

Episode 9: Slice of Life

Intro

Hello and welcome to Tonal Diversions. I'm your host, Lori Archer Sutherland, and this is my journey as a multifaceted musician. I'm a composer, clarinetist and more who is navigating the world of is classical music, and I'd love to share my adventures with you.

Episode proper

At the time of releasing this episode, I'll be nearing six months since I left the library. It's gone by really fast. I've had a lot going on in April, and it was honestly a challenge to think about what to do talk about on the show. So here's a slice of life episode. What I've been up to, the ups and downs of pursuing a creative life and stuff like that.

What Daily Routine?

I only sort of have a daily routine. I try to do music work of some sort in the mornings. Some days I'm more successful than others. I'll admit my sleep has not been great. Add that to not being a morning person—ever-- and it does take me a while to get going in the mornings. But I'm grateful I don't have to get up to an alarm on most mornings and I can ease into the day.

This is the most control I've had over my daily life since college, which was decades ago. At this point, I think that's why I'm still figuring out what's going to work for me.

General Life Stuff

Despite good intentions on what I hope to accomplish, there's this thing called “daily life” that always has something for me and my husband to do. Laundry and dishes never take a break! Not to mention other chores, doctors' appointments, vet appointments, and other everyday stuff that we just have to deal with.

I'll admit something that really bothers me in reading about and listening to entrepreneurs is that I rarely hear anything about how and when they fit in all of this general life stuff. We hear about how they get up at 04:00 a.m. (No thanks, by the way!), they work out, they eat a perfect healthy breakfast and then work on their business or write their book or do whatever until lunch. Then they spend the afternoon taking their kids to the zoo or something fun like that. They eat an amazing, home-cooked dinner and read inspirational business books until it's time for an early bedtime.

I can only assume that they have a partner or spouse who takes care of all the mundane-but-important household things. Or they have outside help. Or both. I want to get to a point where I can outsource the house cleaning as my dust bunnies have *their own* dust bunnies, but we're not quite there yet. I'm grateful my husband is a partner in the housework. And by the way, he does *way* more dishes than I do. He does all the grocery shopping, and he does more. But he also has work that he's trying to get done. The everyday things affect him, too. And while our three cats are cute, they are absolutely *useless* at doing housework.

And then there are the bigger house issues. We're getting replacement windows and have to do a lot of prep before that happens in order to make sure the workers can access everything. And

to protect our own stuff as there will be some serious vibrations along some walls of the house, and I'd rather not deal with things falling off shelves. Like my sizable model horse collection, which takes time and effort to pack up so that nothing gets damaged. (Shout-out here to a good hobby friend who's going to help me with that!) But that kind of stuff means that I'm not working as much on music right now.

We also took a short vacation, which was much needed and enjoyable, and I'm so glad that we went. Except I would have preferred a spring-like 60 degrees instead of the 40 and windy that we had. But we need to get away, too. We need those breaks in order to rejuvenate ourselves.

Why am I going into all this detail? Because I think too often others gloss over all of the things we have to do just to keep a household running. Maybe it's just me, but I'm always wondering in the back of my mind how they all fit it in.

Music News

But despite my rant on household stuff, I do have music news.

Proclamation

My horn choir piece, *Proclamation*, was performed at the Northwest Horn Symposium! A friend of my husband, who is a horn player and was attending the conference, saw my name in the program and sent the info to my husband. That was such a neat surprise, and I'm so honored that my piece was played there.

This piece was also being rehearsed for a performance at a Florida university, though I never found out if, and when, it was actually performed. I think *Proclamation* might be my most performed piece at this point, between the original horn choir version and the arrangement I did for concert band. It's such a cool feeling to know that several someones have enjoyed the piece enough to program it, because at this point we're beyond people I know who are programming it.

Concert Season

It's also concert season. Various groups are presenting their spring concerts. I had them for both woodwind quintet and community band, which meant extra practice and rehearsal time. I really enjoy performing with these groups, but they do take extra time.

My clarinet choir is starting to prepare for summer concerts, and that requires repertoire planning and part assignments, rehearsals and general administration tasks. I'm grateful for the people who helped me out with that because it helps so much, but it is still a lot of work.

International Clarinet Association Enthusiast Committee

Another project that's kept me busy during April is it has to do with my work with the International Clarinet Association Enthusiast Committee. We are presenting our second Enthusiast Workshop. It's a virtual event for clarinet players that offer sessions on various topics: a play-along, a master class, some yoga, and some Q and A sessions.

I'm going to be presenting a session on playing as a section in band, plus participating in the master class and facilitating one of the Q and A rooms. Yesterday, I spent some time recording my part of the master class and getting that done. I still have to finish editing it and get it submitted. By the time this episode airs, the event will have happened, but preparing for it has definitely been keeping me busy. But again, I feel like the work for this group is really important, and so I'm glad to do it, but I do acknowledge that it also takes a time commitment.

Composing

I haven't completely ignored composing during this time, thank goodness, because that's really what I want my focus to be. My biggest news is I finished a commission for a new-to-me ensemble-- an ocarina octet. Shooting Star Ocarina commissioned me to arrange a piece for them. It was an interesting challenge, as I've never written for that instrument before. There was a learning curve, but I had a lot of fun on the project. They're getting ready to start rehearsing the piece, and I'll definitely share a YouTube link once the recording has been released. Until then, subscribe to their YouTube channel and I'll link to that in the show notes.

I'm in the middle of a bass clarinet solo with piano accompaniment. I've stalled a bit on that due to everything else going on, but I'm looking forward to getting back into it and finishing it. It's for high school, or possibly even middle school musicians who are looking for something new and different for their solo ensemble contest. I got the idea for the piece when one of my own students was in the process of looking for something to play for contest, something that wasn't too hard but still enough to work on, and it was just hard to find something. And she did actually play another one of my pieces, but it gave me the idea that I need to write more for bass clarinet. You'd think that would be a given since I play so much bass, but I really haven't written much for it in terms of solos.

I'm mostly done with a clarinet and horn duet cover song that was thanks to a suggestion for my husband that I just couldn't resist. That's all I'll say for the moment, except that we plan to do a video for it, so stay tuned for information on that. I don't know exactly when we're going to get the video done, which is part of the reason why I'm not going to say more about it right now.

Last up in composing news, I finished an arrangement for clarinet choir that I began back in 2017. I don't even remember why I stopped working on it, because nothing jumped out at me when I went back into the file. I was doing some planning for my clarinet choir, and thanks to a serendipitous conversation with a friend, I remembered that I had an unfinished piece that would work really well for my group, because that's who I was writing it for. So once I decided to prioritize that, I was able to finish it quickly and again it made me wonder why I stopped on the arrangement before because I finished it fast, so I don't know what the deal was. The piece in question is *The Midnight Fire Alarm* by Harry J. Lincoln

Music Theory Classes

And because all of that isn't enough, I'm also working toward certification for teaching music theory classes. I was getting through the chapters at a good pace, but I've had to set it aside for a few weeks and I will get back to it soon because I would love to start teaching classes in the summer. My plan is to offer both classes online and in-person. One of my local friends is looking to work with me on that, and so I think that will be a fun adventure for both of us.

And That's a Wrap

That's what I've been up to in my first few months of being a full-time musician. As you can tell, there are a lot of plates spinning in the air right now. I do find it challenging to balance all of these different things, plus have time to just relax.

In all the jobs I've had, I've never had to develop strong project management skills. My jobs all mostly dealt with stuff like helping customers or doing some form of data entry, and I do include library cataloging as a form of specialized data entry. I'm not great at figuring out how long a project will take and how to prioritize various steps of various projects. I bought a planner and I've started using it for bigger-picture planning, and I think that is already starting to help. And I rely heavily on my Google calendar for day-to-day things and also keep track of my husband's schedule.

That said, I do love the flexibility I have in my day, even if I don't always succeed in getting things done. Especially if it means I get to have a spontaneous lunch out with my husband or some other adventure. I'm still learning how best to utilize my days and to give myself some grace if I don't accomplish as much as I want to in a certain time frame. I'll admit that part is hard, especially in our productivity-obsessed culture. We as a culture don't let ourselves relax, and we put constant pressure on ourselves to always be productive.

The Rebel In Me

If you're familiar with Gretchen Rubin's "Four Tendencies," I'm a Rebel, which presents its own issues in figuring out how best to motivate myself and to get things finished. If you haven't taken her "Four Tendencies" test, I will also link to that in the show notes.

I hope you've enjoyed hearing what "music and life, intertwined" means to me right now. As always, I'd love to hear from you, especially if you're a self-employed musician. What's your day like? How do you take care of all these different things? How do you deal with daily life? So please reach out to me on Facebook or email or some various form of communication. Because I really do want to hear from you. Until next time!

Outro

Thank you for listening to Tonal Diversions subscribe wherever podcasts are found and share with a friend until next time. Bye!