**eva\_marie\_restel\_interview.mp3**

[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Good job everyone, whenever you're ready. All right. Okay, well, thanks for doing this. Thanks for being here with me. Can you tell us your name and how long you have been and your title with the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra?

[00:00:19] **Speaker 2** It's Eva Marie Restel and I'm the executive director of the symphony for the last six years now, going on six years.

[00:00:27] **Speaker 1** Where were you previous to coming to lacrosse and what what was your position?

[00:00:33] **Speaker 2** I have an art business, I'm still an artist, and I was doing sculptural pieces like you see behind me. And I still do that, but I did it full time before I did this.

[00:00:47] **Speaker 1** So is this the first orchestra that you have been associated with?

[00:00:52] **Speaker 2** Yes, I was actually on the Board of Directors at the time that they were looking for a new executive director and they had actually asked me if I would consider being president of the board and I said, oh, well, I would much prefer to be the executive director. They're like, well, then I think you should apply.

[00:01:12] **Speaker 1** And that you said that was six years ago? Yes. So right about just before COVID.

[00:01:17] **Speaker 2** Oh, it was, it's just I started April 1st of 2019. And so I did not have a full, I've never had a full season that was normal. So it's hard to compare one to the other.

[00:01:30] **Speaker 1** What was that like a little bit when COVID reared its ugly head? How did that affect the orchestra?

[00:01:39] **Speaker 2** It completely like it did everyone else right so we had just had our march concert we had played by toga and five i mean it was a packed house it was just a beautiful concert we had symphony for you three days later on the wednesday and then the world shut down in lacrosse on thursday so we have had two thousand little people in that you know because it hadn't really This area at the time and it was just all in the news. So it was very immediate. It was, we have a partnership with Viterbo. So they are the ones that provide where we perform and they said, you know, we needed to follow all the rules as they were. So quickly made a partnership with them and stayed in contact with them. I said, well, what are we going to do about these next concerts that we have. And so we ended up, we ended recording our musician, our guest artist did it in her home in New York City, had her husband record her doing it and we live streamed it for the first time. And we, I immediately learned on YouTube how to create a channel. And I spent probably a hundred hours a week just learning how to do online everything. And we moved everything, talked to Alexander, our maestro, and said, I know we have our entire season ready for next year, but Viterbo says if we just did string instruments and there were only 20 musicians, they would allow them to perform, whether or not you and people in the audience will go. Performance by performance, but they would allow that. And so he's amazing, just great to work with. He just, he says, okay, and he created a whole new season of six concerts, all string chamber music. And we rewrote all the notes. We did a completely new season in about a month and produced it, and did all of. The promotionals for it and hired the musicians for that and we had an entire season. And then every time before each concert, two weeks before the concert, Viterbo would let me know what I was allowed to do. It was either, you know, we followed the rules, Vitterbo followed our local rules, we had a group in town that kind of let us know what they wanted us to do and we those. And so sometimes it was no people can come. Other times it was, well, as long as each group of people that's together is six feet away from everyone else. So we did a lottery system. And so I went and I physically measured and came up with this whole paper system of how to see people and we did it by the lottery. And then we opened it up for. Friday night dress rehearsal, you know, that if you didn't win the lottery for getting in those seats, then you got in the lottery and got in those. And then everyone, whether you could go or not, you got a live stream. We live streamed. We livestreamed it and then they would get those live streams, which we had not done before. And then we added a lot of content, you know, we added Meet the Musician and we had them interview about the musician and what is it like and learn their, you, know, meet the musicians and we added that to the channel and Alexander did a 40 Days of Symphony and you could, you could watch that on our YouTube channel so we added, we did a lot that we had never done before.

[00:05:37] **Speaker 1** It seems that way in talking to other orchestras too that COVID forced a lot of changing over to the digital world and adding all of that and now that hasn't gone away even though everything's gone back to normal even with in-person performances. So who takes care of all the stuff on the web for. Of the symphony. Is that part of your job?

[00:06:10] **Speaker 2** Ultimately, yes, but Brett Hoos is our videographer and so he is the one that produces all of it. We now, we no longer do live stream. Technical issues come up every now and again at Viterbo, like anywhere, right? And then if you're live streaming and the sound goes out in the entire building, it's, you know, so we were also, so we record it and then we produce it and and Brett Hoose does that. And Cassie Davis, our administrator, she is kind of overlooks and makes sure everything is where it's supposed to be.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 1** So what has made you want to stay in this position?

[00:06:53] **Speaker 2** That is a great question. There's, there are several things. One, we have a large board of directors, and they are a great team of people really interested in the symphony continuing to thrive, to grow. And that's a very exciting group to work for. So working with them. We have the ability to really think forward. We're looking at five years down the road as we are looking just down the road a year, but we also have our sights on five years down the Road and Really thinking what could you do? You know what what what would be great for this community? What what aren't we doing? Who else could we reach? How can we reach more people and bring all of this to more people? And that's that's how the job goes and that that's a very exciting place to work when you are constantly looking for more partnerships and connecting with people. I'm sure you all at PBS Wisconsin have noticed that you know working with people and partnering with people no matter what you do it's better and and things that you never thought you could do were really interesting dynamic things can happen that way and that's what we're doing and And that's an exciting thing to be a part of, and we're growing, so that's always fun.

[00:08:20] **Speaker 1** Is that part of what drew you to wanting the executive director position? Because I would think being an artist, you're kind of working on your own. And in the executive-director position it seems like you're really working with a lot of other people.

[00:08:39] **Speaker 2** Right, so I like to be with other people and I like working with other people and that's the hard part about my artwork. And so being an artist, you know, I have a beautiful studio but it's in my basement and there are no other people that can make the pieces that I'm making. So although my husband will come down and work down, you know, in the studio on his things. So, I'm not always all by myself, but I needed something other than my work where I was connecting with others and getting to work with others. This was bigger than I was thinking, but, I love it. It's a good fit for me, so I get to work a lot with different people and artistically put the evening on. So my job is to. Is everything outside of what happens on that stage. Alexander is amazing and does his art. So all I have to do is make people aware of that and then create the experience around it. And we have completely changed how it is to experience the symphony. The evening is now a very full evening. It starts at 6.30. You've got live music in the lobby with cabaret tables and. Little lights and the bars are open and the background music and there's all these things going on so you can go from 6 30 to midnight because we have something going on around the beautiful symphony so it makes for a fun full night.

[00:10:17] **Speaker 1** You mentioned Alexander, Maestro Alexander, working with him, can you describe that a little bit more? What is it like interacting with him and how has that been over the last, you said six years?

[00:10:34] **Speaker 2** Yeah, so it's great. I mean, it's always interesting working with a genius. I mean really, he knows all of the history of the people, the music, the time, the politics of everything of all of this music. He just has this vast knowledge and he's able to pull it all together and why this particular group and he does that really well and then. And then my part is connecting him to the patrons and to events and putting his calendar together and having him come to the bow ball and be part of that and going to dinners and doing that. And he is so agreeable. He enjoys it. He interacts really well with the patrons. Patrons enjoy him very much. And so we work together on that. I mean, the hardest thing that we do as a team is work on the budget. And try to be really smart about what you're bringing. And let's say this main big piece that you're bringing is a smaller symphony. It's a Beethoven. You don't have, you don't need 80 musicians on the stage for that, right? So then if you're gonna be really smart because this other concert does require 80, we'll do all your 80 pieces and that, and can you pick the right pieces? That have the right numbers and put them all in one concert and make it make sense, you know, and that's what, that's my part, is the budget part, and then he just comes back and he's fun to work with because he's able to do that without any problem. So he's to work fun with.

[00:12:13] **Speaker 1** What about the other members of the orchestra? How large of an orchestra is the La Crosse Symphony?

[00:12:20] **Speaker 2** So we have 70 musicians, and then we have substitutes that come on, and not all 70 musicians can be there for all. If they're one of our musicians, they're definitely there for four of the six main concerts, but when they aren't there, then we we have a list of substitutes and people that also substitute as well. And they, again, Alexander. They enjoy working with him. He challenges them. These are really talented musicians from a three-hour radius and then we have a couple that are outside of that as well and our fellow is also from outside of there as well. So it's a wide radius but they come in and they really like working with him. He he's able to bring out the best in all of them and and get them and they they love that. It's a special camaraderie that he creates with the musicians and so that's another one of his gifts that he brings to our symphony.

[00:13:23] **Speaker 1** I noticed in looking at the roster of musicians that there are several who have been with the orchestra for 15, 20, 25 years. Is that common that once they start they seem to want to continue doing this?

[00:13:43] **Speaker 2** It is. We actually, you'll hear from stage, we have someone retiring this year and he's been with the Symphony for 31 years.

[00:13:53] **Speaker 1** That's amazing.

[00:13:54] **Speaker 2** Yeah so and we have quite a few that are in the upper 20s to low 30s. Yeah so it's common that they if they have settled into this area permanently then then yes.

[00:14:09] **Speaker 1** You mentioned before about working with Viterbo University. Yes. How long has the Viterbro Fine Arts Center been the symphony's sort of home?

[00:14:22] **Speaker 2** I'm not 100% sure, but I think it's the late 70s.

[00:14:28] **Speaker 1** Do you know where the symphony performed?

[00:14:31] **Speaker 2** I don't, but I think they had some halls. It was whenever it was built and I feel like the Fine Arts Center was built in 1978 perhaps. The FSPA sisters were the ones that said the symphony needs a place and the turbo should be the place. We're going to build it and they will come is the joke that the sisters of perpetual adoration say today, but they are a pillar of community and have made such a difference, but it's because of them that we have that Fine Arts Center to perform in. And the idea was that the symphony, it was so that the Symphony had a great place to perform.

[00:15:17] **Speaker 1** What accomplishments are you most proud of for the symphony?

[00:15:25] **Speaker 2** I would say making it so well through COVID, adjusting and a lot of people had to do a lot of different things and providing quality experiences for our season ticket holders and they stayed on with us and we needed them to do that and they did so and then As we're coming back, I would say... I'm creating that fuller experience of the symphony that I was talking about earlier and we have added a new package for youth so it's $60 for a season ticket anywhere and that's only been the last two years and we now have families coming, you know, they're getting six season tickets, two adults, four kids. And really bringing a lot of younger people and our attendance is higher than it's ever been in the history of the symphony. So I feel really good that we are bringing a lot of people from a younger age group and a broader age group to the symphony.

[00:16:42] **Speaker 1** What are some of your goals for the future?

[00:16:44] **Speaker 2** We have big goals, we have big goal, so the board of directors is, they're really actively looking, I told you this, five years in advance, and what can it be, and they have a strategic plan, and right now we have things that are possible, and things that we realize we could do, and we are just grabbing stakeholders for all of the different areas. And having meetings about these things, and some of them might be things like adding another main concert, you know, that is just for rising stars, or, you now, and building that out, or, and other things like that. So, growing, as far as that is concerned, is one of those, but they've got a lot of things, they have their sights on continuing to. Increase the quality and quantity of the symphony so it can reach everyone.

[00:17:46] **Speaker 1** What about for you personally? Do you have any personal goals that you would like to achieve with the symphony?

[00:17:55] **Speaker 2** Yes, continuing these partnerships with this idea of partnerships is we have a couple of new ideas of companies in town that we can partner with and create smaller, smaller experiences off of what we already have and offer those out. One of those, I have a meeting on it next week so none of these things have happened yet but a possibility is to take from our archives. So we've been recording our, professionally recording our symphonies for the last five years. And we have some beautiful pieces, but creating an archive series where you might pull out one big piece and one small piece, you have about 45 minutes of symphony music, and then you create a one hour, not a lot unlike what you're doing, but having it be Two pieces from our archives have Alexander would curate these and then put some fun things in between, you know, and create these one hour experiences and then play them at the movie theater, at the Reveille movie theater which is our local movie theater and also in some old folks' homes where they have the movie so that you can bring the symphony broadly. You know, and in a one hour increment, maybe on a Sunday afternoon or, you know in different ways. So we are right in the planning stages of creating something like this to bring to our community, which I think would be a great thing.

[00:19:39] **Speaker 1** That sounds wonderful. You talked a little bit about the Archive. Can you give us a little background on the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra? How long has it been in existence? And how long in its present structure, you know, kind of what changes it went through over the years?

[00:20:01] **Speaker 2** Oh sure. So the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1898, had its very first concert on March 4th of 1898. And since then, it was a community symphony. Right now we're a professional symphony, so it started as a community. Somebody was a volunteer and said, hey, you know, I can conduct, who's musicians in town. And they grabbed the musicians in town, and you had that come and go, you know, since 1898. And then back in 1970s, 1980s, then we had a new conductor came in that started to attract people from a little farther out. And we also started paying our musicians and that's when you become you no longer a community symphony but you are a regional symphony and so a regional professional symphony. And so that shift happened back I believe in the 80s maybe early 90s and then as that went through and the big change came with when Alexander came in in 2010. When he came in, he really attracted a lot of musicians at a higher level and we were able to bring in, attract musicians from that wider range. More of those came in and it elevated what we were able to do. And so the kind of repertoire that we play now. Is different from what we used to be able to play and I would say that has been in the last 10 years the structure has changed and then the board structure had to change as well right because a community symphony is run differently and and so the board made that switch over so that they are they're the vision. Of of the symphony and then they also are how everything happens and I let them know what we need this is your vision this is what we need and they they help make sure we have it and so that that that's the new structure of of how that works. So.

[00:22:34] **Speaker 1** You mentioned that you have more season ticket holders now than you ever had. About how many season ticket holder do you have?

[00:22:42] **Speaker 2** Well, no, I said we have more people attending. More people attending, yes. Yeah, yeah. So season tickets, usually it's around 450 season ticket holders is around the norm. But then you have your single ticket folks that come in and fill it up.

[00:23:08] **Speaker 1** Can you briefly talk about some of the educational programs that the Elman Cross Symphony engages in? I think there's like play it forward, the string scholarship. What are these and why are they important?

[00:23:26] **Speaker 2** Well, if you look at our mission statement, half of it is about our music and the other half is about the education, because the symphony can uniquely tap into these musicians and offering educational, rich educational music experiences, which it's very difficult to do from the school system point of view. You can afford to do that. And so we are able to, and we take it very seriously to. As part of our mission for our greater community, for the good of the community. So one of the things we do is we offer a youth symphony. So the symphony for youth, it always happens at March and there's about 2,000 third graders that come to that. And it is a 45-minute symphony that is designed specifically for them and Alexander gets up and does an instrument introduction so all the different instruments come forward and they have the. Explain this is called this and it sounds like this and and this is the job it has in the symphony and the kids love it and then they all play the same don't so they can hear the difference so it's a very it's educational and then they also have you know obviously beautiful music for for young people so that's one of the items the one you may be thinking about is the one that's happening at the May 3rd concert is the string scholarships so there's an audition process for it. Students who are in kindergarten through 11th grade, that happens like in three weeks, and they get to audition. And they audition, and it's not how well they play, it's their desire to play, desire to learn, is what is measured, as well as need-based. So those are the things that they look at. And there's 11 scholarships given out, 10 get. They get lessons from one of our musicians, private lessons, and half of it is paid. So the parents pay half, and we pay the other half. And then they get two season tickets. And then one is from Boys and Girls Club, and they get a full scholarship. And then. The end of their year, so you'll be seeing them at all of our 11 scholarship winners from last year, who have been learning this year. They do a performance in the lobby, that's our live music, before the concert begins. And so they get to do a concert, which is a recital, I should say. They get to a recitle, which a great experience for any young person to get to a piece well enough to perform it. And have that experience is very helpful for them.

[00:26:17] **Speaker 1** How long has that program, how long have you been doing that?

[00:26:22] **Speaker 2** I think about 16 years maybe, so it's been going on for a long time. It could be longer.

[00:26:30] **Speaker 1** That's great.

[00:26:35] **Speaker 2** What you had asked about the Play It Forward, Play It forward goes along with the boys and we have free, we also do free Boys and Girls Club lessons. So at our Boys and Girl's Club clubs we have two and we free lessons at both of them and any student that wants to learn violin. Play violin, we pay for the instructors to do the lessons, and then we also purchase all of the instruments that they need. And that's Play It Forward is our instrument, our instrument donation. But some people donate instruments to Play It forward and then the symphony pays to have them fixed and then placed out into those places, as well as four other school systems. So we. We typically send out about $5,000 worth of instruments out into the school systems and the Boys and Girls Clubs every year. And this is so students who can't afford to go and band or orchestra, then they can because they have the instrument.

[00:27:46] **Speaker 1** One other program, this isn't educational but promotional, is the Conductor wannabes. Could you talk a little bit about that?

[00:27:56] **Speaker 2** Yes, so the Conductor wannabes, we're going into our 26th season of Conductors wannabees. We skipped two during COVID. But 26 seasons of Conducters wannabee's and we've had a hundred and I think it's We've had 126. Conductor wannabes total in that time, because you always have, you know, about five, five to seven conductor wannabees and then these are community members that raise money both for the symphony and they get to pick another nonprofit and so all the money they raise, half of it comes to the symphony and the other half goes to the other nonprofit and they have six weeks to raise money and the top two fundraisers get to conduct a four minute march. At the May concert.

[00:28:54] **Speaker 1** And how are they raising the money?

[00:28:56] **Speaker 2** They are being so creative, they are being so creative. They'll have at different locations, they'll do somebody did a dance party, another person went to, they were a bartender, they were guest bartender somewhere and you could add tips for the bartender that went to the Dr. Wannabes. At Rudy's one of our restaurants, you know restaurants will pair up with them and say well If you donate dollars, then Rudy's will give you you know a root beer float So they partner with people like that. I know one of ours had Oh, he he's theater man And so he had auditions for the sidekick. So and he raised dollars through that. So they are creative, it's different every single time, how they raise dollars. But they're reaching out to their other non-profits through their avenues and that group is also helping as well as us and so between the two. It's a great way to get other non profits that are known throughout the whole community. So it's a a great partnership with all of those other non prophets and it's lots of fun and a lot of people benefit in the community.

[00:30:21] **Speaker 1** Sounds like it's a win win. It is. And a win for the audience too.

[00:30:25] **Speaker 2** It is super fun for the audience.

[00:30:31] **Speaker 1** Speaking of the audience, the audience is made up of people from the La Crosse community. What is it like working with the greater La Cresse community? What's so special about here and working with these people in this community?

[00:30:49] **Speaker 2** So I grew up going to the symphony down in North Carolina and I've been to other symphonies. There's something special about this community. This community embraces the symphony as a critical part of our overall community. I would say that's true about the arts in general, that our community is just really appreciative of the arts that are provided. It creates a culture that they enjoy living in and they take it upon themselves to be sure that they continue. So they. They are all in. So when they come they are fully invested and there's an enthusiasm you can and the musicians talk about this because we have a lot of musicians only about a third of our musicians are from lacrosse and the other two-thirds are from outside of lacross and they talk about how great it is there's this energy that comes from the audience and they just feel like they're on the edge of the seat and they're like right there with them and so it makes it particularly exciting to perform here. And you can feel it afterwards. We have coffee and cookies for everybody afterwards, and you can meet the maestro and the guest artists and the musicians and the energy that happens out there and everybody connecting with each other. The community members say it's a place to connect and to feel part of the community, and you feel that when you go to the symphony.

[00:32:26] **Speaker 1** Thank you, that was wonderful, that was a perfect answer. What is it like then also working with the guest artists? Because you have world class guest artists coming in here. Yeah. What is like being able to work with them?

[00:32:45] **Speaker 2** It's a privilege. It's exciting. It can be a little bit nerve-racking. Some of them are extremely famous people and they come and you think they're accomplished and they're getting major awards and... They always turn out to be these amazing people that are just excited to get to share their music with your community. And they're very fun to work with. I either speak with them or their manager ahead of time, so there's a lot of pre-planning that happens. And everything is put into place well ahead of times so we are full aware of their needs ahead of time, which makes it nice when they come. We're in pretty good shape of knowing what they're going to need. And making sure that we have all those things all set for them. But we do a guest artist society. It's a membership for people. And with that membership, they get to go to a party the night before every concert. And then our guest artist comes with Alexander. And there's a cocktail party and some food for like an hour. But for half an hour, Alexander interviews them just about pretty much anything in their life, the personal things you would never know about. And then they get to do a private concert of anything, except for what's happening at the concert. They can't play anything from the concert, so they get play their favorite whatever they wanna play. And we had one violinist come in, and she's like, I actually really like to fiddle. Can I fiddle? I was like, of course you can fiddle, and the Guest Artist Society members loved it. But in this manner, we are really fortunate in La Crosse where we really get to know our guest artists very well. And they get to know a nice contingency of our patrons as well. And they make a lot of fans when they come here. They get a lot personal fans. So to me, that's one of the coolest parts of the job is getting to meet these amazing people and hearing about all the other things they have going on. It's never just music that they're doing. You know, they're not just performing music in places, they're also innovating and doing all of these other things and you get to be part of that story. So that's a pretty special part of sitting in my my position anyway.

[00:35:11] **Speaker 1** Talk a little bit about the guest artist for this concert, Rachel Barton-Pine, and have you worked with her before, and what was that like, and what are you looking forward to with having her come to this concert?

[00:35:28] **Speaker 2** Well, Rachel Barton-Pine was here several years ago, and I did get to meet her. And she's super dynamic, just a big and a great personality. She brings a ton of energy. And she has quite a fan base here, because she's been here before. And she did all these things I'm talking about, and we'll do it again. And people are like, oh, god, I get to see her again. So she is um. Such a dynamic performer and then she's dynamic as a personality as well. So I always look forward to getting to see her again. It's fun when it's a return artist that I've met before and she, I have met her before. So we're looking forward to connecting again.

[00:36:19] **Speaker 1** It seems like a number of artists tend to come back here. They do. Not every year, but every two, three. Two, three?

[00:36:27] **Speaker 2** Two, three, yeah.

[00:36:29] **Speaker 1** So they must like.

[00:36:31] **Speaker 2** They do. They do! We had Andrei Gugnin was here last year and when he was leaving, he said, you know, and I was taking him to the airport, and he's like, you know I would really like to come back. And my visa's good for this many times, like maybe we could fit it, so we did. And he will be playing again in next May. Because that's right inside his visa coming from abroad, which is pretty extensive work to get someone's visa all correct and over. But he enjoyed it so much and he won the World's Piano Championship. So he's been asked for, he's playing all over the world, but he still wanted to come back to La Crosse. So we took that as a great compliment and we're bringing him back next year.

[00:37:28] **Speaker 1** Do you ever get guest artists who come and they say, I've talked to other people and they say La Crosse is the orchestra.

[00:37:37] **Speaker 2** We have had a couple of people that have said, you know, my good friend so-and-so, we're like, we do. Yes, because they all, I think they know each other. I think there must be a circuit of folks that know each others. So we have heard that a time or two.

[00:38:01] **Speaker 1** So you talked a little bit about working with the community. How do both the LSO and the community benefit from one another?

[00:38:15] **Speaker 2** Right, that's a great question. So the community benefits from having a symphony because a symphony is considered a high-level art form and if you have a symphonie that means you also have a theater, that means, you also have an arts gallery of some sort. It means you would also have those other art forms just because a Symphony is particularly expensive to put on. Um that would be um so that means we have um Mayo Clinic when they opened um you know a new opportunities here in lacrosse and made us a hub a couple of years ago right right before COVID, they brought 200 new physicians to La Crosse. Then they were offered to stay here, and several of them said the only reason I stayed, because it was such a smaller town, and they were concerned that there was not going to be anything to do. And they said, well, you have a symphony. If you have symphony, then you have everything else. That means you have an arts culture, which we do. We have a rich arts culture with our theater and everything else, and so. That helps a community to have that. It attracts high-level professionals to want to work in that community. It attracts musicians, right? It attracts artists. And you need to have an artist in town to have the arts culture, where it's not just at the symphony, but it's also in other places. And you have... Artists that do you know three-dimensional art or you know visual arts and all other kinds of arts and so that's how it helps the community. Now the community Without the community support, you can't have a symphony in a town this size. It's extremely unusual to find a professional regional symphony in a time the size of La Crosse, Wisconsin, because it's expensive to do. And the only way to do it is through all of our partnerships that we have with community members and companies. And so we have many partnerships. And because of all of those partnerships, we are able to exist. So we kind of coexist and help each other by both working together.

[00:41:00] **Speaker 1** So could you just say a little bit more about why you think the La Crosse symphony has continued to operate and prosper here in La Cres in this greater Cooley area over the last 125 plus years?

[00:41:23] **Speaker 2** Yes, we've prospered here because the community appreciates and wants it to be here. And I think with their support and on our end with us continuing to bring in a high level, we have a top-of-the-line maestro. Alexander Platt brings amazing dynamic programs every year. He is. Always pushing to bring, not only those classics we all want to hear, but that paired up with some really interesting new things or some nuanced things, so you bring in a nice mixture of those so you can celebrate both and you bring that to your audience and they want to hear. Both of those things and so they enjoy those and want them to be there. So as long as we continue to bring and our musicians are high level you know they have their PhDs and come from you know Juilliard and places like that so these are highly professional musicians so you bring this beautiful product in a beautiful hall where they can experience this music and that continues on that history.

[00:42:52] **Speaker 1** Um, I think we have covered everything that they want to. Let me just check to make sure.

[00:43:15] **Speaker 2** The only thing I might add on that is I should mention the Board of Directors. So the Board Of Directors, it's a large board of directors. It's anywhere from 15 to 23 members at any time. And they are community members that are really invested in making sure the symphony lasts for a really long time. And back in 2012. One of those board of directors started an endowment. And so we now have a really nice endowment to help us through times like COVID, which it turns out we didn't need it, but it was there. So we were able to know that we can provide what we need to provide no matter what's happening in the world. And I think that makes a difference of being able to. Confidently be able to plan and provide really amazing programming knowing that you have that if something goes wrong in the world to temporarily be able to help you get through. I think you operate differently when you do that and so you have this invested group of board of directors that are doing everything they can. Strategically to keep the tradition moving forward and I think that is another key part of why the symphony has lasted so long and will last into the future.

[00:44:48] **Speaker 1** There is one other question that I thought I would ask. Can you just briefly talk about how you went from being an artist to them being on the to them being executive director and linking those up.

[00:45:04] **Speaker 2** Sure. So I was on the board, the arts board, with our city. Unusual to most of the world, our arts board for the city is connected, is part of the city government. It's part it. So I was on that for like eight years. While I was on it, we we got a National Endowment for the Arts. And where this is going is that we had to celebrate the big John Pugh mural going up, which was what our National Endowment for the arts was, in one form or another. And we decided as a group that we were gonna put on a big arts fair and we were going to start an arts fair. And so I was on the team, it was a whole team, but on the theme that created Art Spire. And then I I chaired that with Brian Fukuda for the first five years. And it won the award for best special event in all of Wisconsin. And it was at that time that I was. So that was a volunteer thing that I did. And then I got invited to be on the board because they said, we don't have any artists on our board of directors. And we want an artist. Okay. So I joined the board in 2013, and then I was there for my six years, it was in that sixth year when I was going to be going off of the board when our executive director left. And they said, what do you want to be president? And I was like, I would rather be executive director. I'm like, well, have you considered applying? Please apply. And when I applied, using the experience that I had running Artsfire. Which was, you know, it was doing, oh, you had to raise dollars. You had to put on productions and plans and all of those things. That's why I ultimately, I had that experience and was very successful at that. So that was the connection of how I ended up becoming executive director.

[00:47:29] **Speaker 1** So what's a really good day for you? Let's say. What would make you go home smiling?

[00:47:38] **Speaker 2** It happens all the time. I'll give you three. Can I give you three? Okay. We have patrons that pop in the office, and they, they come sharing great things. And when they come in and they pop their head in the eye, I just have to tell you how much I loved fill in the blank. That's one. Other times we get things in the mail where they are... Really sincere thank you notes that we get from patrons for the most amazing experience. That's a good day. And then when partnerships work out, you know, I'm constantly looking. That's probably my favorite part of the job is trying to create partnerships and create things that are super full. Diverse and that they help the other person and they bring something to a lot of different people and how can you create that and when those come through and they're like yes we're going to and like with the Rivoli and this meeting we've got a lot the parts put together and I think it's going to work. That's an exciting day when you're going to build this new something that's just going to make it that much better. That's a really good day at the office.

[00:49:04] **Speaker 1** What about Saturdays for our performance?

[00:49:09] **Speaker 2** So Saturdays are, I'm usually in my studio. I usually start the day in my studio and go in the yard if I can or on a walk and do something outside. I eat dinner at three o'clock. And then I get dressed and I head to the, head in and I'm on my feet until midnight because we have the after party. At Le Cob, which is another fun partnership that's gone really well. And so after a concert, Le Cob opens their doors from 10 to midnight for symphony patrons, and they put out a huge charcuterie for everyone, and then there's a specialty drink for $10, and everybody goes, and Alexander goes, and the guest artist goes, and the musicians, and the patrons, and we have like about 50 people normally go, when you just. Lapse in the glow of the experience, which is really fun to share, all the different people, how they experience the symphony. And then at midnight, I go home and I crash. It's a long day. It's good day, it's a good day. It's exciting, you know. It's fun, it a fun day.

[00:50:35] **Speaker 1** Well, I think we've covered everything. Thank you so much. This was great. Thanks. You gave some wonderful answers.

[00:50:42] **Speaker 2** Oh good!

[00:50:44] **Speaker 1** You know, I'm looking forward to, I always get the transcript so that I can see and highlight what I think are going to make the best sound bite.

[00:50:55] **Speaker 2** I hope you get a couple good ones.

[00:50:59] **Speaker 1** Quite a few, quite a few.

[00:51:00] **Speaker 2** Thanks so much for taking the time.

[00:51:02] **Speaker 1** Thank you very much.

[00:51:03] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:51:05] **Speaker 1** Yeah, before we cut, I just want to get the 30 seconds.