how we got involved.

Arthur Gwynne 31:10

And part of this, too, is to get the discussions going, right? So like, kind of like, the first year we worked with the Grammys, it's like, what could they do, right? And then the next year, it's like, okay, this is what you are going to do. And so this is very much with the intention to grow and to continue getting this discussion going. And you know, again, it's just a good reflection of how we seem to be operating, which is like, the first point is like, okay, yes, we aren't doing enough for accessibility or for disability. And so it's like, just help us, right? And then the answer inevitably comes. It's like, okay, well, that means you need to set a budget to do accessibility and equity measures. And so it's like, oh, we don't have the budget. It's like, okay, when you make next year's budget, have a budget, yeah. And so that's, that's where the discussion is right now, and but, you know, we've, again, it's like, we've, you know, got to meet a whole lot of folks involved in this on, like, the the meta side of it. We got to meet with the people who who founded the AMP program, and they are just like, really kind of gung ho on this. Now, the AMP program itself, just briefly, you know, their objective is to open this up, like, the kind of like music entrepreneur, entrepreneurship to underrepresented groups in general, right? And so like, and the way they're doing it is, why we're here, because I love it. It's not just hey, go and get somebody that is underrepresented and give them a job really quick, or give them opportunity, because a lot of times when that happens, and something we see a lot in the ramp community, is like when opportunity comes, sometimes you kind of lie, cheat and steal to get to that

opportunity in the first place, and then suddenly you're under a spotlight, and you don't have that breadth of understanding, you don't have that experience, you don't have that training and mentorship to be able to step up to the plate you've been given. And then everyone turns around and says, "See, that's why we don't give you opportunity, right?" And so they're almost set up to fail, whether on purpose or not. And so I love AMP's vision is very similar to RAMPD's, which is like, do the training, get people connected, get them their network, put their product to the test. So it's not just, oh, isn't that great? And instead, it's like, yo, that's awesome, right? To refine their craft and to challenge themselves and their work and the way that they do business, so that when that opportunity comes around, there's no question that they're going to be able to actually deliver and grow from it and build a career out of it.

Graeme Wyman 33:53

And is that part of the panels with AMP that you're doing? You said you did a couple?

Lachi 33:56

Yeah, yeah, exactly. Actually, I had a lot of fun yesterday, talking about music entrepreneurship, talking about how, you know, boldness, authenticity, distinctiveness and really just honing your craft and your expertise are the building blocks to being a good music entrepreneur. And I won't go into the whole lecture, but I think that the real point is, is that a lot of music, especially artists, but beyond artists, you know, I don't know engineers, producers, composers, they think, "I just got to be really good at my craft," which is good, but honestly, that's a given for a lot of these places that are looking for to hire folks, right? They assume you're good if you're going to apply. So what else can you bring, right? And that's really what, you know, separates a musician from a music entrepreneur. You know, entrepreneurs see a problem, and then they see, how am I the solution? Right? That's the way folks need to begin to think in order to turn their craft that they worked so hard on into a profitable business. And then we're also going to be or, well, what's the other thing we're doing? The town hall.

Arthur Gwynne 34:18

The DEI town hall.

Lachi 35:08

The DEI town hall where we can talk about the resource of RAMPD. So the town hall in general will be talking about some of the resources that composers and producers and artists who are underrepresented can use to navigate the industry and to their advantage and resources, et cetera. And we are going to talk about RAMPD and how RAMPD can be a

resource. And we've already been connecting with a ton of creators out here in Vancouver throughout this program who identify as disabled, neurodivergent saying, "How can I be a part of RAMPD?" And we've been answering questions, and it's been really great. And folks telling us about other artists, and, you know, music professionals that they know that they want to connect us with. So it's been, it's been really fruitful.

Graeme Wyman 35:51

That's awesome. I'm glad it's been worth the trip up here.

Lachi 35:55

I mean, the weather was worth the trip.

Graeme Wyman 35:57

Fair enough and as we said in the beginning, this is a rarity for Vancouver this early in October. So just to wrap up, we'd love to hear kind of both, what's on the horizon for RAMPD, but also, personally, for you. Lachi, you mentioned the book, but yeah.

Lachi 36:15

I'll let you take the RAMPD then.

Arthur Gwynne 36:17

Yeah, I mean, so again, RAMPD is very, very young, like we're not even two years old yet, and we do have support from Ford Foundation, and so that's kind of been where we're starting out with building up our staff and stuff, but no, I mean, we've got a lot of great programming on the way, the more that we are bringing membership in and kind of giving platform for the work that they need to be done. You know, this has been a learning process, not just for kind of pan disabled experience, but throughout the music industry. It's like, what are the initiatives that the country music scene needs? What are the initiatives that sync agents need? Or what is the technology shifts that the you know, engineers need all of those conversations are all happening at the same time, and being kind of like a hotbed for these ideas to then be connected with the businesses that are doing it right. Like, I mean, we just recently got approached by, I won't say which one, but it's like a long it's a e commerce platform for reporting, for musicians, like very niche, very powerful, and it's not currently accessible. And they're like, "Hey, we want to, you know, have your membership come and use our product." It's like, "They're happy to as soon as you make your product accessible to our community." And so they're not being forced to think about accessibility. This isn't a lawsuit or a threat, right? This is an opportunity for them to come to our market, to our community, and be able to, you know, interface with

us, and have the pride of working with us. And so suddenly, instead of it being like, "Oh, where are we going to find the budget to make the site accessible?" It's, well, it's coming out of their marketing budget, right? Like, because they want to sell to us, so, like, it's and turning all those things on their head. It's like dominoes. It's been very aggressive. I don't know where it's going, but even just next year, we're going to hopefully be having, like, a couple very large profile programs going on, getting some of our accelerator initiatives going in the next, probably two years. And, yeah, so we're just getting started on RAMPD.

Bryden Veinot 38:30

Awesome.

Graeme Wyman 38:30

Amazing.

Lachi 38:31

Yeah. And I just wanted to add on to the ramp side, we are building out our advisory board chair—our advisory board and I am the advisory board Chair, so that's why I'm gonna mention that. And also, we will, this year, be partnering, having a beautiful community partnership with the Latin Grammys. The Latin Grammys are gonna be held in Spain this year, so we're working to make sure that they have SSL, which is Spanish Sign Language. So that's gonna be a lot of fun. Our new president at RAMPD is Latina, so she's bilingual, and so that has really helped us to begin that relationship with the Latin Grammys. And of course, we'll be, you know, working again with the Grammys top of next year. Excellent. As for [extravagant accent] Lachi, which is me! [Everyone laughs] We have a lot of things going on. I actually just recently released a fiction, science fiction novel, and it is really about four folks with different apparent and non apparent disabilities who are trying to save New York from being devoured by a sentient plague. So that's a fun one.

Bryden Veinot 39:39

That's awesome.

Lachi 39:42

We are working on the audiobook now that should be released by the end of October.

Arthur Gwynne 39:47

We also have your TED, TEDx.

Lachi 39:50

Yeah, we'll be doing a TED a TEDx talk early November as well. That's going to be a more of a TEDx presentation slash performance. So I will actually be singing at TEDx.

Arthur Gwynne 40:02

TEDx Cherry Creek in Denver.

Lachi 40:05

So, yes, it's in Denver. We again, like we mentioned, we're going to be doing a non-fic as well, so a pop culture sort of discussion on disability narratives that just got, you know, put together very, very, just literally, like two days ago, while we were coming here. So very excited to share that. Of course, we're going to always be releasing music where the project that we're working on right now is called Mad Different, where we're going to be, so "Lift Me Up" was an exploration of disability narratives as well. And before that, we released "Black Girl Cornrows," which was my self-description song. And so we want to do a whole album that really celebrates different nodes and aspects of blending disability and, you know, pop culture and dance music all together to have people have fun while they're learning about disability. And then I think, what else are we doing? We're doing everything. We're travelling. We're also constantly touring. We were just recently in Peru and things of that nature, just spreading this message of disability, culture, inclusion, justice, etc, etc, and doing that through performance and through arts, doing this through our fashion, storytelling and music show that we present throughout the globe. What else? What else are we doing? So many other things we're selling our glam canes. They're apparently selling now, like little hot cakes. I'm so excited about that. I love a bunch of you know, girls and women running around with these amazing canes and just feeling alive, and men and any, however you identify, yeah, everyone, please. Just, I don't care who you are.

Bryden Veinot 41:45

We all like shiny things. [Everyone laughs]

Lachi 41:48

So just so many different things going on. I can't even, I don't know. This guy just keeps booking me for things. I keep telling him to give me a break. [Laughs]

Arthur Gwynne 41:55

Yeah, I mean, like just speaking at Georgetown next year and some other things like that. And we'll keep seeing what we get up to.

Lachi 42:05

Oh, there's one other thing I wanted to make sure that I mentioned. We did a study. I did my study with New York University on recording equipment and technology and its accessibility for folks with vision loss. And we ended up having like, 65 or 66 blind folks do everything from answering a survey to testing out different digital audio workstations, and we ended up having some numbers. I mean, a lot of it is stuff that you would assume would come out of the study, like, it's more difficult for blind people to navigate certain things. But we also had some interesting findings, like, it's actually much more easy for blind folks to navigate simple shortcuts. So play, stop, pause, record, all of those things. Mute, unmute, everything that's sort of a one step shoot and click. It's actually, not that it's easy for blind people, but that it's easier for blind people than non blind people. And so that's a discussion of, well, how, how do we navigate? How do we integrate keyboard usage more to save time for non blind people too? But we'll be presenting that paper end of October at the Audio Engineering Society, which is an international society, very collegiate, prestigious society of audio engineers. So really excited to present that paper, and exciting, and that's my story.

Graeme Wyman 43:26

Well, thank you so much to both of you for being here today. It's been a pleasure and no, just love the work that RAMPD's doing. And of course, your music as well.

Lachi 43:38

Thank you.

Graeme Wyman 43:39

Yeah the Dis Education piece. I love that. Yeah, that was excellent.

Lachi 43:44

Thank you so much. Thank you guys so much for having us. This has been a real pleasure.

Arthur Gwynne 43:48

Thanks.