**10. Engaging with an Audience with Conductor & Harpsichordist Steven Devine**

**Steven Devine:** [00:00:00] Audiences are so central to what we do, and that is the main thing I've learned. I've actually just come to the entire conclusion of my entire lockdown is that audiences are crucial.

**Intro** [00:00:10]

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:10] Hello and welcome to ALSO in PINK. The podcast all about lifestyle design. How we live, the clothes we choose and how we organise our space. I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, a certified KonMari consultant and personal stylist. I'm here to guide you on your journey to live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every Tuesday, you'll get new insight on what it means to live well, plus actionable tips.

Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.

Our guest today is conductor and harpsichordist Steven Devine. He loves to explore new sound worlds from early keyboards to 21st century Bach on synthesizers. Steven has a gift for engaging with audiences and delighting one and all with his comedic charm and musical sparkle. In my alternate life as a musician, we've played together many times over the years, throughout the UK and further afield. Stay tuned for some stories that are bound to make you laugh.

Steven, welcome. What a delight to have you on the show and thank you so much for being here.

**Steven Devine:** [00:01:29] Thank you so much for having me. It's a real pleasure. Real pleasure.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:01:31] to give listeners a bit of background, we've certainly taken part in a variety of musical experiences together over the years. I've worked with you as a keyboard player and conductor and from early Mozart operas to Finchcocks Musical Museum recitals, and more recently the English Haydn Festival in Bridgnorth. And in whatever context it's always, of course, a pleasure to be on stage with you, Steven.

**Steven Devine:** [00:01:59] Oh, thank you. Likewise. Likewise.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:02:01] And I love that you dare to explore new worlds with your music-making too, and have great versatility from early keyboards, harpsichord, fortepiano to electronic music.

**Steven Devine:** [00:02:13] I just like the sounds of things and experimenting and saying, Oh, what does that do? And how does that change things? And I think that's why I could never quite just stick to just doing one thing. I get drawn quickly somewhere else. Cause I find something else that draws my ear.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:02:24] I think that's wonderful. And it seems like comparatively few classically trained musicians maybe think in that way. So nice to diversify, but tell me more about Art of Moog, 21st century Bach on synthesizers. What drew you into that world?

**Steven Devine:** [00:02:42] I love the fact that this is always what people first see. They know me as a harpsichordist just, and then they go, but you pay synthesizers and this group. it's a brilliant brainchild by a friend of mine, a friend of ours I think Robin Bigwood. And he has been writing about Hi-Fi equipment and has been playing around with electronic music and electronic synths for well all his life, as well as being a very fine harpsichordist himself, which is probably how we know him best. And he'd had this idea, as always conceived, after about two pints beer, when it seems like an amazingly good idea that he had this idea with Martin Feinstein of the Feinstein Ensemble, that for their Bach weekend at the South Bank, what we should really do is have a crazy weekend and to have all sorts of weird and wacky things. So we thought that it would be much more interesting for three classically trained harpsichordists who for the want of a better word specialise in that sort of repertoire to play it in a completely new way on completely new instruments and see what comes out.

And so we had a couple of sessions where Robin set up some basic equipment and some basic sounds, and we had an absolute ball and we really, with the deadline of an actual concert, do put together a program. Robin did mostly arrangements. only thing that I can see in Robin that, of course, every new concert we get to do, he has to go and buy more equipment because, it is addictive, that sort of thing. And, but he's incredible and he's done a brilliant job and it's not, it's not tacky. It's not, playing Bach badly on synthesizers. It's a completely new sound world and it allows us to explore some of these incredibly complex works in totally different ways. And it's a lot of fun. It's a huge amount of fun. And, and I think that comes across in the presentation. So yeah, it's liberating.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:04:21] it absolutely comes across. It's so much fun and really musically engaging as well. So I think the best of both worlds.

**Steven Devine:** [00:04:28] I think that's the thing that when we did it for the first time we thought it was going to be a bit of a novelty, three harpsichordists plugging themselves in. And actually we realized that we got an awful lot of musical expression. We went quite far into the music probably further than I think we'd expected at all. And it also wasn't us trying tomodify our harpsichord interpretations. It became a new thing. And that's been fascinating how it's modified. When we started, we only used kind of one sound per piece. Now we're using big banks of sounds. It's become a bigger thing as well. the skill sets been incredibly, diversified as we've gone along.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:05:05] Of course and like anything, the more you learn about it, the more you delve into a new world, the more you get out of it too expression wise.

**Steven Devine:** [00:05:14] We're, we are actually talking about starting to do a bit of composing for ourselves as well. Just as it all started the sort of big festivals started getting involved in the sort of rock festivals, which is one of the funniest things I've ever heard of in my life. The thought of playing in an electronics tent in a muddy field somewhere, I think could be the sort of high point of my entire existence. And it certainly makes everybody who I tell, just burst out laughing the thought of it, me doing this and the thought of these three, three nerdy harpsichordists getting their feet dirty.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:05:41] I don't know what it says about me, but I can completely imagine it. I absolutely see you out there.

**Steven Devine:** [00:05:46] I take that as a huge compliment.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:05:48] Thank you.

Now for a flavor of the unique sound world that is the Art of Moog. This is a highlight from Bach's Chorale Prelude in F minor, BWV 639.

**Art of Moog audio clip** [00:06:03]

There's wonderful quote on the Moog website for your group: looking more like a Kraftwerk gig, than a classical concert and with boundary crossing audience appeal, this is live synth Bach with completely new levels of insight and unsurpassed standards of performance.

**Steven Devine:** [00:07:14] My goodness. I hadn't read that. So, it's good. We've had some fantastic reviews from a real cross section of people as well. And I think the thing I've enjoyed most is people who come along not expecting anything, just, Oh, it sounds a bit nerdy and then they've just really got it. We didn't quite know where we were pitching it, where we've classical musicians or where are we going to be trying to be a bit cool and trendy. Yeah. We can't be cool and trendy because we're not, I'm a mid-forties harpsichordist. I've enjoyed the fact that we've discovered what we do and how we're going to do it. So we don't feel stupid or feel we're trying to be something we're not. We just get out there and play and even stupid things like, w what are we going to wear for this? And how are we going to stand and how are we going to light it? They were things where we could do this and say, yeah, but that's a bit fake, isn't it? we're not that sort of thing. And that makes it, having that dialogue was extremely important. So I think that it took a little while.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:08:04] Yes, absolutely. So how would you describe your Moog style then?

**Steven Devine:** [00:08:08] It's really simple. It involves very cool black t-shirts and jeans and a very simple clean, color wash for the whole thing. We've actually invested in a bit of lighting for ourselves as well, cause we know now what we want it to look like. That sort of thing just comes from experience, as you've said. it's a thing, but it's a kind of good looking thing. I think we spent a lot of time even worrying about how the cables are going to be. Gathered because there's an awful lot of wiring and something like that, as you can imagine.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:08:38] Yeah. Just go. it was to show how much thought goes into anything like this and, branding is huge for anyone, that's an important step in performance or should be anyway.

**Steven Devine:** [00:08:47] I absolutely agree. And I think this is what Kate, my partner and I have learnt as well, is that branding doesn't necessarily have to be sitting down and saying, okay, what are we going to look like but it can be what do we do and how do we want to do it? So it's become a package of kind of us being true to ourselves, but in a way that gives the listener, the viewer, some form of recognition. That's been a good lesson. we've been working on that for a number of years, Kate and I, but we've particularly spent time over lockdown, obviously, really working out what it is we do and how we do it.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:09:22] Speaking of lockdown, you have your own charming Covid satires that you've done together, you and soprano Kate Semmens. So tell me about the inspiration for those. What Did You Do In Lockdown? And Boris Has A Roadmap.

**Steven Devine:** [00:09:37] Yeah, that's another thing that I'm becoming better known for that than I am for playing Goldberg Variations. And that's great. I have no problems with anybody. Once lockdown had started we as creatives I guess suddenly found all our outputs completely stopped. And we were worried about, do you drop off the radar altogether, if you don't have continuous output. And it goes back to what you were saying about branding. So we also felt that actually. Does the audience, as in the general listening public, want another version of, let's say Music For A While or a Bach harpsichord prelude and fugue from me recorded in your front room on slightly duff microphones with a slightly blurred camera. And we realized, no, cause I think it's out there. You haven't control over it. Three years down the line, when you look back on it and cringy or just take it off and it's, there's nothing much you can do about it.

we decided not to do lots of that sort of stuff, but we suddenly realized that this would be quite fun to combine all these skills, these rudimentary videoing skills that we'd got, and sound recording skills and using our front room as a studio. Kate set the music to my poem and we basically recorded it. I mean it was crazy, absolutely nuts.

**Steven Devine:** [00:10:47] And it was just so refreshing to work on something new that neither of us really knew what was going to come out. And again, we only did it for the family Zoom originally. It was just a bit of fun. Eventually, hitched ourselves in and said, Okay, we're going to put it online. See if people like it, if they don't, tough. That was the biggest stage of all really, it was deciding whether to put it out there or not.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:11:04] Oh, that's true. Because doing something new like that, you really do put yourself out there in every way. So it takes some courage to just go for it and say, okay, publish.

**Steven Devine:** [00:11:14] Yes, no idea people like it or not.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:11:16] Absolutely. And what would you say is the most challenging aspect of creating these new little dramas? Is it technical side or creating a story or...

**Steven Devine:** [00:11:27] That's interesting. I think that the most technical side for us is now actually storyboarding, which we didn't do before. Actually, you know what you're going to put in the background here, where are we cutting to this and actually, so it's the prep. We never used to do any of that. We used to throw it together and of course it would take us then a week to try and put it together afterwards, going, oh, should we done that? Should we just get the green screen and record that tiny little bit one more? So it's the workflow I think is the thing that's the most challenging aspect. software is astonishing, isn't it? What it does for you, With minimal skills, you can create an entire virtual world in video and I find that still mindblowing and being able to edit sound with very little training. We've been involved in recordings for many years, so we know what the process is, but actually to get your hands dirty and find this in some cases free software that you can just download and get going and create professional quality things, is incredible.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:12:17] It really is. And as you say, after dealing with that technical hurdle, it then does really come down to storytelling, doesn't it. And preparation, making sure you're creating something that's in line with your goals.

**Steven Devine:** [00:12:31] I think that's true. I think what's really interested me now is with a bit more skill. I can now look at a flow of a video, and go, do you know, if we cut away here, we create this feeling and this ambience. And I think when I'm now looking at other people's work, looking at the professionals and seeing, okay, that's what marks the professional out from the amateur - me - is that they understand to use your words, the storytelling aspect of going in closer, sooner, and coming away. They understand the actual process of pictures and music together creating an extra layer of narrative if that makes sense.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:13:10] Yes, absolutely. And can you imagine translating these storytelling skills to playing concerts, then? Performing generally?

**Steven Devine:** [00:13:18] What an interesting question. Do you know, in some ways, the way Kate and I have always worked, I think we've always done that anyway, because soprano and harpsichord concerts or soprano and fortepiano concerts have the potential to be quite limited in their scope and emotional range. So we've always tried to make it an interesting story about something. So in some ways we've always done that and that's translated into my own solo repertoire. We've got the potential to really take an audience on a journey. And audiences are so central, to what we do, and that is the main thing I've learned. I've actually just come to the entire conclusion of my entire lockdown is that audiences are crucial. The first time back out last month with a live audience was overwhelming. And it made me realize that all these recorded concerts we've done and all that sort of thing, they're great and they're artistically fun and challenging and rewarding to a degree, but there's nothing like watching an audience respond and relaxing and listening to you and coming with you on that journey.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:14:15] That's absolutely true. And that level of engagement though, I'm not sure you always see in classical music that that fine awareness of an audience when you're playing. I think when you study, you're almost taught to ignore audiences, imagine them, with, without any clothes on or just anything that makes you as a performer feel more comfortable. But I think ideally the more you are able to engage with them in how you think about concerts and actually, while you're performing surely that's all for the better.

**Steven Devine:** [00:14:46] Oh completely. I couldn't agree more. But then, it's hard Western art music, particularly. There is a disjoint between say a Mahler symphony, you've got an hour's worth of music that is designed to be listened to an absolute silence. That's incredibly powerful as a work of art that it almost, you don't want people to applaud at the end. Do you want them just to absorb this amazing experience of hearing a live work of such enormous complexity involving so many musicians. And yet on the other hand, you've got that feeling that people need to respond to it. That's why they're there. So they can see other people responding to it and share the energy of all responding to it together and receiving the energy from the musicians and the musicians receive the energy from the people sat on the edge of their seats.And so for me, I occasionally do want to go to a concert and sit there in absolute silence with my eyes shut and I don't want anybody to disturb that or anything like that. On the other hand, I also, then want to go and hear Maurizio Pollini come and tell me about why he loves playing the piano and absolutely, I'm there for you and you're there for me sort of thing.

it's almost it's worst enemy, but it's almost, it's, there's no solution to any of it. And, I've done quite a few sort of debates and, online interviews over lockdown, discussing things like applauding between movements and, is digital art less valuable because of this. And actually, no, it's not. I mean the difficulty for us is we look at our popular music cousins who are in a genre that is actually growing up as the medium. So the medium can change all the time. So you have bands that just record amazingly complex albums, that are designed to be streamed in Spotify because that's all they need to do. You've got bands from 20, 30 years ago who do an amazing live show because it's a live show. So that's an absolute engagement with the audience. It's out there. It's for engagement with an audience. Whereas as I say, Mahler's mid-period symphonies are almost the product of a sort of man wanting to just sit in a room and think about it. I actually, the more I look at Beethoven, when you get to this sort of forth, fifth, sixth symphonies, there is that element. Of course he was writing for the public. He wanted it went to the adulation, but he didn't really care what the audience thought, because he knew that this was a very important statement he was making. So there's this sort of passing frustration you see when the audience may not respond in the way that he wanted them to. but he was self-confident enough to know that this was great stuff he was making.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:17:15] And when do you think that changed that sort of audience engagement? Because historically speaking audiences were quite rowdy, weren't they? In early days.

**Steven Devine:** [00:17:24] Yes, they were. Yes. Yeah. It's a really good question. The disjunct between the audience and the creators, is it starts becoming a big thing in the romantic era, just because of the nature of the beast and the nature of the modes of expression. That's grossly oversimplified, but I do take your question on the nose cause I think it's a really important question that things did change. They were absolutely about audience engagement and then they became not. And now of course we have this body of work that we can't readdress and we've got to find a way of making that, bring that back into the realm. Whereas of course, popular music is of the time. And I do see modern composers, contemporary composers, really battling and saying, look we are of this time. We want to engage with audiences or engage with technology or whatever. It needs to be addressed, I think, and certainly in terms of artistic engagement.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:18:12] Oh, absolutely. It does need to be addressed. And I know the classical music world is accused of many things of perhaps being a little bit elite or stuffy, even boring. And I can completely understand how people might think this. So do you think the classical music world needs to try harder to engage with new audiences?

**Steven Devine:** [00:18:34] Always. but I think the most important thing is just to, it's almost to wear the music lightly and say, look, this is our modes of expression. This is how we do it. And there isn't a right way. So I think it needs the whole industry to think about how we regard each other. So that's, there is space for a Festival Hall piano recital. There's also a space to do, something in a pub, a piano recital and, but neither is wrong and neither is more valid than the other.And I think you said, about the telling the story through the concert. I think that is the best way of keeping an audience. If they feel safe there, that they're going to be taken almost by the hand through it and you can do anything you want. You can, you could laugh, cry between movements so you can applaud, you can do anything. We'll just take you through it. We'll just give you a really nice evening of great music. So that might be just talking from the stage. It might be creating something beforehand. I know that there's talk now about, engaging in augmented reality so that people can hold up a phone. I've been part of a couple of trials. Hold up a phone at an instrument in the concert and the phone will recognize who it's pointing at and look at it and either describe the instrument, what's that funny instrument? What's that funny clattery harpsichordy sound, oh god it's the harpsichord, you know. What's this piece what's going on in this piece at this point, Mahler chamber orchestra tried something last year with Mozart symphony, with iPads and boxes and things, can I point to this instrument. Now move it to the clarinet to see what happens here. that sort of thing is great because it opens up a world for somebody who may not have ever done anything like that before. So yes, I think there's lots of things. I'm not a a big fan of completely revitalizing. we'll just give you a little bit of this and a little bit of that and see if you like it. that there's room for that, but that's not the way all concerts should go. I think, good art is good art. So let's present it in a way,

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:20:21] But even so I think good art can have a story behind it without cheapening it at all.

**Promo** [00:20:30] Imagine... if you lived the life you really want. your dream life.

Have you ever taken time to picture what it would look like? what it would really look like?

We're not talking about the life you feel you should have, but, deep down, the life you secretly want. Your ideal life. Maybe you already have a vision.

You wake up after a good night's sleep on the most comfortable mattress ever. With pillows that support your head just the way you like. You go to your organized closet and choose colorful, unique clothes that fit you and make you feel good. Then pad through a clean, warm, uncluttered home to the kitchen. Your refrigerator offers up the most delicious, healthy options for breakfast. And you have a day of unstructured time stretching ahead of you to do with as you like. But. That's never going to happen, Wouldn't it be nice to take a step back, sweep aside all your worries... and imagine...

That's where I come in.

I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, and I've developed an exclusive questionnaire for the ALSO in PINK community to help you create a vision of your ideal life.

Simply join the ALSO in PINK email list and you'll get instant access to our Ideal Lifestyle Vision Questionnaire. Go on then, make a cup of your favorite tea, or whatever floats your boat... Go to alsoinpink.com and click Start Now. Redefine what's possible & Create your ideal life.

**Interview Resumes** [00:22:11]I'm sure that every performer has stories of things that have not exactly gone according to plan during the concert. What would you say is your most embarrassing or memorable wayward moment during a performance?

**Steven Devine:** [00:22:32] you mentioned, I used to work at the Finchcocks Musical Museum, which was, an astonishing place as and many happy memories for all of us. I was there from the age of 12. I used to go down as my summer job. And then when I left school and university, it became my every holiday. I went there and then eventually I moved in there when I finished university. I knew everything. Every nut and bolt of every paneling in this wonderful sort of slightly crumbling 18th century manor house. But the thing that I had to do as part of my job was demonstrate all the instruments every day, sometimes three times a day for various groups and private groups and individuals and things like that. When I was 15 and 16, I finally got to a stage where I I knew it was fine. I could do it on autopilot. This is the harpsichord. This is the fortepiano. This is wonderful. And blah, blah, blah. And then when you get to 18, 19 you realize you don't know that much and actually, things start going spectacularly wrong, but you notice cause you start caring a lot more about what you're doing and you're because you're turning into an adult rather than a child.

And so most horrendous sort of learning experience - it actually turned out quite well. Was, you probably remember the instrument. They used to have drums and bells and symbols, this wonderful grand piano. It looks a very frail it was made in 1815, and it had these very spindly little legs. And all this beautiful brass work around the side and everything, and it was the perfect instrument for Schubert and things like that. But inside it, it had this whole battery of percussion effects. So you hit the pedal and the whole instrument sounded as though it exploded with drums, bells and symbols, and as this sort of climax to my tour, I used to all the demonstrators we used to sort of play Mozart's Rondo Alla Turca this wonderful sort of piece of music with a big sort of crash bang ending. Yep. Absolutely wonderful. with the drums and the bells and the piano sounding is though it's about to fall apart and everything. It had all gone terribly well and I started playing, building up to the big climax. Everything hit the percussion pedal whereupon the whole of the bottom of the piano fell off. All the pedal work and everything just crashed to the floor. so they, they got the crash, but only once. And of course the entire piano stopped working. So I had to do something which I've never been prepared for... And I don't think anybody ever is, which is that you had to stop, but of course you were in the middle of your finale, as the story is reaching the climax, the audience is just sat there going. Okay. Now what? So I found myself having to explain what was doing was crawling underneath the piano, trying to screw the whole thing back together enough to actually ~~keep,~~ get this show finished, then limp over the finishing line with a few more crash bangs to make it work, whilst all the time giving the audience a really good show. Whilst also suddenly thinking shoot I've just broken the piano and just destroyed this priceless 1815 piano. So that was the most excruciating, oh my goodness. I have no idea what to do now. there's been countless times where I've, once or twice at the Albert Hall when I've done the Christmas show, when I've gone ladies and gentlemen, please welcome... and nobody comes.

And then you sit there going that went well, didn't it ladies and gentlemen. Let's try that one again, the Albert Hall one used to be in costume with wigs and tights and full 18th century costume. So I'd be there all miced up with this wiring running through this body, getting very hot under a very proper wig and full bottomed wig and everything like that, trying to tell really bad jokes and the wig would always have a life of its own. So if I move too much or got too vigorous in my conducting the wig would end up sideways somebody from wardrobe would have to come on the stage and not just move the wig, but sort out the wiring for my microphone, which is all over the place. So I've done lots and lots of those. So, they're the embarrassing ones. Yeah, but plenty of really much more subtle ones where you've started a piece and then realize you're either playing the wrong piece or you turn the page. this, you could come up with as many stories as me on this one. You turn the page and you realize that page blank. So yeah. tons of those.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:26:16] It's very true. I think one of my most recent mishaps was this small chamber gig in some tiny venue. And, thought I knew what the repeat scheme was, but I obviously didn't fully and it meant I had to improvise a bit of a fugue, which of course, you don't want to

**Steven Devine:** [00:26:32] No

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:26:32] hear a recording of that.

**Steven Devine:** [00:26:33] No. Oh, I hate those, they are awful. Yes. Yeah. No, definitely, that's why I like the performing thing in a way as well, on a recording, you just stop and do it again and repair it or deal with it. But actually in a concert, you engage the audience. And I always remember somebody saying, oh, audiences love that sort of thing. And I said, well, they don't with they're embarrassed for you. But they do, if you're sort of going, oh, that wasn't supposed to happen, was it, so now let's see what happens.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:27:00] That's lovely. And I've always been so impressed with your ability to do that with audiences too, just to diffuse any awkwardness.

**Steven Devine:** [00:27:07] It's that Finchcock's thing, having had everything possible go wrong that can go wrong and, the other thing in Finchcock's that used to happen all the time was I would turn round, expecting to demonstrate this instrument to find it being walked out the door by two burely men in a brown coat. That happened about 10 times, now we're another to look at this instrument. Oh, it's gone. Nobody told me the instrument was being borrowed today and, you know, and guys would just walk into my demonstration and just remove it. yeah, a great learning curve for that. But, but thank you. I appreciate what you say. It's something I actually, bizarrely I quite enjoy is that moment of, okay, let's get this right.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:27:42] it sounds like the beginnings of a standup comedy career, Steven.

**Steven Devine:** [00:27:45] Oh dear. I'm not spontaneous enough. And the only times I do tell jokes are actually at the Christmas show, I've 20 years I've done the Christmas show. I've been in serious trouble twice with people for telling jokes that weren't... weren't that funny but they managed to insult somebody. So, oooh, for somebody who only kind of does that sort of thing two or three times a year, that's a pretty high percentage rate. Not one that I want to repeat too much.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:28:08] Speaking of which, do you have a favorite musical joke, you'd like to tell now?

**Steven Devine:** [00:28:12] Ooh. Oh dear. Oh, do I have one? The one I really is the, the guy who leaves his viola on the backseat of the car and leaves it unlocked and comes back and finds three other violas next to it. no, I don't have any musical jokes. I know. It's a great shame. It's a great shame. Otherwise, otherwise it just... Can I tell my parrot joke? Is that alright?

So there's a... This, this man is looking for a birthday present for his wife and he goes into a pet shop and he sees that there's this parrot for 200 pounds. And he says, that's a very expensive parrot, but it's great. So this parrot, it's amazing this parrot. It's so good. It's can sing any aria from any opera. You just name it and the bird can sing any aria. That's incredible. I've got to have this parrot, my wife loves opera. It sounds wonderful. He said, ahh, but before we do that, I've got a parrot over here, it's 500 pounds. Ahhh, but how can it be better than this 200 pound parrot? And he said, this parrots can sing complete operas, all the voices, everything you name the opera, this parrot can sing all the opera. Just incredible. It's brilliant. there's nothing. He doesn't know. I've got five and just guessing his checkbook looking for is your jam 500 pounds off. Got to have it. Oh, hang on there. There is this other parrot. He said, how can any parrot be better than that? And he said, and. He said, it's very expensive though. it's 10,000 pounds. His parents said what, that's crazy. How can you know, how can it be more than the 500 pounds? what can possibly do said what does this parrot do? And this guy says, I've got no idea what this parrot can do, but the other two parrots call it maestro.

That was the punchline. That didn't go down too did it? slow burner that one? Yeah, that might not make the edit.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:29:52] I don't think I've laughed that hard on a podcast episode yet, so well done. And what would you say that you love most about performance, about being in front of an audience?

**Steven Devine:** [00:30:03] That the audience? I would have gone, oh yes. it's the moment of being in an creating music live and things like that. But having this last month had three of the most profound musical experiences back with audiences being moved to tears, to walk out, to, and see people there and watch them. I hadn't realized how much I missed it. I also knew I missed it cause I'm that sort of animal, but, I really I was very profoundly moved to see an audience, again, even a socially distance one, and just watching people who just, they needed it, they needed the interaction of seeing live music again. I feel we could have played anything. And consequently, it made us play better and concentrate harder. And just, yeah, this is why we do it. And I think it's the audience. It's that immediate feedback. Even if there's no response, even if they don't clap very much, because they're a bit inhibited, which is interesting with small socially distanced audiences feel slightly sort of, there's only eight of us in this room now,

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:30:58] And I always find it fascinating that even if they're not very loud, you can still feel that intensity of people listening of being really engaged in what you're doing.

**Steven Devine:** [00:31:07] Completely. You're so right. That is exactly it, yeah. The feeling of the audience rather than the sound of the audience. There is that feeling that something invisible is connecting you and it's absolutely intangible, but when you've got the audience or they've got you, well it's the best drug in the world. as I think you would respond to as well, having seen you perform those gorgeous viola moments in those Haydn symphonies, for example. I've seen that look on everybody's face, but yours particularly, that's what it is.

And I think it's the more I analyze it. I don't know the answer, but I think the more I analyze it, I wonder whether it is down to this fact that you prepare for something, you create something. And the performance marks a boundary that it's come to an end. That you can put it back in the box, ready to bring out again for another thing.

But whereas with recording, you there's no end to it because then you've got all this sort of editing and sort of stuff, and then you're never quite sure when to let go with recordings. I've personally found, is this good enough? how good is it? And you try and get a second pair of ears in to sort of mediate. It's a very unsatisfying process. Whereas with the performance it's done, there's nothing you can do about it. Was it good? Yeah. Was it bad? Probably. But it doesn't matter. On to the next thing. Whereas there doesn't seem to be that with recording.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:32:20] Yes. I think that makes a lot of sense. someone else helps us.

**Steven Devine:** [00:32:29] printed. So like I said, we all need editing in our lives.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:32:32] Yes, whether it's a wardrobe we could go into that,

**Steven Devine:** [00:32:35] I just love the idea of your slogan. We all need editing sometimes.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:32:39] Excellent. And do you have a daily habit or ritual that brings you joy?

**Steven Devine:** [00:32:45] I have a very nice coffee machine and I still think I make better coffee than anybody else. So I allow myself a coffee at home and that's my grounding thing. We've really enjoyed walking during lockdown. We decided that we had to not vegetate and as we live in a beautiful part of the country, so we're very lucky we're in a village, but there are fields all around us. I've tried to keep that going actually, ever since even when I'm away is to walk a good amount every day. Just to keep the body moving. yeah, that's become an important part of my ritual bizarrely. I never thought that would that, that and a nice coffee when I'm at home and yeah.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:33:22] That sounds lovely. I'm just imagining some sort of entrepreneurial venture now that involves coffee and songwriting and performance and out of doors. I don't know comedy. So many possibilities, Steven.

**Steven Devine:** [00:33:36] I'd quite like to go back to what I was doing before in some ways. **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:33:41] And do you have a top top living well, something my listeners can take away with them and apply in their own lives.

**Steven Devine:** [00:33:50] Top tip. If it's worth doing, then let's just do it absolutely as well as we can. Even if it feels there's nobody there to see it. If it's worth doing, just do it well. And then the personal satisfaction gained and the skillset that you might develop along the way. So I like coffee. I really like good coffee. I don't like bad coffee, so I, I tend not to buy it on the street when I'm out, because I don't know it's going to be any good. And I'd rather not spend three pounds on something that I don't particularly like. So it was worth spending time here just to get it just so, so I could really enjoy something like that. So yeah, take time over things. they're worth doing, they're really worth doing well.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:34:29] I love that. If they're worth doing they're worth doing well. That's a great tip.

**Harpsichord Interlude** [00:34:33]

And now for a taste of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, book one, Prelude number 15 in G major BWV 860. Played on the harpsichord by Steven Devine. Hope you enjoy this little musical interlude before we carry on with the final round of quick-fire questions. And so we've reached the final round. So we have some quick fire questions to end the show. So first of all, what's your most treasured possession and no judgment, of course.

**Steven Devine:** [00:36:03] Yeah. my life and who shares it are my most treasured possessions. Materially, I've got some very special keyboard instruments that mean an awful lot to me that I chose, commissioned and had them made me. a couple of my harpsichords are very important to me. And I wouldn't really want to sell them even if I had financial necessity to do because they feel so much part of me, but actually I'm afraid it's a bit soppy but it's the person I live with.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:36:31] Oh, that's lovely. And what's your favorite article of clothing in your current wardrobe? Or it could be an accessory as well.

**Steven Devine:** [00:36:41] Ooooh. We had an amazing tour with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment to, Southeast Asia two years ago, 2018. And in Vietnam I went and had a concert shirt made to play keyboards in something that was lightweight, silk, really comfortable, and fitted me properly and just moved with me. It's just lovely. It feels when I put this on, I feel I'm going to do a concert,

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:37:04] Oh, a special feeling. So you have the, yeah, the memory of the action as well that comes with it.

**Steven Devine:** [00:37:08] I know. I do have a colleague who talks about putting on his concert pants, this is...

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:37:12] And that's the British sense of the word pants, isn't it? Yes.

**Steven Devine:** [00:37:15] Yeah, I'm afraid so. Excellent. That maybe should get edited out too. And anybody who can guess the friend sent me a check.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:37:28] And where do you go to get inspired?

**Steven Devine:** [00:37:31] Out, out and about. This village is lovely. So it's a mixture of people who've lived here all their lives, who work the land, who go to London to commute So everybody you meet here is different and interesting. There's a field over there where you can just get out and mooch around and lots of country walks and some really fabulous sort of, hedgerow foraging possibilities and all that sort of thing, which I've been learning particularly during lockdown. So actually I'm finding this place is inspiring me more and more because it's where I can come to clear my head of lots of conflicting thoughts and just focus.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:38:05] Sounds good. And what's one book or resource you'd recommend for everyone?

**Steven Devine:** [00:38:11] It's a very personal thing, but, my father's mother, my grandma, who incidentally was called Grace Divine. Isn't that one of the great names of all time? Her favorite book, which I have her a copy of, she gave to me when I was a teenager is John Steinbeck's Travels with Charley. It's autobiographical and he's basically coming up to retirement and he decides that he doesn't really know about America and he's writing about it and all different pockets of factions and things. Basically he commissions a camper truck and Charley is the name of his large, French poodle. And so he goes traveling with this big dog, and it's an astonishing book. For me it was life-changing and still is I still go back to it. It's just a very special record of human interactions by a very special observer of such things. And I think it's an absolutely incredible book. It's a go-to book for me.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:06] Excellent. And here's a very KonMari question for you. What are you grateful for?

**Steven Devine:** [00:39:12] I'm the luckiest man alive. I always have been, I'm very blessed with friends and family and I do something I love that I couldn't live without, and people seem to like me doing it for them as it were. So, you know, lucky me.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:28] And finally, what do you love most about life?

**Steven Devine:** [00:39:33] Just everything, everything that changes. And it's nice that there's always a balance. that this didn't go to every well today, but it might go better tomorrow and this might change and this might change this. But this is great. this is all that. The fact there's no stasis.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:47] Steven, thank you so much. It's been a great pleasure speaking with you today about all things music and performance and thank you. It's been a lot of fun.

**Steven Devine:** [00:39:57] It's been my absolute pleasure and it's lovely to see you again.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:59] Oh, thank you so much.

hope

**Outro** [00:40:15] you enjoyed that chat with conductor and harpsichordist Steven Devine. Be sure to check out the delightful assortment of videos on the official page for this episode. See the show notes for details. So here's some key takeaways from our conversation. Whatever content you create, storytelling is bound to be at the heart of it. Always take your audience with you on a journey. Engage with your audience and like Steven, you can diffuse even the most awkward moments with a twinkle and a few well-chosen words. And yes, you can always develop new skills. Many performers and people who've had their livelihood transformed by the pandemic have needed to innovate. Whether you want to develop video and audio editing skills, like Steven, to create content for fun. Or maybe you're looking to develop an entirely new career path. There are so many possibilities. So get out there and start exploring. That's our show then. Thank you so much for listening. I'm Alexandria, and this is ALSO in PINK. The podcast, all about lifestyle design. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe to ALSO in PINK, wherever you get your podcasts. And the absolute best way to show your support is to write a review on Apple Podcasts or iTunes. This really helps more than anything to promote the show. And, of course, tell all your friends. Thank you so much for your support. Until next time, have a wonderful week. Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.