

Art Lives Podcast Season 1 Episode 9: Jennifer Uphoff Gray

Elizabeth DeLamater 0:09

Hello, and welcome to episode nine of Art Lives, a series of interviews with artists of all media. My name is Elizabeth DeLamater, and today's interview features Jennifer Uphoff Gray. Jennifer Uphoff Gray is the artistic director of Forward Theater, a not-for-profit professional theatre company based in Madison, Wisconsin. In this episode, Jennifer takes us from her "light bulb moment" to Broadway. We learn how Jennifer collaborated with other artists to form a new thriving arts organization that just had its 10th anniversary. We also learn how Jennifer figured out how to maintain her family legacy of community engagement and social justice, and combined that with her love of the arts. She tells us what her day to day life is like as an artistic director, and also shares her belief that personal suffering is not required for creative expression. We had a wonderful conversation and I really hope you enjoy this. Here is Jennifer Uphoff Gray.

What it seemed to me, from the moment I met you, you knew what you wanted to do. And then you went and you did it. And it seemed that you always you always knew. Is that true?

Jennifer 1:59

Well, yes and no, because I actually had a really sort of one at career plan shift in college because I was always, I was. I was always driven. I was, you know, focused on academics and extracurriculars and doing all of those. But if you look at my high school yearbook, it says that my plan was to be Wisconsin's first female senator. Which I'm very grateful Tammy Baldwin wears that crown.

Elizabeth 2:23

yes

Jennifer 2:23

But but I planned to go to law school. And then I you know, I was a history major undergrad, right? Gonna go to law school, I was going to do civil rights, law. And then I was going to go into politics, that was my plan. But I always loved theater, I acted in tons of shows, went to tons of shows, loved it. But literally, it never even occurred to me being an actor professionally, that - I never had that drive. I never had that sense of being good enough at that to want to pursue it.

Elizabeth 2:54

Right

Jennifer 2:54

So it was always just a thing that I did, that gave me joy that I didn't intend to relate to my professional life. But when I was at Harvard, you know, I'm a history major. So I'm taking tons of history classes, I'm taking all the core curriculum requirement classes, and then every leftover class that I had every slot, I would take a theater class.

Elizabeth 3:12

Sure

Jennifer 3:12

They don't have a big theater program there. There's not a theater major or anything like that. But they did have quite a few classes. You know, in the English department, there was a visual arts department there were you know, there were opportunities. And I would take these theater classes. And I remember my sophomore year, I took a class where you did some acting and some writing and some directing.

Elizabeth 3:36
Cool

Jennifer 3:37
And it was the first time I'd really done any directing. That experience, combined with - so, at Harvard, there was a professional company in residence, the American Repertory Theater, run by Robert Brustein at the time, Diane Paulus runs it now. And they did a five show season. In the Loeb Drama Center there on campus with you know, Cherry Jones was one of the company members, while I was an undergrad, I got to see her in like 15 shows, it's the greatest thing ever.

Elizabeth 4:04
Wow.

Jennifer 4:04
Alvin Epstein, all these amazing, amazing actors and that was a director's theater. Like they brought in these really more avant garde, more experimental, directors so that you really saw their handprints all over the piece, which is very different from the kind of theater I grew up going to see here, back then right, which was much more about the actors or the writers?

Elizabeth 4:25
right.

Jennifer 4:26
So then it was just sort of education. And oh, "Directing is like this really creative job." And that combined with this class, I was like, "Oh, I want to do some more of this. And I over the course of a year started directing a bunch of shows as extracurriculars and that led me to this realization that THIS is what I wanted to do with my life. And I still remember junior year of college, suddenly realizing, "Hold on, I don't actually have to graduate with a history major. I've taken so many classes and theater that I could probably construct an independent study major in theater." And so I did that I went and got an advisor. And my, you know, Harvard doesn't give what they call technical degrees?

Elizabeth 5:11
Yes.

Jennifer 5:11
So I thought, "Okay, well, if you were pre-med, you wouldn't major in pre-med at Harvard, you'd major in biology, or something like that." I was like, "Okay, well, what are the building blocks of theater?" So my degree from Harvard actually is a degree in dramatic literature and stage history.

Elizabeth 5:25
That's right. I've seen that.

Jennifer 5:28
And so. So yeah, I mean, when you knew me in high school, like I was very driven, I did have this really clear sense of where I wanted to go. But in terms of where I wound up, it was this big

path shift, when I realized that there was a role for me in this art form that I loved that really suited my, my strengths and my interests.

Elizabeth 5:50

So did you feel... Did you have any conflict about that? Or did it just feel like, "oh, okay, this is, this is me."

Jennifer 6:00

I didn't feel and I, again, lots and lots of smaller decisions that I make in my life, I felt more stress about but with that one. It just felt so right. It felt so hand in glove.

Elizabeth 6:15

Yeah.

Jennifer 6:16

Because I've always had this part of me, that's creative?

Elizabeth 6:19

Right.

Jennifer 6:19

But I've also always been, you know, I'm very organized, I, you know, that I like to- if you put me in a group of people, I will help us sort out a plan for action and help us get there. It's not sort of pay attention to me, but it's like, "Can I help us all move in a direction rather than sit here and talk about it too much?" You know. That's always been my personality. And that's not a good personality for an actor.

Elizabeth 6:43

True, True (laugh)

Jennifer 6:44

That's not necessarily a good fit. But all of those things that I felt I was good at that would have been useful in the original career path. But that original career path might not have been using the creative part of me.

Elizabeth 7:02

Yeah.

Jennifer 7:03

When I sort of realized that there was this job that was out there that I could use all those parts of me, it felt really like the right thing, kind of right away.

Elizabeth 7:16

Cool.

Jennifer 7:17

Yeah.

Elizabeth 7:17

Did you have any...Was this all then self directed once you made that decision? Or did you have any immediate mentors that you...

Jennifer 7:29

um, I didn't have any mentors really, that were directors? Because again, it's funny, because if I had thought I wanted to be a director in high school, I wouldn't have gone to Harvard, I probably wouldn't apply to Yale, or Northwestern or a school or NYU or a school like that. But interestingly, I don't think I would be as good a director because those programs from everything that I know about them, it's much more structured, you go through this program, and then here you can have a show to direct in your senior year, etc, etc.

Elizabeth 8:00
Right

Jennifer 8:01
Harvard there were like 40, 45 shows per semester that were done self produced by students all over campus. So I could direct a couple of shows every semester, and really learn that way. So I learned a lot that way. But I didn't learn a lot from a teacher saying "this is how you direct," while I was a student.

Where I did get mentors was after I got out of college. When I was in the summer between my junior and senior years, I got an internship in New York City, working for at the time, a small Off Broadway commercial producer, Richard Frankle Productions, they had an internship position. And it was a very small staff, they had like five people or something like that. And then I was the summer intern. And it was a great crash course on how the commercial theatre business worked, but also how New York theater worked. And what was great about that was that I built some, I got to see a lot of shows,

Elizabeth 9:03
Sure,

Jennifer 9:04
I got to read a lot of scripts, understand how the business worked, and I made some connections. And when I, in my senior year, directed my thesis production on the Loeb Drama Center stage where the ART performed, Richard sent a couple of his staff members up to see the show.

Elizabeth 9:20
Cool!

Jennifer 9:20
Which was great. So then they're like, able to say, Oh, this person actually has some talent and has a potential career. So then when I moved to New York after graduation, they put me forth as a possible Assistant Director for some shows that they were producing. And I was able to, I got a couple gigs on some Off Broadway shows as an assistant producer that led to some Broadway productions, and that's how I gained some mentors who I really was able to work with on multiple productions, and really learn from.

Elizabeth 9:51
right. It seems so easy.

Jennifer 9:55
Sure. (they laugh)

And the thing is, there's no one path. I mean, that's the thing is I'll talk to a lot of young directors and they'll say, "Great! So how do I have a career?" I'm like, "I don't know." (laugh) You know, no two professional directors had the same path to getting work. And so that's hard.

Elizabeth DeLamater 10:12
Did it feel easy at the time?

Jennifer 10:16

No, it didn't feel easy. And there were times when it was very stressful, or I was like, "What comes next? What do I do?" You know, there are times when I considered going to graduate school, you know, I actually went through the whole application and interview process at one point and then decided not to go. That Yeah, there were times where it felt really hard. But luckily, I never went incredibly long stretches before the next opportunity came along. And that that made all the difference. And I did a lot of temping in between. So I was able to support myself and not be... I wasn't sitting in my apartment going, "Oh, god, what am I gonna do today?" I was like, "I'm gonna go to work, and input things into Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations until the next gig comes along."

Elizabeth DeLamater 11:09

Now, that's something that's very interesting to me, because the show Rent was just on TV.

Jennifer 11:17

Yesss.

Elizabeth DeLamater 11:19

And that show, when that show, first hit Broadway, I didn't know about it, because I was "living Rent," (except for the AIDS part.) I was in school for music. And I had all of those conversations with people about selling out. And "You have to just live your music." And "If you take a day job, you're selling out, not being true to yourself." And I... some of my friends took a long time before they felt like they weren't letting their artistic selves down if they did something else to pay the bills. So for you, is that is that "you?" Was that the reality of living in New York? Why were you so practical?

Jennifer 12:11

I've never really personally bought into the idea that you have to be suffering to be an artist. And I know that that is a very deeply felt life view for some artists. And this is not meant to dismiss that life view. But I've never, I've never seen that as as true for me. I think that art can come from anyone, it doesn't have to come from suffering. It can come from suffering, it can come from joy, it can come from complacency. It can come from uncertainty. Or it can come from anywhere. I also believe - and this is this is a philosophy - We can talk about this later, that's borne out in how we run Forward Theater Company. You need money to create art.

Elizabeth 13:11

Yes.

Jennifer 13:11

You do. It does not mean you have to sell out. You have to find the right balance; what resources do you need to create the art that you want to create? And you have to find the way to balance that? But if you don't have money to pay your rent, and to buy food, you're going to have a limited timeframe in which you can create your art. Right. And so I don't think there needs to be some sort of 'Purity Test.' You know, the more starving You are the better artists you are, or the more true artists that you are. But it is the quintessential New York especially dilemma of, "Okay, great, I'm a theatre artist, how am I going to live while I build a career?" And, "Am I going to wait tables? Am I going to temp? Am I going to be a childcare provider?" You know, what are the what are the there's lots of there's lots of options. And you have to find the thing that works best for you. For me, temping was a really great solution. Because, I went to Harvard, I'm smart enough. You know, I had good computer skills. I could do all of that. So I was actually in high demand as an office temp.

Elizabeth 14:15
Nice.

Jennifer 14:16

Ironically, it's funny, I look back now I was working in the derivatives department at Citibank in the mid-90s, and when I think back on the stuff that they were doing there, it's like, "Oh, god, did I help tank the economy? Unintentionally? (They laugh.)

But, you know, so I was in high demand, because I was responsible, and I was smart, and I could get that work done. And constantly they'd be like, "Can we offer you a full time position?" But what I loved about being a temp - and I was a long term temp sometimes - was that because I wasn't an employee of the company, I could leave on a moment's notice. I could say, "You know what, I just got a gig." This happened once I was like, I got called to assistant direct a Broadway show on like, three days notice, because the producers would always - that would be last thing they would think about. "Oh wait, we're about to start rehearsal, the director wants an assistant, let's go get somebody." If I had been an employee, I would have personally felt a lot of guilt about quitting and leaving them in the lurch. But that was the deal. They got to have me without paying benefits. And I get to quit without feeling guilty. And that's, that's how, you know, that was what worked for me. And then whenever my, theater gig would end, I would call up the temp agency and say, great, I'm available starting, you know, tomorrow or next week, or whatever. And they would place me. And I certainly did well, on the routine of, "I'm going to go have my nine to five job," and I could take classes in the evening, or I could direct things in basements in the evening, or I could see lots of shows in the evening or on weekends. So I still felt like I was pursuing my artistic life in between gigs.

Elizabeth DeLamater 15:49

Nice. Nice. Yeah. I think that that is, I think that that is really important. Another important thing to say, to my students that I do find myself saying is, you're not a failure if you are eating.

Jennifer 16:08

You are succeeding if you are eating! (laugh)

Elizabeth 16:12

Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer 16:14

100% Yeah, I was I watched that Rent broadcast the other night, and just for my husband and I, I mean, we were living in New York, then. I saw the original Broadway cast, I think three times in the first couple of months

Elizabeth 16:25

Oh, wow.

Jennifer 16:26

...that it was running, you know, once with tickets that, you know, my in-laws had bought so we could all go see together and once you know, my husband at the time was in graduate school and a company that was courting him, offered some tickets. And we did the whole wait on the sidewalk overnight for tickets once. And that was really we weren't we weren't living in the East Village. We were living in Brooklyn. You know, we weren't Upper East Side. But we weren't East Village either. But the city we lived in and the concerns that it reflected about, about AIDS, about poverty, about trying to find a place to make your art that was the life we were living. And it was so ...it felt so personal. And it is pretty wonderful to watch it now and have it feel really dated.

Elizabeth 17:18
Yeah, woah

Jennifer 17:18
It's really largely in terms of the AIDS crisis. But also in terms of it was, it felt like such a new and shocking good thing to see these LGBTQ couples on a Broadway stage. Oh, my gosh, and now they can show it on Fox. You know, we've moved so far in such a relatively short period of time that, that was thrilling.

Elizabeth 17:47
Absolutely.

Jennifer 17:48
That I can watch it with my - I watch it with my 12 year old and it was great.

Elizabeth 17:52
There wasn't an "advisory." Like, I think there was

Jennifer 17:56
"Be careful".(laugh)

Elizabeth DeLamater 17:58
Yeah. Well, that's also another thing is that art can, that theater can be a place where you can portray the way people live. And you can express human experience as it is now. And I wish that I knew how to tell people this. I knew how to tell young students, how do you tell, especially young people, theatre, you need to go see theatre? It's not this stuffy thing. What do you say?

Jennifer 18:40
Yeah, that's something we're really doing a lot of thinking and working on at Forward. And it's partly because I feel like Madison has a really rich arts community and a really rich theatre ecosystem, where we really fall down as a community is theater for teenagers. There's fantastic theater experiences for young children. So if they're middle school age, there's a few classes and things for teenagers but but, you know, high schools very rarely take their students to see theatre, there are not a lot of opportunities other than your school show to participate in theater. And that's the thing we're really working on in it, you know, we're well positioned in a way because Forward's focus is on doing contemporary work, first of all, so we don't do productions of "chestnuts," you know, pretty much everything we do is between, you know, zero and you know, eight or 10 years old at the oldest. And so we really are doing plays that speak to where we are right now in the world that helps. And frequently. I've been drawn to plays that have sometimes focus on teenage characters. We did a play last year called I and You, which has two teenagers. It was not a play specifically for teenagers. It was for adults but also incredibly engaging for teens, or plays that have younger characters in them like we just did Fun Home. And so we've really tried to work to build relationships in the school districts to entice high schools to bring groups to see our shows. We've done a couple of student matinees, just for teens of different shows. We had a play a couple years ago called From Up Here that dealt with bullying. It was, the script was focused sort of evenly on the kids and on the parents. But we did a student matinee and brought teens in. Same thing for I and You actually, for this ties back to Rent in a way. When we were running Fun Home. We did a matinee that was underwritten. And we partnered with this group GSAFE, they coordinate all of the GSA clubs around the state high school and middle school. And we went to them we said, "Look, we want to do a free performance for kids who are in their middle and high schools GSA clubs in like Dane County." And they helped us coordinate that. So we packed the Playhouse

we had like 300 and something teenagers from 18 different schools, who all came in, we did this private performance. We had this extended talk-back afterwards, to see that show with that group of kids. I mean, every single person working on our show, whether it was the IATSE technician running the lighting board, the stage crew, the actors, the musicians in the I mean, all of us were just completely overwhelmed with how great that was. And it was, yeah, so we're trying to do more of that. I mean, we're doing plays. Contemporary writers are writing plays that I think are incredibly engaging, I have have three 12 to 17 year olds living here. They come to see the shows that we do, and find them incredibly engaging, it's convincing their peers.

Elizabeth 22:01
yes.

Jennifer 22:04
And if I knew like the silver bullet to make that happen, you know, I would just be going all over the country sharing that, but, but I don't, but we're working on it.

Elizabeth DeLamater 22:14
I think there's there's a thing with live entertainment with... I'm teaching college now. And when any class that I teach is a general education class, I require people to go to a live performance of some kind. And it's often people's first live performance of something, which is so surprising to me, because of the way we grew up where our school took us to so many things. And I don't know what the answer is, but Forward Theater seems to be doing a great job with that. And you you also partner with so many other organizations, which seems to be important, you're not trying to do just your own outreach. Was that your idea?

Jennifer 23:03
I mean, sort of, yes. But but also a group effort. As you know, and as my talk about wanting to be, you know, a civil rights lawyer and politician indicates, you know, I grew up in a super political family, I grew up in a family where there was this absolute expectation laid down that you would, in your life, be making efforts to make the world better than you found it. Right. And there's a lot of different ways to do that.

Elizabeth 23:33
True.

Jennifer 23:33
But that was a clear expectation, you know, very politically engaged, not, you know, my parents both worked for nonprofits, their whole careers. I had grandparents that ran for office on the socialist ticket, you know, very, (cough) excuse me oh it's winter in Wisconsin! So that was a big part of it. And honestly, it was one of the reasons why, ultimately, we left New York. I mean, there were a lot of family reasons. It started to feel hard with kids being there and wanting to be closer to more family and like quality of life. And that was part of it. But professional considerations were also a really big part of it. And I was doing a lot of very high-profile work in New York, I was the associate director on a bunch of Broadway shows, I directed national tours, I worked with amazing artists, it was great. But I really had lost the sense that what I was doing was making the world better. And I do believe that art intrinsically makes the world better. Like I really do believe that. But it can be hard to convince yourself that that's true when you never interact with your audience.

Elizabeth 24:44
Yes.

Jennifer 24:45

And in New York, especially working in the commercial theater. It's not like you have a subscription audience. It's not like you're there in the lobby greeting people, there's no sense of interaction and I had really lost the sense that I was making the world better and, again, I had two Young kids at that point. And so the balance was tough. And I wanted the world better for them. And so I just reached the point of thinking I, this doesn't work for me anymore. And so the thought when we moved back to Wisconsin was, I'll see if I can get a freelance directing career going here, at a place where there's better balance and better life for my family, and you know, more interaction with the audience. And if that doesn't work, maybe I'll do something entirely different and leave theater that was absolutely kind of in the back of my mind, I was, you know, in full blown, I've got young kids at home mode. I was continuing to do some theater work in New York while I was there, but I thought, we'll just see what happens. Luckily, when, when I got here, I was able to get a few directing gigs in southern Wisconsin fairly quickly. And so that had me feeling reasonably confident that I would be able to stay in theater and be here. But then in the midst of that, we wound up starting Forward Theater. And, you know, Madison Repertory Theater had been the only equity, union company here in Madison, right. And during that horrible, you know, financial meltdown, 2008-2009. The Rep was in their 40th season and they closed mid-year. It was just horrible.

Elizabeth 26:17
Stunning.

Jennifer 26:18

And I was one of a group of artists that I was invited to a conversation about how we might preserve professional theater in Madison. So I was one of a number of people at that table. But then this gets back to my whole, I'm going to take a group of people together to organize and take action. I showed up at that conversation, because I had about a week's advance notice, we were gonna be having it with literally a scroll of butcher paper on which I had sketched an outline of how we could build a theater from the ground up. And luckily, I was in a room with incredible and like minded artists who all were like, "Great, that sounds good. Let's do that." And then helped fine tune and yeah, and adjust that vision. But it really, I really do feel incredibly fortunate. Because if I had taken over an existing theater as artistic director, I would never have been able to mold it into this kind of company that I find so fulfilling. I mean, I really do believe that the work we're doing at Forward is making the world better both through the art and through the ways that we engage with the community. And I get to see that because I have 3000 subscribers that I get to see several times a year and talk with and that we bring in new new audiences to everything we do partnerships with nonprofits on virtually every show that we do. We're doing plays about contemporary topics. So great. We're doing a play _Skeleton Crew_ last fall that was about a plant closing in Detroit. Fantastic. We partnered with Wisconsin Historical Society, we did this photo gallery exhibit "Faces of Oscar Meyer," where we went out and we interviewed people who'd been working for Oscar Meyer and lost their jobs when the plant closed down. And that had been their life. And we got to meet and talk with those people and bring a bunch of them in to see the show and see how the story rippled out through our community. And that's, you know, we've tried to do something like that around nearly every production. So I get to see that up close and personal, but it's not just me, that that made that happen with Forward. I mean, that's certainly something that I am drawn to, and lean into. But it's also Celia Klehr; it was her table we met around that we, when we founded this company. She grew up on the Wisconsin Idea, and the sense of, of giving back and connection; art of, by, and for a community, right? She was a huge leader in that. And then also, we've been led by our audience, because we would sort of experiment with, "Well, let's try having a talk-back after every performance," or "Let's try doing a fundraiser for this nonprofit that works on an issue presented in our play," and our audience just glommed onto that so enthusiastically, we're like, "Ooh, you like it? We like that too! Wait, let's do more." So it's really been this kind of virtuous cycle where the more we do the more the audience

embraces it, the more we get to do it. And I don't think that would necessarily work everywhere.

Elizabeth DeLamater 29:25

Well, it also I think it also a combination of, of your generosity and courage, the theatre company's generosity and courage because it's very vulnerable to open yourselves up. for example, a talkback?

Jennifer 29:48

Sure.

Elizabeth DeLamater 29:49

you just did a performance. And then, literally the actors go back on stage and sit down. "Okay, how'd I do?" you know? To me as a performer, that's, that's terrifying At times I want to get out of the building! (they laugh)

Jennifer 30:05

Yeah.

Elizabeth DeLamater 30:06

And the fact that you do that as a whole as a company, but then directly as talkbacks, and that you find actors who want to do that, and and everybody who works for you consistently, I think that's been a huge part of it. But that's very, that's very admirable. And it's not easy.

Jennifer 30:30

It's, you know, it's not easy, but it's, it's so rewarding. And again, it's partly, you know, the Madison audience is so smart and engaged and curious, that helps tremendously. But really, you know, we started doing talkbacks after every performance on our first production. And that was partly because our first production when we founded our company, was Christopher Durang's *_Why Torture is Wrong and the People Who Love Them_*, which wasn't an easy play but it was very funny. But it was, it was a provocative choice out of the gate. And we thought people might want to talk about it. We also were brand new company, and we kind of wanted people, we wanted an opportunity to introduce ourselves, right? And say this is so people could ask about the company, they didn't have to ask questions about the show. So we said, you know, we're going to talk back after performance, we left it optional to all the actors and said, "You can come out on stage for this, but you don't have to, I'll be there. And, you know, it's up to you." But quite a few cast members in that first production were people who'd helped found the company nice. We don't have like a rep company of actors, no one who's guaranteed roles, but that first show was partly picked to be able to use some of those folks. And it wasn't an intention of look, "We'll always do this," we'll do this for the first production. And we were pleasantly surprised by, at that point, maybe like 20, 25 -30, people would stay for each performance's talk back. And that felt like a pretty good number, especially compared to what we've seen happen at other theatre companies. Oh, my kitty's gonna come and help us. And so we did that. And we thought, we got some good feedback, people like, Oh, I really liked that. A couple of reasons. I think they like to be kept short. Our talkbacks are usually like, maybe 20 minutes? At most? That helped a lot. So no one was saying, "I'm going to sit here captive for additional hour after the performance." And we really were very wide open, it wasn't, "We're going to talk at you." It was like, "What do you want to know? Do you wanna talk about the play? Do you want to talk about our production choices? Do you want to ask the actors about their process? Do you want to talk about our Theatre Company, how we pick plays, whatever you want to do, we are here for you." So the audience clearly valued it, we found it invaluable, because it's, we started learning more about our audience,

Elizabeth 32:42
Right

Jennifer 32:43

And that felt really instructive. So we said, "You know what, next season, we're going to do that too." And what we saw is that the numbers kept growing. Now, routinely, half or more of our audience stays, we'll have 100, 150, sometimes 200 people stay for the talk back in a house of 300 seats.

Elizabeth 33:00
Amazing.

Jennifer 33:02

And it's, it is I say it frequently. I really mean it, it is the most valuable time that I spend as artistic director, those 20 minutes, you know, I'm at every performance. And it's partly so that I can lead those talkbacks. And I hear from people. And that is what tells us what our community is looking for. And you know, we see our theatre company as a public service. Obviously, we get something out of it as artists, we get to create our art. But if we just wanted to get on stage and do the projects that we want to do as artists, we could do a community theater, and that is not with a pejorative term or feeling attached to "community;" we would just do it for ourselves. And it doesn't matter if anybody shows up. And if anyone wants to buy a ticket It's a professional theatre company, we're providing a service that people pay for. It doesn't mean it doesn't have artistic integrity, but it means that we are responsible to provide a good experience to our audience. And there's a lot of different kinds of theater it. You know, it can be challenging. It can be provocative. We do really provocative plays at Forward! But we're also committed, it's it, we have to respect the audience. These are people who are choosing to spend their evening in a theater with their neighbors and community members. And so we are responsible to them and there's in no way do I feel that we have dumbed anything down at Forward by keeping that at the forefront of our thoughts. And if anything, I think we've been able to do much more challenging and provocative material than our predecessor company was able to do in this community. And the dialogues that we have at talkbacks, I think are part of that rewrite.

Elizabeth DeLamater 34:37

I think that a lot of artists, a lot of organizations, performers, are worried that if they listen to feedback, what they're going to hear is that they need to, as you said, "dumb things down."

Jennifer 34:52

And that has not been our experience at all. In fact, we frequently hear from people, "Keep challenging me!" and sometimes I'll do a play that will be A little extra 'out there.' And I'll hear from some people, you know, we did a play in our seventh season called _Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play_ by Anne Washburn. It's brilliant. It's one of my favorite things we've ever done. But it is incredibly challenging. It is it is 'out there' in terms of its form and its structure. It's 'out there' in terms of its content. I thought that what it had to say was deep and profound. And I thought it was entertainingly done. But yeah, I had it quite a few subscribers, not a majority, but I mean, maybe 5%, or something, which is still a lot of people who said, "Oooh I didn't like that play." I also had 500, young, first time single ticket buyers come see that show.

Elizabeth 35:44
Oh, interesting.

Jennifer 35:47

Who were drawn in now, I'm not going to do an entire season of 'Mr. Burns.' But every couple years, when I find one, I'm going to do it. And the subscribers are okay with that. Like they they

get it; Not everything is going to be my cup of tea, but everything will be well done. And different things will appeal to different people.

Elizabeth DeLamater 36:06

Yes. So it seems like you have been patient, you you folks knew when you started this that it would take a while. Why are you so wise?

Jennifer 36:22

I don't know about how I mean, part of it is that we're we we did that there was a group of us that do this together, we pooled our experience. And we came from a lot of different perspectives, it's not just me, I mean, I had my experience in New York, as well as having grown up here in my knowledge of Madison and what this community is like, but I'd worked on a lot of different kinds of theater with a lot of different kinds of artists. But we also had, in that group that founded the theater, we had designers, we had actors, we had playwrights, we had technicians. So there were a lot of different people with a lot of experience, who got to have a voice in how we set this up. And then we built a board of directors, and they've been wonderful, and they've had a voice. And so it was never one person being wise, its collective wisdom from letting a lot of people have a voice. And that is something we're really proud of it Forward, our operating structure to our knowledge is completely unique. It's the way we built the company. It's on that scroll from our first meeting.

Elizabeth 37:27

Wow.

Jennifer 37:27

And it has, I think it is the secret sauce to our success. And that is that when we sat around the table and said, "Hey, let's start a company." We were thinking not just about Madison rep having closed, we were thinking about companies that we collectively had seen go under, yes, locally and across the country. And we and we all thought like what, what causes companies to fold. And it really can't seem to come down to two fundamental issues, which are interrelated. One is when communication breaks down between boards between staffs, between artists, between audience, that is a huge problem. And the other is, when the art you're creating, and the fiscal realities of creating it get out of balance. If you focus solely on the art. And don't focus on the fact that you need to raise money and sell tickets to support the art, you're gonna have a very short lifespan as a company, right? If you focus solely on what you think is the financially safe thing to do and ignore the artistic impulses, to keep things exciting, the audience is going to very quickly bore and move on. And so you need that sense of balance. And so when we founded the company, we thought, how can we... How can we maintain balance? How can we make sure that we consider fiscal and artistic priorities in every decision that we make? How can make sure that everybody knows what those considerations are? Who's making decisions so that artists aren't making those decisions without considering fiscal responsibility? So that boards aren't making fiscal decisions without considering artistic needs and desires? How do you keep that seesaw in balance, and our solution was our company's not a seesaw. We're a three legged stool. And so we built into our bylaws, we not only have a staff, and a board of directors, we also have what we call our advisory company. Now, a lot of companies have an advisory board. Ours has rights and responsibilities built into our bylaws.

Elizabeth 39:37

That's the difference.

Jennifer 39:38

And that's the difference. And, you know, we always joke, it's like the federal government, (but functional) in that sense of the three branches of government and that checks and balances. And we built that into the foundation of the company. So I have advice and input from a lot of

different artists with different aesthetics, and different areas of expertise, when I'm choosing my season when I'm hiring artists, I have a lot of input from a lot of people with differing perspectives than mine. And the advisory company has to approve the season that I select by not unanimously, but by a majority vote. So if I were to suddenly go off on a, you know, aesthetic tangent and create this sort of, you know, I'm going to do an entire season of Beckett, because that's what I want to work on. They could say, um, no, we don't think that serves the breadth of our audience very well. And that's built into our bylaws. At the same time, the board cannot the board doesn't get to approve the season, they approve the budget. But I don't have board members weighing in on do you do this play or that play? I have the advisory company who are artists who read plays a big deal making those decisions. And the board can't make executive level staffing changes without talking with the artists first, and hearing what those implications might be.

Elizabeth 6:55

It's a big problem with Symphony Orchestras.

Jennifer 6:57

Yeah. And what's really been fun is, you know, we actually we have, we have a buddy system. Every year, we assign one advisory company member to a board member, and they are buddies for the year, and they get coffee or lunch or drink, and they get to know each other. And suddenly, my artists know more about what it actually takes to run a company than any artists I've ever worked with.

Elizabeth 7:17

Wow.

Jennifer 7:18

And they help. They help raise money. They help with advocacy, they help with outreach events, because they have this vested interest in the success of the company. My board understands better what it takes to actually put the art on, than any board I've ever worked with. And there's such respect both ways. So you don't have, I've been I've been a guest director companies where the board is, the board's bitching about the artists? "Oh, they don't know how hard it is to raise money." And the artists are bitching about the board, "Why don't they just go, you know, raise some money. So we can do whatever we want?" We don't have that at all at Forward. And that is such a gift to me. as a director.

Elizabeth DeLamater 7:57

That's incredible. You're working with a bunch of artists and artists... (Many of us) are strong willed, We have strong opinions. (laugh). And often people who are on boards of directors are people who are perhaps 'type A's' or very successful. So how do you? How do you manage all of these people who have probably great ideas, and strong opinions?

Jennifer 8:24

What's great is because we are structured in a way that really values everybody's input.

Elizabeth 8:29

Yeah,

Jennifer 8:30

I think that actually helps. And I'm a type A myself; helps everybody relax a little bit because everyone gets their say, and then a decision gets made. So nobody feels like they're fighting to be heard. And sometimes the decision will be what they were advocating for. And sometimes it'll be something they weren't advocating for. But they know that their voice is part of the decision making process. So it really is so collaborative. So our advisory company meets

monthly, just like our board of directors does. We discuss a play every month that's been assigned to the group, everybody reads it, and then we we talk about it. And you know, is this a good play? Do we think it's not a good play? Is it a good play for our company is a good play for our community and our audience? What, what are the pitfalls of this? What are the strengths of this? And those get incredibly passionate, and they there can be incredibly varied opinions about plays. But we've done plays that some people around our table hated.

Elizabeth 9:28
Wow!

Jennifer 9:29
But other people loved. And what happens is, when I present a slate, people aren't voting on one play. They're voting on the slate on the season. So they might say, you know, I really hated that play, but I love those other ones. And you know what, I might represent a segment of our audience. And as long as there's something for them to love, then this is a well balanced season. Right? And similarly with the board, they feel like they're a part of these discussions. We have advisory committee members that we sign up so that there's always an advisory company member or two at each board meeting, there's always a board member or two at each advisory company meeting. So again, you get to see the seriousness with which with whichever one approaches their job. So there's so much respect baked into that. and fun too: we cook a lot, we have a lot of shared meals, we have a fun holiday party, a fun summer picnic, where everyone brings their families like there's such opportunity to get to know each other as human beings, that there just seems to be a lot of affection and respect going in all directions. And that, that helps us get through hard decisions without breaking us.

Elizabeth DeLamater 10:41
I read the mission statement that you have.

Jennifer 10:46
Yeah.

Elizabeth DeLamater 10:47
And it looks so wonderful.

Jennifer 10:51
It's very simple and straightforward. We fought really hard for that.

Elizabeth DeLamater 10:54
Holy cow. It actually makes sense. Unlike some other mission statements, and all of your rights, your list of rights. It also looks like it would be, it would be amazingly wonderful to participate in a show. And you've spoken before about the fact that you are providing employment and jobs to people very seriously.

Jennifer 11:25
It's a huge part of our mission. And that's partly because we founded the company in the thick of a major recession. When the [Madison] Rep closed, it was one of three equity companies in southern Wisconsin that closed in a six month period. Newport in Beloit and Milwaukee Shakespeare closed in that same six-month period and there was this real sense. You know, there is a professional theatre ecosystem in Wisconsin. It's not huge, but it's mighty. And there was the sense that people are going to have to leave the state or leave the profession. Because there wasn't enough paid work.

Elizabeth DeLamater 11:59
Oh my gosh.

Jennifer 12:01

For most theatre artists in Wisconsin, it's a freelance career. You do a show at APT [American Player's Theatre], you do a show at Milwaukee Rep, you do a show in Door County, you do a show at Madison Rep, you know, you build a season. Right? And you can stay relatively close to home, you can have a home base. And Madison always played an important role in that ecosystem. Madison Rep did. And when they left, when they closed, there was this real sense of, "Is there still a freelance career to be built that can be focused on Wisconsin, where we can still create art that's of, by and for our community?"

Elizabeth 12:37

Wow.

Jennifer 12:37

And so that was a really big, foundational principle. So our mission is that we are creating a home base for Wisconsin theater professionals and audiences, that expands the cultural and economic life of the greater Madison area. That's our mission. We prioritize hiring Wisconsin-based theater artists. Over 95% of the 100-plus artists that we hire every season live in Wisconsin, and the and the handful that don't are people who do most of their work here, but they have an apartment in Chicago, cuz there's more work there.

Elizabeth 13:11

Sure.

Jennifer 13:13

Or they went to graduate school here, and they have a sense of this community. But now they live some where just out of state. But we we take really seriously our role, not just in hiring locally, but in paying a living wage and trying to push, push forward pay rates amongst our peer organizations, and make it sustainable for people to choose to live in our state and still be part of the professional theatre community.

Elizabeth DeLamater 13:41

If you had a do over, although i i don't know that you'd want to do any of this hard work again. (they laugh) Would you do anything different?

Jennifer 13:55

It's a great question. I don't know. I mean, I've learned a lot. All of us have learned a lot. And, some of those lessons were painful. On a sort of personal emotional level. But I, but we needed to go through them. We needed to learn. It made us stronger, as a company, healthier as a company. I can't think of something because even the things that were hard, helped us in the long run. So no, I can't think of any, I can't think of any sort of fundamental thing. You know, growing pains are good.

Elizabeth 14:45

Yeah.

Jennifer 14:46

You know, we're in our 10th season now, and we've just expanded- we now do a four- show mainstage season instead of three. We do a lot of support to develop new work from new writers. We do a lot out in the community. Our budget has grown. Our first, opening bank balance was \$56. Because when we were at that first meeting, we were like, well, if we're starting a company, we need to apply for a 501 c three status. To do that, we're gonna need a post office box. So we all kicked in like five or 10 bucks. And then we opened the bank with \$56. The budget for our first season was \$100,000. And and we went from zero to \$100,000,

you know, that first year? Because we're like, we have to, we can't just do some readings, right? If we want people to support us, we need to show them what we actually intend to do. So we did a full-scale professional production as well as as well as a couple of readings that first year to kind of say, here we are. Our budget this year for season 10 was \$1.2 million. And one of the things we're proudest of stuff is that we've been in the black every single season. So we've been, and the fact that we took till season 10 to expand to four shows a year; our second season was three shows. Seasons two through nine, we're three shows. And we knew all along, we wanted to go to go to four. But we waited until we felt that we had all of the financial support infrastructure and all the staffing infrastructure in place for that to be long term sustainable,

Elizabeth DeLamater 16:20
Right.

Jennifer 16:21
So we were, I would say we're super, super conservative in our budgeting and our spending, and then we're super bold in our artistic programming. And it wouldn't seem that those things balance if you just think of it on the surface. But actually, it's exactly what we've done. Yep. And it's worked.

Elizabeth 16:40
Patience and trust in process is required for success.

Jennifer 16:45
Yeah

Elizabeth 16:48
But it's hard to have those things.

Jennifer 16:50
Right. Right. The artists, the artistic community has embraced us, we had so many artists that worked with us that first year, and we paid everybody. We were like, "We are a professional company from the get go, we are going to be working with union artists, we are going to be paying everybody," but we weren't paying them what they were getting paid at the 40 year-old company that first year. And we just said, "Look, we are going to pay you and we are going to promise you," you're all gonna - all of our actors get paid the same every season. All of our designers get paid the same every season. It's not negotiating, "Oh, they get more than me." It's more egalitarian that way. But what we say is, "We promise you next year, the pay rates are going to be higher. And the year after that they're going to be higher. And when you come back to work with us, you're going to make more money than you did this time because you're helping build something." And people have come back again and again. And they feel you know, it's our mission that we're home base. So that's been great. And the fact that I think that's part of why these actors choose to come out for these talkbacks every night. That and that they get that same reminder, I get that what we do impacts our community in a positive way. You know, when you talk with the audience after performance, and you see how your work, moved them, or inspired them or excited them or challenged them, you get to go back to your next gig where maybe you never talk to the audience having been reminded that what we do actually, it matters, it has an impact. And so we take a lot of pride in that.

Elizabeth DeLamater 18:23
So anybody who is a 'type B, color-outside-the-lines' person needs to find somebody like you to pair up with. (they laugh)

Jennifer 18:38
We go well together.

Elizabeth DeLamater 18:39
Yes. So what do you personally do in one day, if you're, you're concerned with all of these things?

Jennifer 18:52
I would have sort of two typical kinds of days. It depends. In our four-show season, I direct two of those plays. So I have days when I'm in rehearsal, and then I have other days. When I'm in rehearsal, I'll have an eight hour rehearsal day. And before rehearsal, and during lunch break, and after rehearsal, I'm putting my artistic director hat back on, and responding to emails and, talking with the rest of the staff and sort of just keeping those balls in the air during those three and a half weeks that I'm really kind of not very available. And that's, six days a week and craziness, but also my happy place. When I'm not in rehearsal, and that's, you know, really, I've got the, you know, the seven, seven weeks of the year that I'm the person in rehearsal. Other than that, it's a mix, it's a lot of meetings, and those could be meetings with artists we might work with, they could be meetings with sponsor companies that might give us money. It could be meetings with a donor, it could be meetings with Overture center to talk about how things are going in the facility that we rent, it could be meetings with someone at a nonprofit that we might want to partner with. It could be meetings with a theater student who's reached out and said, "Can I talk with you about making a career?" So there's a lot of that. There's a lot of time spent talking and brainstorming with staff about, "Ooh, what's a cool thing we can do?" Or "Here's a problem, we have a fundraiser coming up and ticket sales are going slow for that, how can we move that needle forward." And then, you know, some days, we have a very open plan office so that we can all just shout ideas back and forth. And it's very sociable, and, and fun and collaborative. But then we also have a little room that we call the Fortress of Solitude, it's a tiny little room with a door so that we can go in there and sit if we need a quiet phone call, whatever, you know, at least once a week, I try to, you know, go sit in there and read a play. Or I might be I might be casting, you know, having auditions or meeting with a designer for an upcoming production yet, so my days are not the same. They are extremely varied. And that is great. And I like that.

Elizabeth DeLamater 21:15
So what do you say to that theater student who calls you? What advice do you give somebody who says I want to be a director? And they're in high school?

Jennifer 21:27
and they're in high school? I mean, it's what I tell them is that it's a really hard thing to give advice on because there is not a path, now we're going back to the beginning of a conversation, there's not a do this, and then do that, and then do that. And then you're a director. Usually, what I will encourage them to do if they're a high school student, I will say, make sure you go to a school that does a lot of theater. You know, regardless of what your major is, and what the department is, do a lot of theater. And if you can play a lot of different roles. And I don't mean acting roles, like be a stage manager, be a director, be a writer, be a performer, design something if you have the opportunity and to learn how to do that. Because the more theater you can participate in, the more you'll learn. That's usually the main piece of advice that I give them at that point. If they're in college, and they're looking at a career, all I can really advise someone on is the path that I took. I learned a tremendous amount from being an assistant director, being in the room and watching somebody work. And if you're with someone who's directing style, you really like, you learn a tremendous amount. If you're in a room with someone's directing style, you really don't like, you learn a tremendous amount! And it is a great way to learn how to run a room, it's a great way to learn how to solve problems, you meet a lot of people who are working at a level above where you are in your career, and

you start building relationships. And you get to watch great artists work, that's what I did. And so it's a path that I can recommend if people have the opportunity to do that. Which doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of other good paths. It's just, it's the only one that I have personal experience with. You know, and then, there are a lot of directing programs for MFAs. They're extremely small. So they're very hard to get into. But I know a lot of great directors who've come out of those different programs. But it's not the only path. Yeah.

Elizabeth DeLamater 23:56

Okay. Still doing it. Do your craft. Seek out people who do it. Be around it, watch it done.

Jennifer 24:07

And find a way to sustain that life while you're in your learning stage. We're always as artists in our learning stage, but especially when you're in your sort of new to the field, what I think of more as the apprenticeship phase of your career. You need a job that pays the bills, that allows you to take those opportunities. And that's one of the hardest stretches to go through. And so that's that is a piece of advice I always give. It's like whether it's temping, or finding some sort of job, that takes advantage of other skills that you have, so that you can get paid, you can pay your bills, but that does allow you the flexibility when an opportunity to apprentice comes along. Because some of those pay and some of them don't, which is another thing that our field is really trying to address because that holds us back as a field because it limits people who can take those learning opportunities to people who've got the financial means to do so. That's that's an area that I'm looking to. I'm trying to at Forward specifically, but more statewide, come up with are there some models that we can get grant funding for that allow us to provide some, you know, directing apprenticeships that pay at a living wage so that someone can afford to do it and get that learning experience? Yeah, it's, it's a jigsaw puzzle you have to put together for a patchwork quilt, I guess, is a better analogy.

Elizabeth DeLamater 25:33

That's a great analogy. So I have a couple final questions. One question is, what are some misconceptions people have about your life? As they find out you're a theatre director? And so then, what? What do some people think that is false about you or your life?

Jennifer 25:57

I think most people would not presume that I spend as much time fundraising as I do, and, and working on the running of a business. There's a huge misconception in the business world, that nonprofits aren't businesses. They're businesses, and they run really just like businesses, except that our goal, our goal is to make money, our goal is not to not make a profit, our goal is to make a profit, and then put that profit back into serving our mission. Right. And so a huge amount of my time is spent running a, I run a business that has a budget of \$1.2 million a year, it's a big business. And there's a lot of responsibilities and work that comes along with it. I've surprised myself at how much I enjoy a lot of that work. You know, when I believe in what I do, it's not as hard to ask people for money as you might think, or to, or to build a budget, because I'm building the budget so that I can then hire 100 artists; that's pretty awesome. So I think people wouldn't guess that I spend as much of my time as I do. doing that. And there, there might also be a misconception that it's just a question of, oh, who are those artists that hire, it's just all the people I know, I just, you know, go on, who are the actors that I like, I just give them jobs, who are the designers, I like I just give them jobs. Obviously, that is part of the process, you know, you get to know an actor's work and you like them, and you want them to come and work with you. That is part of it. You work with a designer, and you're like, oh, you're really good at this, I'm going to hire you for another show. That is absolutely part of how this works. It kind of has to be, but a huge amount of my time is spent going and seeking out new people, bringing in new artists, going going to open auditions in Milwaukee and, and going to see shows in tiny little spaces so that I can get to know a director's work or a designer's work, reaching out and saying, "Hey, I've got this role to fill. I want to bring in someone new for this.

Do you know anybody?" How can I continually expand the pool of artists that work at Forward? Those might be misconceptions people have.

Elizabeth DeLamater 28:30

Neat. The last thing I would - I mean, I would like you to say anything you want to say. (they laugh) The last thing that I have to ask you is if you could tell us at least three things that are inspiring you now and they can be any kind, anything in the world or any kind of art. It can be our play, it can be a general thing.

Jennifer 29:05

Oh my gosh. Three things that are inspiring me now. Okay, if I overthink this, I'll be here all day. So I'm just gonna think of what what springs into my head initially 123? Yes, okay. So I'm just these are the first three things, okay, that have come into my head. And I'm sure that tonight I would have 30 that I would supplant them with. One thing that's inspiring me now is watching. I had someone who's a member of our advisory company who, over the course of a couple of years, decided that he was interested in being a director. He had acted in some shows with us came and said, "Can I be your assistant on a show?" Did it, did a great job and then said, "Can I assist you on another show?" I was like, really what is this man, another show? You know, and he's like, "No, no I feel like I'm still learning." Did that, was incredibly helpful to me. He was really learning a lot, was able to help me a lot. I wound up hiring that person to be my associate director for two seasons, because it helped me do my job better. Because he was really clearly talented enough to be a professional director. [He] was responsible enough to be able to help me because it's hard when I'm directing and I'm also still the artistic director. And sometimes I need to like, juggle those things. It can get overwhelming and he was very quick to step up and be like, here's this thing I can do to help with that juggling act. Watching that person, grow and grow and grow in their directing insights over those couple of years, I gave him an opportunity to direct a monologue for a monologue festival, he did a great job. Gave him an opportunity to direct a reading of a new play for our Wisconsin Writes new play series. He did a great job. He went and self produced a show at the Bartell Community Theater. I went and saw it, I was like, "This is really good." So he directed his first mainstage show for Forward this past fall. It was it just so inspired me to watch this person become a professional director. And to do so well, and now I'm looking and he's getting gigs now with other companies and working on building the career and it's in that really hard stage where you know, he's been working with Forward and building up a career. Or building up a skill set. And now he's going out and pursuing work elsewhere. And it's... I remember being at that stage, and it's really hard, but it's it's inspiring me and making me feel it's like it's the first person that I've really mentored through this process the way some of my mentors mentored me. Anyway, that that inspires me in a lot of ways. I'm gonna ignore the phone that's ringing. The second thing that is inspiring me is I've just been watching some really fabulous television on Netflix recently, that is just been a lot of different forms. And I have been enjoying that tremendously. There's some really, really, really good art and storytelling happening on Netflix and on the other streaming platforms right now. And I feel like that's been really rejuvenating. And fun, just as just to be a patron of storytelling? In a way that I sometimes don't get when I go to see a show. Because, when I go to see a show, my director hat is 100%. Doesn't mean I can't enjoy it. But what I'm seeing everything. I'm seeing the directorial decisions I'm seeing with design decisions, I'm seeing the acting decisions. I'm seeing the playwriting decisions while I watch it. When I watch TV, I can still sometimes just enjoy the story. And that's really fun.

Elizabeth DeLamater 32:53

Yeah.

Jennifer 32:55

And the third thing that - this is literally the third thing that popped into my head- that's inspiring right now is our development director Julia Nicklaus at Forward, because she's been

with us since our second season, and growing into this role. And you know, just as I learned how to be an artistic director on the job at Forward, she's learned how to be a development director on the job at Forward. And seeing her confidence, and her success at growing this company, and the passion that she has for the work that we do? It just really inspires me and we've thrown a lot of challenges her way, like, oh, we're gonna grow our season, so we're gonna need to raise another \$100,000 a year. Oh, you know, we're on the cusp of probably doing an endowment campaign. That's going to be a huge new experience for all of us. And I just, I get inspired watching her do her work to serve this company, because she's not coming at it as an artist who has this, "I need to create, I need to be in theater, I need to be an actor I need to..." She loves the work that we do. And goes out every day to help us raise the funds to do it. And with such grace and passion and dedication, it just yeah. She inspires me.

Elizabeth 34:17
That's marvelous.

Jennifer 34:18
Yeah.

Elizabeth 34:20
Of course, it's people for you.

Jennifer 34:22
Yeah.

Elizabeth 34:23
That's wonderful.

Jennifer 34:24
Yeah.

Elizabeth 34:25
Well, thank you so much.

Jennifer 34:27
This is fun.

Elizabeth 34:27
What a pleasure.

Jennifer 34:28
Yeah.

Elizabeth 34:32
You have been listening to the Art Lives Podcast. Much gratitude to Jennifer Uphoff Gray for speaking with me. I posted links to Forward Theater on the Art Lives Page of my website, elizabethdelamater.com. Please give us a rating and comments on Apple podcasts. More ratings allow more people to hear us of course, we are available on the website on Apple and Stitcher. Art Lives theme and incidental music is composed by Nicholas Meyers. And our logo is created by Eduardo Moreno. Big thanks to both of them and to my audio advisor, Bill Sallak. Finally, thank you so much for listening to Art Lives.

