**25. Living in the Moment with Violinist & Artistic Director Madeleine Easton**

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:00:00] It's that idea of investing in yourself in a day-to-day life, no matter what you do, which will give you the rewards. And if you need to be selfish with your time, then you shouldn't have to apologize for that.

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

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:14] 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 violinist and artistic director. Madeleine Easton. She's an entrepreneur, the director of her own ensemble Bach Academy, Australia. And a violinist who's first love is the music of JS Bach. Madeline also knows how to boogie. She has a background in dance and isn't afraid to break out the shoulder pads and eighties dance moves. We chat about a wide range of topics, from the importance of happiness and surrounding yourself with joy. To sci-fi and star wars Well, Maddy, welcome. Thank you so much for getting up early. I know it's what 6:00 AM in Sydney now?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:01:30] It's just bang on 6:00 AM here. Still dark outside. Yeah.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:01:34] Well, I'm delighted to have you on the show. You've gone beyond the call of duty I think. You're the only guest who's got up so early, but of course there is that 11 hour time difference.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:01:43] Hey, what's a time zone? We're all international people here. I remember reading a book called the Island of the Day Before by Umberto Echo. And it was all about this 16th century sailor who was sailing around the world and his ship got shipwrecked off the coast of an island he thought was where the international Dateline was. And if he could swim to the other side of the Island, he reckoned it would be the day before and he could save his ship and he went round and round and round trying to figure

this out. It was the, one of the funniest books about time zones I've ever read.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:02:15] Oh, that's wonderful. I love that. If only we could do some time traveling in reality, maybe we can, maybe I just don't know about it yet. But, um, to give listeners a bit of a background we've known one another for years and met on the early music scene in London and have played in all sorts of ensembles together. And I think have done a bit of dancing at parties, too. Nothing like a boogie.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:02:40] Thank you might be right there.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:02:43] I'm sure you taught me some eighties dance moves or something once.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:02:47] I think, I remember saying it's all in the shoulders. Got to use the shoulder pads. Yes.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:02:54] Is it shoulder pads that gives you those signature eighties moves?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:02:58] I'm choosing to think so. I'm probably wrong, but for now let's say that's my theory anyway.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:03:04] I like that. Let's go with that. So you lived in London for what, nearly 20 years?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:03:10] Yes. I lived in London for 19 years. Much longer than I thought I was going to be there. But you know, that's life really.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:03:18] And the music scene is so international in London, or maybe ex-pats just are drawn to one another. I don't know about you but when I first came to London, it took a few years before I really had any British friends. I think most of them were international.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:03:32] Absolutely. Yeah. it's interesting, you know. As you know, coming from a country, which also speaks English and you think, well, we're all colonials here as such. And when you come to London, you realize that actually, even though you speak the same language and so much is the same, it's very , very, very different. When I first arrived in London at the Royal College of Music and I sort of bunked down at the halls of residence, And ~~, uh,~~ yeah, there were a couple of Brits there, but it was the internationals who seemed to band together, cling to each other for dear life. Desperate fear of loneliness, because you are so far away from your families, ~~But you know,~~ but you know, you do break through and then you find some wonderful friends.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:04:09] So what kept you here for so long, do you think?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:04:12] The sheer excitement of being in London, you know, coming from Sydney, where there is a fantastic music scene. ~~Um,~~ But to arrive in a place where just in the one city alone, you have five major symphony orchestras, two very, very famous opera and ballet companies. ~~Um,~~ all of the fantastic modern orchestras and then all of the early music ensembles as well. the cultural fabric of London is probably richer than anywhere else in the world. And it's also a city of 12 million people. At the time I found that exciting. I'm not sure I'd find that so exciting now. ~~Um,~~ But I just wasn't ready to leave after my two years at the Royal college, I just thought I'm not done with this place yet.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:04:51] I felt like that too, and I'm not sure I'll ever be done with it, but we'll see.

Were there any words that you particularly got teased about when you first moved here? I know pants was one for me. I very quickly learned to not say pants.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:05:04] We say trousers in Australia. It's weird. It's could have a half and half situation. Some people say pants and I'm like, are you talking about under pants? They're like, no. My trousers. And I said, well, why didn't you say trousers? That makes it nice and clear.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:05:19] I don't know if it's an Aussie cliche, but how about budgie smugglers?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:05:23] You have to be a very confident person of the male variety to sport a pair of budget smugglers in any public situation.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:05:33] Otherwise known as Speedos.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:05:34] That's right. I have actually relearned a few Aussie words recently having been back a little while. There's this word I'd forgotten about? It's called rashy and it's a funny word, a rashy. And I can't remember what it's short for. You know, obviously over here in Australia, we shorten everything. So a rashie is a long-sleeved swimming top. And I absolutely erased that word from my memory and got a huge shock when my sister said, ah yeah, I've bought my kids rashes. I'm like, what on earth are you talking? It's nothing to do with having a rash that I am sure of.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:06:07] That's amazing. yeah, and we do share that love of dance. So you... studied ballet I think when you were growing up, didn't you.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:06:15] I did. Yeah. I studied ballet from the age of four till 19.I was

really passionate about it actually. I just found it the most wonderful discipline and way of expression and it felt good to move one's body. ~~Um,~~ especially when you're training as a musician, even as a teenager, there's a long time spent being rather sedentary sitting either in a chair or just you know, standing alone in a room, practicing ~~, um,~~ or sitting down in an orchestral rehearsal or whatever, you know ~~. , um,~~ just to be able to move like that and make your body do those things. Especially being up on point, it felt magical. And I just fell in love with the whole idea of dance. And I very nearly gave up the violin to pursue that actually, when I was about 15. Yeah. But then I had a bit of a funny knee issues and I had to stop for a while to the bone healed itself.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:06:59] Oh, I see. Yes. It seems like it's quite wear and tear on your body, isn't it? Ballet?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:07:04] It is long-term, but it shouldn't be when you're a young teenager, but I had a funny thing. ~~Um,~~ I'm not sure if many people out there have heard of this, but there's a little condition called Osgood Schlatter's disease. Has the most fabulous name. Osgood Schlatter. Sounds like some sort of mad German or Nordic scientist has invented

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:07:23]

It's a PG Woodhouse, like Osgood that would be sort of PG Wodehosue name,

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:07:30] Yeah, but it's a little funny thing where your bone actually grows too fast when you're a teenager. And the top of my knee right, I think it's below the growth plate, started to go a bit like honeycomb. ~~It wasn't,~~ It wasn't becoming dense enough, fast enough. And I ended up getting a little microfracture from all of the impact from being on point the whole time.

So the doc said, sorry, lady, you're going to have to come off that for a whole year until your bone knits itself together.

And if you don't, you'll grow with one leg shorter than the other.

So it was pretty, pretty intense and it was absolutely necessary for me to do that. So I got very good at swimming that year, you know, zero impact, but I wasn't even allowed to run. I could not actually put any impact on that knee for that entire year.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:08:15] Oh gosh.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:08:16] Unfortunately, by the time I got back to dancing at the age of about 15, all my friends in my year had just gone straight ahead and it was too hard to catch up. And also I'd practice the violin quite a lot in that year as well. Yeah. But I've always danced. And you know, in London, I used to attend classes regularly and go salsa dancing, which is my other great love.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:08:35] Oh, yes. I've only tried a bit of salsa, but swing is my great love. Swing dancing.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:08:40] That's right. I'd forgotten that.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:08:42] Good Lindy hop. Yeah.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:08:45] All right. Next time. I'm in London. We're going to go Lindy hop dancing together.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:08:49] Oh, that sounds amazing. Yeah. Okay. It's a date, Maddy. And, yeah. Do you feel like your background in dance has helped your general performance, your stage presence? Has it given you that certain poise?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:09:03] I absolutely am convinced that it has helped me and I highly recommend other musicians go and, you know, learn a bit of dance and practice the discipline of it. ~~Um,~~ not only for the posture benefits, but it's coordination, it always helps. And, you know, as a musician, what we do is so incredibly coordinated. But look, there are plenty of musicians out there, world-class musicians, who have never danced. I mean, look at Itzhak Perlman, take him as an example. He's pretty good. And he's probably bless his heart never had the opportunity to dance. Look that said ~~, um,~~ I'm sure it helps. I'm absolutely sure. And, you know, playing and learning an instrument also helps you as a dancer, if that's what you want to do as well.

~~Um,~~ You know, my dance teachers used to say, Oh, we're so grateful you're musical. You always stay on the beat. And these guys haven't got a clue, you know?

So they loved the fact that I felt the rhythm. It definitely helped my rhythm as a musician, being able to feel it more internally, you know, and both physically actually. Yeah. And the posture thing that's certainly helps. Absolutely. You have strong back. Yeah.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:10:06] And you know, when we were growing up there weren't that many female conductors or artistic directors about were there.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:10:14] No. I mean, here in Australia, I can think of, oh, two. Simone Young, the well-known Australian conductor who really has made an international career ~~, um,~~ and Jane Glover. ~~Um,~~ Now I'm not sure if she's Australian or British but nowadays, isn't it wonderful that it's become normal and we're not. So you know, Oh my gosh, there's a female up there. ~~Um,~~ I just think that's fantastic and ~~it's,~~ it's made my life a lot easier. It's made me feel more accepted.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:10:40] do you think that's changed even since you started doing more directing yourself?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:10:44] Yeah, I do. You know I used to direct a lot from the violin in the UK, especially with the Hanover Band. There are so many female directors and conductors really, really coming out of the woodwork now and here in Australia ~~uh,~~ Yeah, I'm stepping up and actually conducting now without my violin. I have a wonderful conducting teacher actually based in Adelaide called Luke Dolman and he's a brilliant Australian conductor who's made an international career. He ~~, uh,~~ goes and conducts a lot in Scandinavia. He's gifted with the art of being able to teach. And that's amazing.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:11:18] That is amazing. And just because you're brilliant at something doesn't necessarily mean you can teach it as I think you implied there.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:11:25] Exactly. Well, it's true. I have to say ~~, um,~~ and look, you know, conducting feels like the most natural thing for me. I feel I've always known how music goes, how it feels, how it goes. So getting up and just starting to direct the traffic feels normal to me. It feels natural to me. So I'm really excited about this next step in my career.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:11:45] Oh, that's fantastic. Have you been practicing it more or have you actually done it in concert yet?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:11:51] Yes. I sort of threw myself in the deep end with my own ensemble. I formed my own choir here in Australia. We tried out lots of different combinations and we got the fantastic set of 13 singers, which is the basis of my choir. And we performed the Ascension Oratorio, which has three trumpets, timpani, two oboes, two flutes and a choir. And I thought, wow, I'm going to have to conduct this. I realized very quickly how it was going to be impossible to direct from the violin, with forces such as that. And in order to prepare for this, I went and met Richard Tanya, who directs the Australian chamber orchestra. And I saw that he had got up in the past and directed the Christmas oratorio and all sorts of other things and Beethoven nine, actually. And I asked him, how do you do this? How do you, ~~um,~~  get around the problem of having large forces, but you're also a violinist and you're used to directing from the violin.

And ~~, uh,~~ we talked about it a lot and in the end he said, look, I just put the violin down and I conduct. And he said that just works so much better for everybody, particularly singers. And ~~, uh,~~ when it came to singers, I realized that I wasn't getting the emotional reaction from them ~~um,~~ if I had a violin and what they need I've discovered is someone to interact to someone to look at and focus on.

~~Um,~~ and the difference was just extraordinary. In the past, what I've done is when you are presented with these huge big polyphonic choruses, which you get at the beginning of Bach cantatas and oratorios. You cannot have a violin in your head. You have to really direct the traffic.

~~Um,~~ And from there. I have actually, you know, has done more and more conducting ~~and less~~ and less violin playing weirdly. there's lots of opportunities in Bach to direct from the violin, you know, and when it comes to cantatas, I conduct and if there's an obligate Aria, I'll pick up the violin and play. But who knows to say ~~which,~~ which way I will go completely that's to come.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:13:44] Yeah, what would you say to people who don't feel like they get classical music or Bach, which is what your group specializes in. Would you invite them to come to your concerts or are they catered for people who already really love that sort of music? Or what would you say?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:13:59] Well, I think the great thing about Bach is that it doesn't matter ~~if you,~~ if you know intellectually what's inside the music or not. ~~Um,~~ It's just such happy, beautiful, meaningful music. There's something in it for everybody. Bach is one of those composers who stimulates both heart and mind. ~~Um,~~ and if you're into the nerdy stuff gosh, the sky's the limit when you're talking about what you can find inside of Bach and from an intellectual point of view. But all of that aside, you know, when you're listening to the music, you can just be totally swept away in it. ~~Um,~~ and it really does deal with universal themes. Just like Shakespeare, the themes of love and death and heartbreak and revenge and friendship and everything in between. It's all there. you know, you can get into it just like you would anything else it's still so relevant today.

I think classical music ~~is,~~ is wonderful in a way, because it takes you somewhere else. I mean, going to a rock concert or a live band really gets you going and you feel so excited about it ~~um,~~ and you really, you can do the same with classical music, especially if you go into something like a Beethoven symphony. Or a Mahler symphony or something where you're just like, Oh my gosh, that was so intense and so amazing. I mean, just think if you went to a concert of something like Marla six, that grand big symphony in the beginning ~~, um,~~ you know, with those hammer blows in the cellos. I mean, you're instantly in another world and it's exciting. It's a bit like going to a musical version of Lord of the Rings.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:15:27] And what's the magical thing about being on stage, do you think?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:15:30] It's the connection with the audience. last time I was working with John Elliot Gardner. he said being a performer requires ~~, um,~~ three aspects, the performers, the composers and the audience. And without one of those three things, it doesn't work. we all need each other. You can't just have a composer and a performer. That's not enough. You need someone to perform to. without that wonderful combination of the three aspects, it just doesn't work. And I really did realize that this year and when we did some of those digital performances where we were performing to empty halls, ~~that~~ that was terrifically difficult.

~~Um,~~ so when I'm up there on stage, the thing I love most is being able to look someone in the face. Find people in the audience and play to them. And when I know that they are with me, That's when the magic happens, this incredible intangible, indescribable feeling ~~of,~~ of connection. And I know that I'm giving them something and they're coming with me and that's giving to both of us at the same time. Whether that's one person or a thousand, it doesn't matter does it. And it's this ability to just connect and play and collectively take us both to somewhere else. That's what I love the most.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:16:43] Yeah, it is magical. Isn't it? I think the most I've ever felt that was being onstage at Shakespeare's Globe. An audience is such a magical thing.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:16:52] It really, is. I mean, just recently I was in a taxi in Australia and the taxi driver was telling me how much he loved classical music cause it took him away to another world and some way calm and beautiful and untouched by the world. And ~~, um,~~ don't you think that's just as relevant to people today and it's not elitist, is it? It's just about taking you somewhere new and somewhere you might not think that you would go. And if people gave it a chance, they might find a place, a musical place, a place of refuge they could go to and just take some time out and close your eyes and be swept away.

**Musical Interlude - J.S. Bach - Cantata BWV 4 "Christ lag in Todesbanden"** [00:17:27] Academy Australia

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:18:37] playing an excerpt from JS Bach's Cantata BWV 4, second movement. Delicious. That's beautiful. Why think you've painted a picture delightfully of that experience? Hopefully a few people will be inspired to go.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:19:00] I hope, so. There's so much out there so much beauty out there. It's just beautiful.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:19:06] it's something that we need at all times, but maybe especially now in the midst of all this crazy.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:19:12] I mean, I have to ask how are you guys going over there?

Well, in terms**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:19:16] of the pandemic, you guys have certainly done much better in Australia than we have in the UK.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:19:22] I feel such survivor guilt here.

I feel pandemic guilt.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:19:26] You shouldn't at all. So what does life look like in Sydney at the moment? Pandemic wise?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:19:32] Well, it depends which state you're in actually ~~. , uh,~~ in new South Wales, not so good. ~~Um,~~ We have had a lot of COVID here. when the virus escapes from hotel quarantine, then you have a problem. And look what happened to poor Melbourne over the Australian winter in July, August, they had a terribly serious outbreak and they were getting 700, 800 cases a day. They were in lockdown for 122 days, almost three months. ~~Uh,~~ but they did it. They killed the virus and they've had no cases now for over a month, zero cases.

Now that is **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:20:02] extraordinary because that is far from the case here and in America and so many other places.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:20:08] We've learnt the hard way here in Australia that you can have health or the economy, but you can't have both. And I think other countries around the world are just starting to wake up to this fact that they keep wanting to keep life going, but you just can't. You can't. And in Perth, a few days ago, they had a case of the South African variant escape from hotel quarantine.

They're still finding holes in the system and they have found that, for example, the virus can travel through air ducts in a hotel and travel from room to room if you don't circulate the air properly. Then people get it,

staff, get it. And then the staff take it out into the community. And then, you know, the horse has bolted.

~~Um,~~ but they put the city down into a five day hard lockdown straight away, even though there was only one case.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:20:54] I remember hearing that and was very impressed at the time.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:20:57] And it's those kinds of strategies, which mean that when the little spot fires happen, you can cut them down quickly ~~um,~~ And then, you know, I mean, life is sort of normal, I suppose, but there are still a lot of restrictions. I mean, you can't have more than 30 people in a home

I know.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:21:13] that sounds so like extravagant

in the house. Wow.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:21:20] and for outdoor venues you can have up to 500.

And. then ~~, um,~~ shops and cafes are all open and all you need to do is scan your QR code so track and trace can do their business. If there is an outbreak, concerts is quite difficult still, you still have to have the two square meter rule. Everybody has to be socially distanced. All performers on stage, still have to wear masks,

including singers and brass players. That's compulsory. And they take them off to sing or to play, but then they go back on again. It looks weird, but I don't care. As long as public performance ~~can,~~ can keep happening. And venues, indoor venues like for big symphony orchestra concerts are at 75% capacity now.

So, you know, day by day, we're learning more about the virus. We're learning how to contain it. And we're learning how to shut down little outbreaks as soon as they happen so we can live our lives.

No, but the main thing for us to be honest is the lack of international travel. It's not happening.

And I, for one, I'm really feeling it because, had so many things in the diary to come back to the UK to play in ~~um,~~ and we just haven't been able to leave. And also ~~, um,~~ I'd like to draw attention to the situation of all the Australians trying to get home to Australia. ~~Um,~~ there are almost 40,000 Australians who are stranded right now, all over the world, in all the cities and because of the limited number of hotel quarantine places ~~, um,~~ there's only certain amount of airline tickets that are sold every day.

And there's an absolutely huge backlog. ~~Um,~~ and some people have been waiting since March last year to get back home. And these people have jobs and families and relatives who are dying and they won't be able to see them. ~~Uh,~~ it's a terribly sad situation. And ~~, um, I~~ I'm ashamed to say my own government is not doing anywhere near enough to address this problem. ~~Um,~~ you know, they're not putting on charter flights to get the Australians home. They're not sorting out hotel quarantine. They're not doing enough to get these poor people home.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:08] That is tragic, but at least they have done something to protect the people in your country at the moment, which is more than has happened in a lot of places so I think that's a definite positive.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:23:20] I know. And I'm so lucky to be here. I mean ~~, it's,~~ it's paradise in Sydney. Summertime. The weather is great. We're surrounded by beautiful beaches. It's heaven.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:30] No, you shouldn't enjoy it. Paint a picture for the rest of us. We can vicariously enjoy it with you.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:23:41] Just come and visit the second you can.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:43] That would be brilliant. And. would you say you've had any kind of lockdown realization that's changed your perspective or your priorities during this time?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:23:53] my one biggest lockdown realization was the importance of trying to live in the moment. I need to learn how to enjoy life all over again. I need to sort of retrain myself how to get through and how to enjoy my life. And I did come to a realization actually before the pandemic, which was, yes, we can succeed in life and yes, we can try and have a great career and we can succeed in our professional lives and in our personal lives.

But at the end of the day, if you can go to bed at night asking yourself, am I happy? Am I genuinely happy today? And if the answer is yes, then that is success. And it doesn't matter If you have material wealth or it doesn't matter if you sort of nailed a certain professional job. That does not matter. If you can say you're happy. That is the main thing. Happiness is the ultimate success in life, I reckon, no matter what your circumstance. ~~Um,~~ So I have really tried to do that and I think it was the only way I could sort of save my mental health with just every minute of the day. Just go all right. Stop thinking about tomorrow. What are you doing now?

Are you enjoying yourself? And that's my biggest realization from all of this. Just try to, I try to be in the moment and enjoy it.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:25:07] And I think Marie Kondo would agree with you too. Yeah. That's at the heart of what she does really about her. ~~Um,~~ sparking joy and everything. I think in a sense it is just figuring out what makes you happy, what you surround yourself with and ~~, uh,~~ how you choose to live your life.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:25:25] Yes. Well, speaking of Marie Kondo ~~, um,~~ yeah, she did actually very much inspire me. ~~Um,~~ especially when I moved into my little flat here about six months ago and I jettisoned at least half my possessions and. I had 20 years of life to bring back with me all in

boxes, which came back. And when I finally got them out of storage, that was a very good day.

I just looked at most of the things and I thought, I don't need this. I just don't, you know. New start. New life. New flat. It's going. And I worked very hard last year teaching and I managed to be able to buy myself some really beautiful things. And I have a bit of a philosophy, which is buy once and buy well. So I was able to furnish my flat with very, very lovely, beautiful pieces. There's not very many of them, but they make me happy, every single one of them. The more I get rid of things, the more space I have, the happier I am.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:26:18] And the closer you get to, I guess, curating the sort of space you want to have as well by surrounding yourself with those things that are important to you and that you find beautiful. I'm sure.

~~Um,~~

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:26:32] I've got water in my Star Wars cup here.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:26:36] Oh, that's amazing. Look at that.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:26:40] You get them free at the supermarket.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:26:42] Oh, are you a big star Wars girl, Maddy

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:26:45] I am the biggest star Wars girl. Oh my God. It's like my absolute obsession up here I've got Lego millennium Falcon up there. I've got Lego, Boba fits ~~, um,~~ chip. And ~~, uh,~~ I've got original star Wars figures from the seventies over there in my little collection. That's my pride and joy.

I know. Yeah. I'm a little bit obsessed. My ring tone is the Cantina band from most Isley spite sport.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:27:15] That's the reference I definitely get, although I still am not a hundred percent sure if I've seen Star Wars. It's one of those things where I don't know if I've just seen scenes over the years, or I can't remember if I've watched the whole thing or not, which is ~~, um,~~ I'm sure strikes horror into the heart of anyone who's a true fan.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:27:34] Don't worry.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:27:35] you convince me to watch it then ~~what~~ what's so amazing about it do you think?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:27:39] well, look for me. I grew up in the late seventies, early eighties, and that's when they came out. ~~Um,~~ You know, the first star Wars, new hope episode four came out the year I was born in 1977 ~~and,~~ and I grew up with it. we spent hours as children playing in the backyard with star Wars figures. And I was obviously wasn't old enough to watch Star Wars when I was zero. Uh, but you know, when I sort of was old enough to watch it, it was magical just throwing yourself into this world of stormtroopers and stash ships and lightsabers and Yoda and the force. And I was like, Oh, this is so amazing. And ~~, um,~~ also I just love science fiction. I always have. I'm obsessed by any kind of science fiction that comes out on the tele or at the cinema.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:28:21] Oh,

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:28:22] world I could throw myself into.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:28:24] Oh, I should get into it because I love science fiction too,  yeah. Have you ever seen things like Utopia that kind of quirky British series and

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:28:34] my list.

Yes,

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:28:35] you must see it. You'll love that I think. It's quite dark, but yeah, it's great.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:28:40] thank you. Thank you for that recommendation.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:28:43] Oh sure. Anytime or Humans.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:28:46] Oh, that freaks me out a bit. That reminds me of Black Mirror.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:28:50] Oh yes. I know. I'll be curious to see what happens black mirror wise when it comes to the pandemic. I know they did this sort of biography thing, but when they do a kind of proper episode,

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:29:00] That will be amazing.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:29:01] I know. Are you looking forward to the pandemic-related sci-fi in the next few years?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:29:06] absolutely. But it's been done. I mean, it's not like there haven't been, pandemic related Saifai things before. I mean, that's the thing about science fiction, which I love so much. It always tells you what the human envisages for itself in the future.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:29:21] Yeah. Yes. I think it's fascinating. you know, I saw the film called pandemic just when this was sort of starting about a year ago out of kind of morbid curiosity. And even at that time I was thinking, Oh yeah, there's certain things here that really ring true actually. Yes. Quite terrifying. And how about staying fit during the pandemic? I know you've joined some running clubs, haven't you?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:29:49] I have, yeah, running has actually become really important to me just in terms of achieving a better balance in my life. ~~, uh,~~ also that all-important clearing of one's head and during the worst of the lockdown, we were only allowed out an hour a day. ~~Uh,~~ and that hour was so precious and as ~~I~~ I'm absolutely sure everyone in the UK understands very well right now.

~~Um,~~ And I'm fortunate enough to live on a little Bay here and getting out and running around that bait was just heaven. And it was so precious. ~~Um,~~  I just felt so wonderful having done the run and having got some fresh air into my lungs and moved my body. It just made me feel so good and so healthy and so positive. And like, I was loving myself in a way to do something good for me. ~~Uh,~~ and then I decided, well, actually there are some good running groups around the neighborhood, so why don't I try and meet some new people? ~~Um,~~ And that's what I've done and I've really enjoyed it.

And ~~, uh,~~ I found a fantastic support group as well. everyone is incredibly supportive of everybody else. which I found really heartwarming, cause I'm still a bit of a newbie at all of this and I'm still back in the pack, eventually ~~I'll,~~ I'll be able to run with the others. I mean, they're super quick, these guys, it's just frightening how quick they are.

~~Um, but you know,~~

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:30:57] Oh, you will. That's what I'm telling myself too. Yeah.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:31:00] What are you doing? Are you running as well or.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:31:03] Well, yes. You know I've never enjoyed running ever. I love dancing, but I was inspired to start ~~the couch,~~ the couch to 5k, actually, Ben and I have been my husband and I are doing it together. And ~~, uh,~~ we're just finishing off week three.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:31:17] Fabulous.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:31:18] I don't know if you're familiar with the program, but it really eases you into it.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:31:21] I am familiar with it. that was the one I used to get me to 5k. ~~It's~~ it's brilliant. It's so helpful. It's the best thing. And it really helps you realize that literally from zero, you can do it and it's totally achievable.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:31:33] well that's comforting. I notice we get tired after a second lot of three minutes. We're like, we'll get there someday.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:31:40] Yeah, you will. Before you even not just keep following that program.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:31:43] Yes, I will.  ~~Hm.~~ have a musical joke? You'd like to tell us,

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:31:49] So yes, I do have a musical joke. It makes me laugh and ~~um,~~ it makes other people roll their eyes in horror, but I don't care. I love this. Here we go. Mozart comes to heaven. God welcomes him and says you are going to be the conductor of my celestial orchestra. That's a great honor. But what about Bach? Go I know it's nerdy and silly, but I love it. And in my opinion, it's absolutely true.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:32:18] ~~, um,~~ Yes, I guess I'm honored that it wasn't a viola joke because that's the default for musicians.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:32:24] that's right. Well, I wouldn't do something as predictable as that, or as degrading. Yes. I mean, there is the famous viola joke of, you know, the bloke, the deskie at the back of the orchestra and ~~, um,~~ the two Viola players there and the conductor sort of goes off sick and then, you know, the orchestral manager rushes on stage and says, can anyone conduct tonight?

And . And so, yeah. You know, he gets up there and he conducts and it turns out that he's brilliant. He's amazing. Absolutely fantastic. And then he gets booked to do a tour and he's brilliant. He's amazing. And then one day the regular conductor comes back and he says, all right, mate, go back to your job. So he sits down next to his deskie and his deskie looks at him and says, well, where the hell have you been all this time, you know?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:33:05] I think it's definitely an inside joke, but yes, in other words, viola players don't actually look at the conductor.

No, of course not.

**Review Ad Spot** [00:33:16]

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I just can't**Madeleine Easton:** [00:34:37] emphasize enough having order in your home actually. I ~~really,~~ really think it's the path to a clear head and a clear mind and a focused, productive life. ~~Um,~~ That's one thing I just absolutely insist on ~~in my,~~ in my little home space here. ~~Um,~~ if you can have an outdoor space, a little terrorist or some kind of a garden, it's not always possible, but. That makes all the difference I feel and surround yourself with beautiful things. Things that you really love. God, I've heard so many people say that I sound like a cliche. I know I do, but it's so true. And just give yourself some time to do the things that you love. It's so easy to get swept up in work.

Believe me, I spent 20 years of my life running, literally running from gig to gig, to rehearsal to rehearsal, never, quite, really being on top of everything that I was doing. ~~Um,~~ partly out of, financial necessity yeah, I think loving yourself. that is a cliche, but that's absolutely true. And by that, I mean, taking time to cook for yourself ~~, um,~~ taking time to give yourself an hour to read a beautiful book. Giving yourself the time to go for a run and it takes a bit of organization, but it's so worth it.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:35:45] And that's what I've been trying to do as well. want, anytime you start a new business or something like that, it does feel like, you know, you're in a snow storm or something, but it's still it's taking that time. Making sure that you get your exercise in or reading before bed which i've just started doing that as well.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:36:05] That's the best thing. It's the secret to a good night's sleep. And look, I know that anyone who starts a new business ~~, um,~~ will have to work so, so, so much harder in those first few years. And yeah, I did not have a very good work-life balance over the last few years because of starting up Bach Academy. but I got there, we've got to a place now where I'm starting to get some admin help with it, and a much better structure within the ensemble. We're investing in ourselves, which makes life easier for everybody. And it's that idea of investing in yourself in a day-to-day life, no matter what you do, which will give you the rewards. And if you need to be selfish with your time, then you shouldn't have to apologize for that. Got to do what you need to do to really, really make sure that you're happy and satisfied and And like I said, ~~if you, if you,~~ if you can do that, then you can go to bed, have an evening and have that lovely feeling of contentment. You don't have to have a partner. You don't have to have the greatest job in the world. You can still achieve that.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:37:02] Brilliant advice. I love that. And how would you describe your personal style, Maddie? Certainly I associate you with vibrant, bright red lipstick.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:37:13] Well, I have a pretty classic style I'd say when it comes to dressing. ~~I~~  I'm one of these women who is shaped where I go in at the waist and out at the hips. So everything needs a waist. Otherwise, I look like I'm wearing a potato sack.

Yeah. Um,I guess you'd call me an hourglass, I suppose.

~~Um,~~ so I love those long skirts, the long flowing maxi skirts, you know? ~~Um,~~ but I also love sort of stripey bodycon stuff as well. And I love scoopy neck things. I love the 1950s style dresses. I've got quite a few of those. ~~Um,~~ And there's a few really great vintage shops here in Sydney, which I go to and I get some fabulous retro 1950s clothing from ~~, um,~~ yeah.

but in terms of being on stage, I love those 1940s Dior sort of style, you know what I mean?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:38:03] Yeah. Oh, that sounds fantastic.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:38:05] Everything Audrey Hepburn wore I am drawn to, not that I would ever dream of fitting into the sizes she did. I think not many people could, but it's the style. It's the style I love. And I've always loved the Sophia Loren eyeline Which you are not seeing right now because it's so early in the morning.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:38:23] yes. But we can imagine it. So You're wearing it on the inside.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:38:27] exactly. Exactly.

But these days, my style is kind of changing a bit. Actually, it's sort of evolving a bit more boho.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:38:35] pandemic style.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:38:36] Well, yeah, sponsored by, you know, active work.

Yeah. These days, I'm kind of getting into more of the Boho style, I suppose. Like long maxi dresses ~~, um,~~ sort of belts and jewelry. slightly different, and I am a bit older now as well. I'm in my early forties and you can't dress like you did when you were 20 anymore. I wouldn't inflict that on anyone.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:00] Well, I think that whatever age you are, you can dress in a way that makes you feel good and confident. And no one else necessarily has to like it. I think that's the main thing is that you enjoy it yourself.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:39:12] Yeah, but I have had to change slightly because in Australia ~~, um,~~ everyone is a lot more casual because of the weather. and when I first came back, I realized that in London, I was dressing up a lot more And people here so casual. ~~Um,~~ and yeah, I mean, wearing your active wear to the supermarket or out for coffee, everything is just the normal, that's what people do, you know, but I can't quite bring myself to do that yet. I don't want to do that. I mean, why don't I go to the supermarket in a little cocktail dress tomorrow and see what everyone thinks? Who knows?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:44] Please, please take a video of it. Somehow. I'd love to see it. It would be an internet sensation, the glamorous woman at the local store.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:39:53] Maybe I'll do that when I'm 80, if I get to 80.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:39:57] I think everyone has a duty to at least try to get to a hundred. Let's try for it. anyway.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:40:03] Shall we? Marvelous? Let's do it.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:40:05] It's a lovely pact and be able to dance in our nineties as well.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:40:11] Yes. Or we will, even if it's like wheelchair dancing.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:40:15] Yes. If it's a very slow Foxtrot, it's still happening. And Maddy, do you have a daily habit or ritual that brings you joy?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:40:26] this is going to sound nuts, but you know, opening all the doors and windows when you get up. shaking out the duvet or dunot, as it's called here, putting your clothes away, just getting the house going. I quite enjoy that. Putting the coffee on, putting all the plates and cups away.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:40:42] You're essentially the Australian version of Marie Kondo then

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:40:45] Really?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:40:46] exactly what she does, she opens up all the windows areas, things out.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:40:50] Yeah. I guess the air flowing through one of these people who feel that not making the bed is like not cleaning your teeth. It's sort of a horrible thing to watch. It's like, I can't bear it. I have to make the bed.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:41:03] I can picture you dashing about like Mary Poppins then just Sparking joy.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:41:08] I don't dash these days I glide

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:41:11] Oh, even better.

same goes for dancing. Oh, I don't know if I ever told you, but one of my favorite dancing experiences was in London years ago and there was swing dancing upstairs at this venue. And then tango downstairs. And I'd never done any tango before, but it looked amazing. And I was down there watching, and then this guy came and danced with me and he'd done both swing and tango. And at one point. My leg just went bop. It just floated up like you see in tango. And he somehow led something that made that happen. And I just thought, well, that's the ultimate ~~,~~

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:41:48] yeah. That's wonderful.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:41:51] the power of the lead. So you don't always have to know what you're doing as long as you can follow.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:41:56] Just need a good leader. Eight that the truth.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:41:59] Exactly applies to so many things!

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:42:02] Yes. Countries around the world. Take heed. You need a good leader?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:42:05] yes. Orchestras as well, orchestras dancing situations, And what's your top tip for living well?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:42:15] Living well means taking care of mind and body. These days I really think about it and it's made me so much happier. It's just loving myself and taking care of myself. and that's different for everybody. Everyone will have a different version of that, ~~Um,~~ another thing I have started to do as well, which is really, really think about the negativity that I have in my life. And sometimes I catch myself being negative. I catch myself gossiping or saying negative things or being around amounts of negativity. And I'm I'm trying to be a much nicer person and a better person. And I think that's part of trying to live well as well.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:42:54] Yeah, I think. That's all we can ever really hope to do is live well. And hopefully this enforced self-reflection of the pandemic has made more people realize that.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:43:05] ~~I really,~~

I really hope so because actually that could be a really great benefit that comes out of all of this being mindful and being in the moment and trying to really just take care of yourselves. And then when we're out of it, I'm just hoping that we will all take that with us.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:43:19] Well, that's my hope too, actually, that's the whole also in pink philosophy really? So I think it's important to take the time to live well, to figure out what that even means for you. To create your vision for your ideal life. However you define it.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:43:36] Also another little thing don't put too much pressure on yourself. The idea that you must succeed and you must have a great job and lots of money in a perfect partner and all of that, you know ~~, uh,~~ that's not the way to happiness. That's not living well. And it depends whether you come from a family who heaped the pressure on, in those departments as well. ~~Uh,~~ Uh, that can be really tough, but at the end of the day, you must just drown out all the noise and ask yourself what will make you happy.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:44:02] Exactly. Happiness is not what's defined by other people, but how you define it yourself. yeah, so with that in mind, we've now come to the finale. So I have a few quick fire questions for you to end the show. So what's your most treasured possession and of course no judgment.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:44:21] My violin.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:44:23] Oh, and tell us a bit about your violin. It's quite special. Isn't

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:44:26] It's a stunning run and it's made by ~~, uh,~~ the fraternity grand Chino ~~, um,~~ Giovanni and his brother. ~~Um,~~ it was made in 1682 in Milano in Italy. ~~Uh,~~ And when I first played it, I just knew that I had met my partner in life. ~~Uh,~~ in that way ~~ya , uh,~~ it was a wonderful case of person meets instrument and that connection was made.

And ~~, uh,~~ I couldn't afford it by any means. And I had three months to raise the money and I did it by convincing 15 wonderful people to invest in the instrument. So now I have a syndicate of investors who own the violin. One day I might own it. Who knows? Hopefully.  ~~Um,~~ but that, I think out of anything my life, I couldn't live with everything else, but not without that viol

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:45:07] and that's such an inspiring story to, ~~, to,~~ to think, okay, this is something I really want in my life and I have three months and I'm going to make it happen. And you did. I mean, that's quite extraordinary, really.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:45:18] Well, when failure, isn't an option, you'll be surprised about what you can come up with to make things happen.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:45:24] Very true. I think that should be on a t-shirt or something.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:45:26] Failure is not an option.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:45:29] And what's your favorite article of clothing or accessory in your current wardrobe?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:45:35] I have this fabulous green and white dress with a lovely flower pattern on it. It's mostly green and it's just the most beautiful little cocktail dress. ~~Um,~~ and when I put it on, I feel like a million dollars. It just is me that dress. I feel beautiful and happy and yes, I wish I had more chances to wear it.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:45:58] Well, you could just wear it at home sometimes for an hour or something. Be like, I'm going to wear my magnificent dress. Why not?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:46:05] That's wonderful. The whole idea of dressing up to stay at home is a new concept we've all become terribly familiar with. Isn't it.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:46:13] And where do you go to get inspired?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:46:16] Around the Bay. I'm surrounded by water here, which is just the loveliest thing. There's so many beautiful little parks around here, so sometimes I will just go and just sit and watch the sunset and just think about music and think about what I want to be doing. And. Yeah, but I'm the kind of person who can be inspired anywhere. I don't sort of really have a particular place. I'm just that kind of a person. Talking to you is inspiring my dear.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:46:45] We have all the loveliness happening now.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:46:47] Well, that's what happens when two very old friends catch up?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:46:50] Absolutely. So what's one book or resource that you'd recommend for everyone?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:46:56] it's a book I'm actually reading at the moment. My hairdresser put me on to it. Wonderful, amazing hairdresser. it is called think like a monk, train your mind for peace and purpose for everyday. It sounds like a self-help book, but ~~it's,~~ it's not actually, it's written by this British Indian man called Jay Shetty.

it has just helped me so much just get rid of all that negativity, I suppose, that I was talking to you about before and just really taking a hard look at myself and doing a bit of a life audit. If you know what I mean. It's not patronizing. Talk about helping me live in the moment it's been brilliant, actually.  ~~Uh,~~ so I cannot recommend that book enough and I've got it as an audio book, so I just listen to it in the car or wherever. I love audio books. They're brilliant.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:47:35] And here's a very KonMari question for you. What would you say that you're grateful for?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:47:42] I'm grateful for being able to be here in Sydney at this time. And grateful that it's summertime outside. All the flowers are at the fringe of pennies and high biscuits and all the tropical flowers around. ~~Um,~~ I'm really grateful for old trends who I've rediscovered since moving home.  ~~Um,~~ and my wonderful sister and ~~her,~~ her kids and her family and my brother and my mom, who's struggling with cancer right now. I'm really grateful for every moment with her. And how lucky am I to be running my own business here in Australia, doing what I love. I can not complain. Trust me. There's so much to be grateful for. There's not one thing. There's everything.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:48:22] And finally, what do you love most about life?

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:48:27] Wow. That's an interesting question. Well, I know that I was put on this planet to play music, you know, specifically the violin. And I am so sure of that. I am so certain of that fact, deep down in my gut. That's my whole purpose in life. I'm the kind of musician who could not ever conceive of doing anything else. I love music that much. And I suppose what I love about that is that I've dedicated my life to that aim. I get to travel the world and I get to perform music, such beautiful, inspiring, meaningful music. I have that in my life. And, you know, I suppose that's what I'm most grateful for about this life is that I get to do what I love deep down.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:49:15] That's a serious thing to be grateful for. I think ~~if,~~ if only everyone could experience that. it's my hope that we all can.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:49:22] suppose there are lots of people out there who aren't so fortunate or perhaps haven't discovered that thing, which really means everything to them. It's their reason for living and breathing. So for that, I'm seriously grateful.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:49:38] well, cheers to your reason for living and breathing. It sounds like a good one. Well, thank you so much, Maddy. It's been a huge pleasure chatting with you and catching up, talking about happiness and thanks for getting up at the crack of Dawn to

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:49:53] Oh, I'm used to it now. My running group runs at 5:45 AM. So this is all good. It's helping me. It'll help me in my run tomorrow morning.

So thank you.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to be on your amazing podcast. What you're doing is fabulous,

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:50:08] Oh, thank you, Maddie. I really appreciate it.

**Madeleine Easton:** [00:50:11] I wish you all the success in the world.

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:50:13] Thank you.

**Key Takeaways** [00:50:14]

Well, hope you enjoyed that chat with violinist and artistic director Madeleine Easton. So here's some key takeaways from our conversation. Invest in yourself and your happiness and surround yourself with things you love. Buy once and buy well is a wonderful way to choose quality over quantity. And it embraces sustainability over our often disposable throwaway culture.

Remember self care is not selfish. Self care is about looking after your mind and your body. So get some fresh air. It's easy to get so caught up in work and life that you essentially neglect yourself. Believe me, I've been there. So get up, move your body. Dance. Have a boogie. And get out. The couch to 5k is a great way to get started running. If I can do it, you certainly can.

And happiness is quite possibly the key to life. So ask yourself this at the end of the day, are you really happy? Whatever your answer, be kind to yourself. Try to live in the moment and enjoy life.

**Outro** [00:51:35]

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