

## **Vermont Arts Council**

### **Transcript**

#### **Vermont Made, Episode 15**

#### **“Grooving with Impermanence with Musician Rebecca Mack”**

**This document is available in large print upon request.**

#### **(00:00):**

[A loon calls over a soft, bright guitar riff, songbirds twittering in the background.]

#### **Desmond Peeples (00:05):**

You are listening to Vermont Made, the show where Vermont creatives tell me, Desmond Peeples, all about something they've made. In this episode, I talk with Burlington-based musician and teaching artist, Rebecca Mack, who received a Vermont Arts Council Creation Grant to support *Body*, their new cycle of six songs inspired by the impermanence of the human body and the earth body, the ethereal music and poetry of which are sampled herein. We discussed Rebecca's experience with long COVID, composing music in response to climate change and migratory animals, including friend of the show, the loon, and developing original work into a teaching artist curriculum.

#### **(00:45)**

[Instrumental string music]

**Rebecca Mack (01:04):**

The impetus behind writing this is really trying to take a look at our human bodies as they are in relationship with the earth body. Both of the partners in that relationship being constantly changing. So the relationship is always changing. So there's a factor of impermanence that I've been trying to get at through the poetry, and also through the way that I've written the music. Because I think it's really helpful for us as humans to groove with impermanence. It's a helpful perspective, since it's going to happen whether we want it to or not. And then, of course, right now when we look around at the climate crisis and even just what our backyard vegetable crops are doing or whatever-

**Desmond Peeples (02:09):**

The new climate, the growing zones. Yeah.

**Rebecca Mack (02:11):**

Exactly. Yes. The growing zones just changed.

**Desmond Peeples (02:14):**

Yes.

**Rebecca Mack (02:15):**

Yes. Which is exciting and scary.

**Desmond Peeples (02:21):**

It confirms so many people's suspicions, I think. We have this daily experience of the real changes happening in the climate around us, and so to finally see like, oh, it's actually happening, yes.

**Rebecca Mack (02:33):**

Totally. And then it invites the question from us of how do we relate to this? Do we update our growing practices? If we're working with herbs or vegetables or flowering crops, how do we embrace or roll with it? That's that active participation and impermanence that I am wanting to look at in the work Body.

**Desmond Peeples (03:06):**

Yeah, yeah. So this music is inspired by your observations of impermanence in the environment and in the climate and also in the human body. Did you have some personal experiences that revealed this principle to you?

**Rebecca Mack (03:24):**

Yes. Directly related to the beginning of the pandemic, and still an ongoing reality, not only for myself, but for many, many others. I'll just lay my hand on the table and say, I have had the blessing of being very able-bodied throughout my life and able to move very good health., And that enabled me to do a lifestyle that was very active and outdoors. And then in the very beginning of the global pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic, even before we thought that COVID was here in Vermont, I got sick with COVID, and I was sick enough that I still tested positive a month later, in March 2021, when tests were available. And I did get better. I am very, very grateful to be here having this conversation with you and being writing music.

**(04:32):**

So the problem was that I, a few months later, then developed some pretty serious and disabling long COVID symptoms. Now we know that I'm not the only person who has long COVID. A lot of people get long COVID. We still see long COVID symptoms showing up in one in 10 COVID infections, even now, even after vaccination. The severity seems to have changed with the new strains and the new vaccination. Hopefully we're still watching the numbers, of course, and trying to see what science can tell us. It'll still be some time. But that was my unfortunate privilege of being in the early wave of folks who got more or less disabled by long COVID symptoms. So impermanence in my own body, which also really changed my... Everyone's career in music changed for at least a few months during the beginning of the pandemic. Mine changed a lot in different ways and led me to be in a position where I was really ready to embrace writing a large choral work.

**Desmond Peeples (06:01):**

So I would love to get into that shift in your practice, not only as a musician and performer, but as a teaching artist. I know that's a large part of your practice. But first I would love to touch a little bit on your work prior to this Body song cycle. You're a part of a number of musical groups, and I listened to a bit of Amerykanka's Snow album. Is that the album title?

**Rebecca Mack (06:29):**

Yeah, that's...

**Desmond Peeples (06:30):**

Yeah. Yeah. Beautiful Bulgarian inspired music. Is that right?

**Rebecca Mack (06:34):**

Some of it's Bulgarian. There's a few Yiddish songs on there too, and a couple in English. Yeah, those are all folk music except for two, which were originals that I wrote.

**Desmond Peeples (06:49):**

So how does this new project build on or differ from the work that you've done with your previous groups or as a solo artist?

**Rebecca Mack (06:58):**

Well, first I have to say that the work that I've done... My own studies and my own performing career as a solo artist led me to what I really wanted to do, which was sing in really intricate harmonies, and mostly acapella with light instrumentation. So when I got to the point where I was able to just organize that for myself and for others, that's what I did. And that's how Amerykanka came about. I also play drums, and I'm a turntablist, so I've been in a number of different, very, very diverse kinds of ensembles. Most of my musical career has been in singing, mostly choral singing, but some solo singing as well, and a couple of different ensembles where I was singing in mixed groups and different things like that.

**(08:04):**

But Amerykanka really became the home where I felt like I could get at the... Really bringing, breathing life into harmonies in a way that is... The

only way that I can find is transcendent, the kind of harmonies that are created from the human body that have this magnetism with each other and allow both the singers and the audience to go on a short journey together. And from there, I really wanted to write more music for us. So Amerykanka is really my muse, even though we haven't been performing as we did before, the pandemic, before I got sick, I'm still working with the members of Amerykanka, and we've been testing out the composition, and taking our recordings and working on it. Hopefully we'll perform it in its entirety at some point. I'm also looking for other conductors to take and perform the piece of music body. But anyway, that's how we got here to Body. It really came through Amerykanka and that experience of taking, becoming a director so that I could go right after that thing that I loved and bring other people along with me.

**Desmond Peeples (09:43):**

Can we talk a little bit about language in your work? Amerykanka has this multilingual aspect to it, and the language primarily in the body song cycle is Latin, am I right?

**Rebecca Mack (09:58):**

Mm, mm. There's Latin and English. My collaborating poet in Body is Stephanie Lynn Wilson, and Stephanie wrote poetry in English, and I wrote in Latin. Stephanie is also a member of Amerykanka, and that was where our working relationship began, and we began collaborating together. The choice to write in two languages at a time, also the choice to perform in a lot of different languages previously really has to do with... It reflects my home life, my family life. We speak a lot of languages in my home. We speak English, Tamil, and Spanish at home currently. And then the other languages

that are spoken include French, Italian, Russian, some Yiddish, not fluently. So there's just a lot of... I love languages because it's... Each language is a different poet, and if you are listening to the same words in one language versus another language, the musical sounds of the language are completely different.

**(11:26):**

And if you take a word that you love or a concept that you love and pull up, just choose 16 languages and look at the words, and play with the words, and they all feel different. Right? So languages each, they have their own context, their own history, their own chutzpah that they come with, and their very own unique flavors and things. So I love the diversity of languages in my life for that. And also, I'm not the only person I know who has multilingual households. So to me, it just makes sense to reflect that in my compositions. But the other piece about singing in languages is that languages are totally different when you sing them than when you speak them.

**(12:23):**

Some things will move more in certain vowel sounds. Sometimes the consonants will change completely or disappear. Just their singing and speaking a language is also really different. So I guess what I'm saying in general is that I love languages, and I want to reflect the things that bring me joy to... If I'm making something, I want to make it with all the joy that I can find and bring it to other people for them to find joy, and the various ways of singing in different languages and the meanings and the musicality and the sounds. I want to be a part of a very long conversation with a lot of people in that way.

**Desmond Peeples (13:15):**

I love that. I think there's an obvious connection between musicality and language in a facility. People who are given to music, I think are also given to language.

**Rebecca Mack (13:27):**

I would love to think about that more too. If you ever find any resources or if any of the listeners have other resources or ways to get in touch... This is just a conversation that I adore. It piques my curiosity and my engagement.

**Desmond Peeples (13:45):**

Okay. So let's go back to... We were talking a bit earlier about this kind of transition in your practice, you're doing a lot of performing, and this experience with long COVID and impermanence has shifted the way that you work. Let's talk about that.

**Rebecca Mack (14:08):**

Okay. Yeah, one thing that's really interesting... Well, I would almost say ironic about it is... Okay, so the piece that I just finished writing and that I'm in the process of making, bringing out into the world so that everyone can hear it, it's called Body. Before I got sick and before the pandemic, I was doing much more performing, which is a very physical, I would need to rest, hydrate, really work with my mind so that my mind's in a certain way, so that I'm ready to give the direct artistic presentation through my body, and my body would be seen and all of that. But when I'm composing, it's much more private. I'm alone when I'm composing. So my body is absolutely



involved in terms of how I sit, how I move when I take breaks or go for walks, if I'm indoors, if I'm outdoors, wherever I am doing my poetry or singing or writing music or playing piano. It's obviously we never escape our bodies, but the audience part is different, which is really interesting for me, because my life as a musician has always had a lot of performance component to it.

**(15:43):**

[singing]

**Desmond Peeples (15:47):**

I want to get to this idea of the connection between the body, the human body, and the earth. There's this quote that you said to me in an earlier conversation. It's, "When the earth is not an object, we are co-created." How does that quote play into this cycle of music cycles?

**Rebecca Mack (16:27):**

Well, how it dropped down into the moment was during the period while I was writing the music, I did an online course with Vandana Shiva, who is a philosopher, an activist around earth activism. And so what Vandana was talking about in this section of the course was the objectification of the earth as something that we see it in terms of its resources. Water is a resource, precious metals are a resource, trees are resources. So there's this lens of objectification that we look at everything in the earth, the animals, the spices, all of the things as commodities that are there to be controlled, created, harbored, mined, and that there's a danger, there's a dangerous factor in the objectification of the Earth's resources. We're looking at the

earth as something that is there to serve us instead of something that's part of us and that we are co-created with.

**(17:59):**

So when the earth is not an object, we are co-created. We can understand that we are the earth. We're not different. We're not different than the plants, we're not different than the animals. We're not different than the water or the sky. Our bodies are... We have these big brains that move our bodies around in whichever ways we choose or whichever ways we're forced to move. But we're not separate from the earth. And for me, that is a very essential part of how I am dealing with the trauma of becoming very surprisingly and rapidly disabled from the pandemic and in the impermanence of my own body. Because I can see that if we're looking at the earth as resources, then we're also looking at ourselves as resources.

**(19:05):**

So if I'm looking at myself in terms of how much can I get done today, what is my worth in terms of what I can contribute today, whether that's financially, or the emotional resources that I use to support other people or whatever. But if I'm looking at myself as a bundle of resources, it's a very exhausting and not a very rich relationship. So when we can not objectify other people's bodies, when we can not objectify our own bodies, and when we can not objectify the earth as the earth body, then we are co-created, we are in a flowing relationship where we're in a dance. And it might be a dance that isn't the dance that we thought we were going to be dancing, but it's still a dance.

**Desmond Peeples (20:04):**

Right. It allows that impermanence that is usually, that for a lot of people, inspires fear or struggle. It makes room for impermanence to work with change. And that, really, that's what you've had to learn to do with your practice as a musician. And as an artist, that's one of the hardest things to do. When you have to change the way that you make your stuff, the things that you're here to do, that's an enormous process. So congratulations on, it sounds like, making that transition. Yeah.

**Rebecca Mack (20:43):**

I really appreciate that reflection. And the way that I was able to do it was by looking to the earth and the environment for cues. And I got really interested in liminal spaces, which to me usually had meant things like in terms of the human life cycle, like pregnancy is a time before birth, but after conception. So it's like this in-between time that there's obviously a life is coming towards earth but not there yet. And death can be... I used to work as a hospice LNA for quite some time, and so I have some experience being with people at the end of their lives too. And that can be a similar liminal space where you're here, but you're not here, you're in a whole bunch of other places. And then you're very much here. And that goes on for some time in a lot of cases for people.

**(21:46):**

So I used to think of liminal spaces, particularly in terms of human life cycle. But then with writing this work, I really started to look at the sky a lot and our waterways. So if we're thinking about liminal spaces in terms of the sky, we've got twilights at both ends of our day or beginnings of our night, however you want to look at it. And I got really obsessed with the ways that

meteorologists talk about twilight. So there are two twilights every day, which was news to me. I thought twilight was just the evening one. But the one in the morning, dawn, or however we like to call it, all of the different words, that's also considered a twilight in meteorological terms. And each twilight has civil, nautical and astronomical degree, and it's math. This is degrees of the sun in relationship to the horizon of wherever you are on planet earth.

**(22:50):**

And they go in the opposite order for the next twilight. So the civil one is when you can see the sun around the horizon. The nautical one is when if you were out on a big stretch of water, there would be a significant more light. And I think these are each 18 degrees from the horizon or something like that. And the astronomical is when we're just starting to move out of darkness or really close to complete darkness. So I just thought it's fascinating that these wonderful scientists came up with math around that. And there's so much math in music too. So I got really obsessed with writing these two pieces of body, two of the songs, the Twilight songs, there's Twilight Aurora, and Twilight Vespera, representing those two twilights. And those are the songs the Stephanie Lynn Wilson worked on with me. And we had a blast collaborating, exploring ideas of these liminal spaces and how there's just a quality change in life when you're outdoors in those early dawn-ish or late evening-ish hours.

**Desmond Peeples (24:09):**

It's a very, very unique time. Yes.

**Rebecca Mack (24:11):**

I also looked at waterways in terms of liminal spaces, because shorelines move. Sometimes they move dramatically like in the case of our flood plains now, like our flood, after the great flood of this past summer, our flood height also just got regraded. So the flood stage has new math that goes with it now because so much of the earth got washed into Lake Champlain where it probably is right now, or whichever way it was going. It ended up somewhere. So the changing ways of the edges of a shore, if you walk on the same riverbank throughout the year, you're going to find the edge to be in a slightly different spot.

**Desmond Peeples (25:03):**

Right. And so these explorations of liminal spaces, how did that fit into the writing process? You said that this was a lot of alone time and very different from the way that you normally produce music. So were you going out into the field, so to speak, and then returning to write at home, or can you talk a little bit about the process?

**Rebecca Mack (25:26):**

Sure thing. I did both of those things, and sometimes... Basically I'd alternate it whenever I was stuck, which happened frequently, because that's sort of how it works. But I have a large garage at my house, an industrial size garage with a big door that opens. And I built... Actually, I had a lot of help building a small, semi heated studio space during the wintertime that was built out of the Sukkah from my synagogue because it was off season and they weren't using it. And when it was not cold, I didn't have that shelter. So I used as much shelter as I needed, but it was cold in there. I was wearing my jacket, had my little space heater, or in the

summertime it was blowing rain and the big open door, or rabbits would come in or whatever.

**(26:31):**

So I had this sheltered space that was very much in touch with my big garden, and all of the weather and whatever raccoon was sleeping in the roof or whatever. But it had a piano. So that's where I did a lot of the writing. But I also take my phone out for walks and just sing into it. I visited the Winooski River Delta right where Burlington and Colchester split there down by Charlie's Boathouse in Burlington. That's one of my favorite spots on earth. So I visited there a lot, and especially during the flood to watch everything washing down the Winooski River. But I go to places like that, or I took a trip to Puerto Rico and was working outside in the El Yunque Rainforest a bit. That was pretty great.

**(27:31):**

The coqui and the sounds, just the dripping sounds, even when it wasn't raining and stuff like that. So I definitely worked outdoors. You can't get much of a recording from being on an ocean beach. But that also definitely was part of how I was writing poetry and being in touch with the sunrises, the sunsets, and the moving sand and water. I love how you can... If you are at the ocean's edge and you're just watching your feet, if you're standing right at the ocean's edge, you can watch the water come in both directions and the sand moving all around you. And it absolutely can disperse any notion of being a solid thing in a solid place.

**(28:22):**

[singing]

**Desmond Peeples (28:38):**

Loons also play a part of your inspiration for this song cycle. Can you tell me how the loon is involved?

**Rebecca Mack (28:47):**

Sure. So there are a couple of partner songs in the six songs of the cycle. There's the two Twilights that we talked about, and then there's Cantus Avium and Cantus Flores. And as you would guess, Cantus Flores is focused on flowers and bees, and pollinators in general. Cantus Avium is focused on birds and migration. And in terms of the meaning department, I really dug into a lot of thought around migration in terms of our human experience, which many of us have had migrations during our lifetimes. Many, many of us have migrations in the previous generation or two generations previous.

**(29:43):**

So all of... There's just so much when we're thinking about our ancestry and our ancestors, and the people who have come before us who have helped shape us and who we do, we carry on their legacy in terms of migration. And that, of course, ties back to the interest in language and very much in terms of culture. So I am thinking about the birds and their migration, and when I started to write Cantus Avium, I knew I wanted to be writing about a water bird because I was thinking a lot about shorelines and the places where water birds build their nests and such. And one of the members of Amerykanka, Audrey, is another one of my beloved collaborators, and is also amazing at producing bird calls, and does a fantastic loon. I will not try to do right now, but you do have one on your...

**Desmond Peeples (30:55):**

Right. Maybe we can have some of the recording from your music, the loon impression with the real loon recording.

**Rebecca Mack (31:06):**

Well, the loon impression is not in the music. I just ended up using-

**Desmond Peeples (31:10):**

Oh, darn.

**Rebecca Mack (31:10):**

... loons as... Well, Audrey loves loons, and I was writing this song for her because she adores birds. I knew that I wanted to do a duet for this song. And she and I have a really special vocal relationship where we can... Even our speaking voices are different, and our ranges are slightly different, but they overlap. But we have a really amazing time blending together, and we can make our voices move in a way... If you've ever... You're a dancer and you have a dancing partner that you love to work with, or in any artistic field, like a beloved collaborator, you'd know the thing I'm talking about. So I really wanted to write Cantus Avium for Audrey, and Audrey loves loons. So I started doing research on loons and got completely obsessed because they are amazing creatures. Wow. They're here in Vermont, which is great. We can hear them. I went camping at the Grand Isle State Park and was woken up at four in the morning by this absolutely insane sound. Ridiculous. It just sounded like somebody losing their mind cackling.

**Desmond Peeples (32:34):**



Yes. Yeah.

**Rebecca Mack (32:34):**

That was the loon, it turns out. But loons are amazing creatures. They don't do very well on land. They can't walk very, very much, but man can they swim, they can deflate their lungs, really... They have this ability to squeeze all the air out of their lungs really quickly. And they have dense bones, not hollow bones like some flight birds. So they make themselves look really heavy, and that's how they can dive really well and hunt that way. They also... They need a long runway to get started, to take the air, but once they get into the air, they can fly up to 70 miles an hour.

**Desmond Peeples (33:18):**

Are you kidding me?

**Rebecca Mack (33:19):**

It's like... No, not kidding.

**Desmond Peeples (33:21):**

Wow.

**Rebecca Mack (33:21):**

My university website, this is where I got this information. I really trust those kids.

**Desmond Peeples (33:30):**

70 miles an hour. That's incredible.

**Rebecca Mack (33:31):**

And they can live for up to 30 years. Both the parents of chicks will co-parent them, but not for very long. And then the chicks are... The parents leave because the loons migrate from freshwater to saltwater every year. So the loons that are here in Vermont, they end up in Cape Cod or something like that for the winter. And then they come back. And the parents will totally just leave the chicks to figure it out for themselves. And the chicks will make these bands of chicks and they'll go migrate, but they'll end up... A lot of the migration, the ways that they migrate is that they'll go to a place that's near where their parents are, and then they'll come back to whatever kettle pond or wherever it was.

**(34:20):**

They don't always come back to exactly the same spot, but a lot of them are banded and noted to do that. So somehow they know where they are, or they'll come back to places where their parents were, but where they weren't born. That's even wilder. So there's some kind of ancestral memory or something going on there. And I just really loved the juicy parallel there with human migration and culture, and how we are always craving to know more about what kind of world and place our grandparents were living in, our great-grandparents. What were the plants in Belarus, where my grandmother grew up? What plants were in her forest? I don't know, but I would really like to. That kind of thing. Right?

**Desmond Peeples (35:21):**

Yeah. The parallel is incredible. And going back to this idea of impermanence as this kind of lesson that we need to learn from nature right now. We humans, as you say, are a migratory species. We've always been moving for one reason or another, from place to place. But we are kind of stuck in this desire to be sedentary right now, or to be more settled than maybe our nature or what nature is asking us to be right now. So yeah, what a wonderful lesson from the loon.

**Rebecca Mack (35:59):**

Yeah, I like what you're saying too, in terms of the risk taking that it requires to be a wild bird. You don't really get to opt out of risks and be like, "I like my house. I'm just going to stay in here." You can't do that.

**Desmond Peeples (36:18):**

That's great.

**Rebecca Mack (36:21):**

Yeah, totally. And when I wrote the poetry, one of the English translation of part of that Latin poetry was wild and wise. They return to the ancestors' place. So just trying to keep track of this migration. Looking outside of ourselves as humans, we have been very focused on humans for at least since through the industrial age, just focus... That human culture is the only culture. Some call this the Anthropocene, the age of the Earth that is run by humans or human focused.

**Desmond Peeples (37:14):**

When humans create the most change.

**Rebecca Mack (37:17):**

I guess that is pretty accurate. Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (37:24):**

Well, I'd love to talk a little bit more about your life as a teaching artist, and how this work is going to fit into that. And I also, I'm sure as a teaching artist, your practice has changed enormously since COVID. So how did you get into teaching artistry first? Because I know it's such an important part of your practice. Yeah.

**Rebecca Mack (37:54):**

If you can hear a strange sound, my cat is chasing something.

**Desmond Peeples (38:00):**

Yes. Cats welcome.

**Rebecca Mack (38:04):**

Teaching artistry was just one of the most beautiful twists of fate in my life. I've had a lot of different jobs and I've enjoyed a lot of different jobs. They all give different skill sets. And when I... I was working as a preschool teacher after my hospice years, because I needed to take a break from hospice and work with the other end of life. So working with babies and toddlers and preschoolers was a really interesting move there, just really rich in human experience. And I was lucky enough to be working in a classroom where I had so much freedom to be creating curriculum. And of

course, as an artist, what are my skills? So I started to just really make a lot of artistically focused curriculum for those students, and just go a little bit farther than I think what some would think is possible in terms of what I...

**(39:24):**

It's like this. If you think that children are only capable of up to a certain amount, you're not going to see anything beyond that amount. So with a background understanding of arts integration, where you can use the tools of artistic modes to engage academic goals, I started to work that way with my very, very young students. And that turned into... I became just mostly doing teaching artistry with the very youngest. I've also had the extreme pleasure of working with Inclusive Arts Vermont, formerly known as VSA VT, and I think maybe another name before that. But that's an agency that is focused on arts, education, and arts opportunities for people with disabilities across the age spectrum, and across the disability spectrum as well. So we're talking all kinds of mobility or people who are autistic that have hearing or sight impairment. Just any and everything. And I've had so many different opportunities to have the chance to try to take the curriculum that I want to share and adapt it on the spot to whatever the needs of the student are.

**(41:02):**

I got to learn a little bit about another structure called Universal Design for Learning, which I'm pretty passionate about. But basically it's the simplest way to explain the concept, is that there are lots of ways to present any topic that you're trying to teach. And there are lots of ways to engage students in working with the topic, and there are lots of ways to take your evaluations or assessments. And so it just... Basically... That sounds vague,

but what it does is it gives you a pathway from the teacher to the student to adapt your curriculum in real time. And for me, that is just really fun. It doesn't seem like a yucky game to me. I love it. I just love it. I love the opportunity to work with students who have a different way of approaching something than I do, and to, in real time, be figuring out how that we get to that learning goal together. And I like the flexibility of it. It makes me feel really alive.

**(42:16):**

And the engagement, that kind of engagement is truly compassionate and truly outside the box. So it just makes me feel like life is good. Today was a good day. And I love teaching artistry for that. I also love it because when you teach in that kind of way, you're going to see people giving their reflections to you that were completely unexpected. And early ed is really good for this, because people who are forming language for the first time, like three and four year olds, have the most crystal clear and unconventional ways of expressing exactly what you're talking about. And so it's a really fun, dynamic process. And I've found that through my teaching artistry, I just get a lot of spoons back, a lot of energy back, and a lot of more creativity, thinking in ways about something that is not how I started thinking about it.

**(43:28):**

And that's pretty much calories for any artist. It's how you have to move in new ways in order to keep making new things. So it's... Teaching artistry really goes hand in hand with my own creative practice for me. And I don't know, I could just nerd out about it a lot. And I just really hope everybody becomes a teaching artist. I'm really, really pro artists learning how to work

within the different systems, and make those connections with different students, whether it's an after school program of middle school students or a room of disabled seven year olds and their parents, or an early ed program that is in the middle of Vermont in the winter or whatever it is. Just being able to get to students and engage the things that you are creative and passionate about. It's so worth it.

**Desmond Peeples (44:46):**

Well, so how will you be bringing the Body song cycle to your students? I know you're already working on ways to integrate it into a curriculum.

**Rebecca Mack (44:58):**

Yeah. And you mentioned that my teaching artistry has changed with the pandemic and with my disability too. That is absolutely the case. Because I can't... The way that my body is capable right now, my hours are much more limited, and some of the hours that are most desired by the places that I would love to teach are hours that doesn't work for my body. And so right now what I'm doing, focusing on, in terms of how to share it is two different ways. Because during the entire pandemic up until now, I've been doing a lot of private teaching too. And that's often student-led. So sometimes someone wants to learn a Christmas Carol or a Dolly Parton song or Beyonce or something like that. And sometimes they're like, "I don't know, what do you want to sing?" And then I'll be like, we could sing this thing that I wrote.

**(45:55):**

So it's fun to work off the page with my students directly in person. But I'm approaching it in two different ways at the moment. I'm creating a curriculum packet that should a middle school or high school chorus want to sing part or all of the choral song cycle, I'm working on a curriculum packet that can be used where I can be present, but I can also support the teachers in the classrooms to ask critical questions or suggestions about... Inquiries about what the poetry is about or different things like that. So I'm trying to make up a curriculum bundle for school residencies specifically. And then the other thing that I'm doing is a little bit more general and versatile outside of the school setting, which is, I'm looking at my finished composition and looking for little phrases that can be used for voice, piano, harp, cello, students, pedagogically, like repetitive phrases.

**(47:20):**

The inspiration here is from Bela Bartok and the Microcosmos, which were two volumes that... Because like many composers, Bartok taught students throughout his career. And so taking pieces of his grander compositions, but making them into these little things that can be used as exercises, and demonstrate certain types of music theory or certain parts of technique in terms of vocal health, there's always certain exercises that I fall back on that we should be doing all the time just to keep our voices in shape for performance or singing.

**Desmond Peeples (48:06):**

I'd love to know some of those.

**Rebecca Mack (48:08):**



Oh, good. That's great. So I'm working on it in those two different ways. One's more of a curriculum packet for schools, and then one is more of pedagogical exercises, and just which one could use this on your own or with a teacher. And that's for voice harp, piano, and cello.

**(48:32):**

[singing]

**Desmond Peeples (48:54):**

That's our show folks. To learn more about Rebecca Mack and her music, check out the show notes at [vermontartscouncil.org/podcast](http://vermontartscouncil.org/podcast). Vermont Made is a production of the Vermont Arts Council, the primary provider of funding, advocacy, and info for the arts here in Vermont, which is and has always been Abenaki and Mahican land. This episode is sponsored by the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing. Visit [vermontvacation.com](http://vermontvacation.com) to find countless ways to enjoy our state. And if you're a new resident here, visit [thinkvermont.com](http://thinkvermont.com) for regional resource guides and job information. Thank you for listening.

**(48:35)**

[Songbirds twitter as a guitar strums a soft but upbeat tune.]