

Speaker 1: 0:00

Welcome everybody to season two of hyphenated life. Thank you for joining us and thank you for following us on all the obvious channels. Facebook, Instagram. I don't think we're on Twitter yet. and@hyphenatedlife.org , you can also find us through pine street, church.net. Hi , faded life podcasts can be found there as well. And we're so thankful to our church.

Speaker 2: 0:27

So we really are excited to be back. We have , uh , a lot of exciting guests lined up here for this second season. And , uh, the first of which is a really good, almost lifelong friend of yours. Andrew Wright , Steven nix , who lives in Nashville.

Speaker 1: 0:43

That's right. Steven Knicks is on the show today. Uh, Stephen is a Grammy nominated songwriter. He's a producer, he's a vocal coach. He's a director of music for a church in Nashville , uh, and somebody who , um, kind of adopted me as his little brother, what I was in college. Uh, and so just feel really grateful and lucky. And , uh, to have him on the program today and talking about his own personal journey and his own kind of musical philosophy, life philosophy, we kind of cover a lot of ground today with Steven .

Speaker 2: 1:18

Yeah, I'm excited. I've heard a lot about him as he has been, you know, formational in your life as a friend, as a mentor or a colleague. And , um , I , I hearing his story. I find so much fascinatingly similar to my upbringing. My story as a musician, you know, will I'm sure be able to relate on that level. Um, and he he's, he said he was like a surrogate older brother, and now he's like a surrogate uncle to your kids. That's how close you are. And it's so cool to get, to have him on this podcast today to kick off season two of hyphenated life. I am so excited about this. Um, tell me a little bit about you guys met at Belmont. This is not the first guest we've had. That's has a connection to you and Belmont university, but that's a great, a great school , um, a great music program and he was floating around there and you floated in and how did you guys connect?

Speaker 1: 2:16

So he'll talk about this on the episode today, but we actually met at a mega church in Nashville. That was my church in college. Uh, he was the director of worship there and doing , uh, compositions for, for this church. And I was looking for someone , uh , to , to give me vocal lessons because when I started at Belmont, I was a music major and then figured out I was going fail freshmen , piano, and transferred to the business department as soon as possible. And then found my way to religion is such a , such a weird and eclectic journey. Uh , but that's how we met was through the mega church in Nashville. And then Steven and I started writing music together for, for that church. Uh, and so, yeah, that was, that was a fun beginning to my college journey, but meeting Steven and we'll talk, we didn't quite get into this today, but , uh, letters to a young poet, I swear to goodness , uh, that was a formational foundational book that Steven introduced me to Rainer Roco , this beautiful German poet. Uh, that's been a big part of my own personal spiritual journey, but reading that book letters to a young poet completely changed my life and the way I saw God, the way I saw myself , uh, the way I saw how I grew up and where I was going. So anybody out there who's not read letters to a young poet. You got to read that book by Rainer Rilke, R I L K E anyway.

Speaker 3: 3:45

So I haven't read that. So I guess you're speaking to me as much as any of our listeners who haven't haven't read it.

Speaker 1: 3:51

I was hoping you'd pick up on that .

Speaker 3: 3:54

Just kidding. Yeah, for sure. It's a , it's an awesome book. Welcome to hyphenated life. We invite you to join us on this journey to explore the connection of the sacred and the secular that inspires us to become more fully alive. Welcome to

Speaker 1: 4:35

He's to episode one of hyphenated life. Thank you for joining us, everybody. And today we have the great good fortune of launching season two with Stephen Knicks . Stephen Nicks is a Grammy nominated producer for blues songwriter and recording of the year. He is a pianist and musical director for multiple Christian country and blues artists. Stephen currently serves as director of music at Hillsborough Presbyterian church in Nashville, Tennessee, where they celebrate the diversity of musical styles in worship. A little bit more about Stephen Stephen's basic belief for making music is to have fun, to be inspired and to be creative. He holds degrees in piano, voice choral conducting music, pedagogy pedagogy. I'm not sure and arranging from the university of South Alabama and Louisiana state university LSU go tigers. I guess he was born in mobile, Alabama on a farm, not too far from the Gulf of Mexico. Well , Steven has traveled the world as a pianist, as a music director for numerous, numerous professional artists and all sorts of genres. Uh, he was also creative director for Nashville and Hollywood based music publishing companies, and currently spends lot of time. Well , at least a little bit of time as a guest clinician and vocal coach, Stephen has written several hundred songs which have been recorded in sung throughout the world. And what I love , uh , perhaps most about this fine young man from Nashville as that he loves his passion is helping others become the best musicians and singers. They can be through what he describes as the universal language of music to build faith and community Steven Knicks . Thank you for joining us on hyphenated life today. What a pleasure.

Speaker 4: 6:34

Thank you. Wow. Thank you so much.

Speaker 1: 6:37

He didn't know half of that stuff about yourself. Did you at least forgotten about it? Well , uh , I guess, I don't know. We can start with this. I mean, full disclosure , uh , Stephen Knicks is one of my best friends in life and , uh, he is somebody I've admired since I was 19 years old. And it's so interesting since I just turned 33. Everyone knows that's not true. We've known each other for God, 25 years or so by now. And , uh, he is somebody I admire and respect and, you know, sometimes we get into our professional worlds and our personal stories, you know, not, not by intention per se, but get lost in the mix of what we're doing professionally, because one of the things that most people ask , uh, about who we are is , well, what do you do, right? It's like, what do you do in life? But I think to start today, Steven , uh, I , I would love for our audience to hear a little bit about your own personal story and how you began and your own evolution, theologically and personally, and relationally. And so I'd love to start with that. And so you grew up on a farm in the deep South. What was that like?

Speaker 4: 8:02

Uh , well, I always say when you're in the deep South and you grow up on a farm , uh, it's chores and church, that's pretty much all it is and school. And so basically that was your entire community was going to church during your chores and going to school. And that's the way you lived. Your life was quite simple.

Speaker 1: 8:22

So what was church like for you growing up?

Speaker 4: 8:25

Well, I was raised very strict what they call Pentecostal holiness, which was the belief that like we couldn't have TVs, we couldn't wear shorts. Women had to wear dresses, women couldn't cut their hair. Men had to keep their hair short. So I was, I was raised in a very strict religious background. Um, but you know, that's what it was, it was normal.

Speaker 1: 8:53

So you've talked a little bit and , and some more full disclosure. Steven was recently featured on pride forward, which is a storytelling project with the USA today network. And , uh , we can link to that on our hyphenated life page as well. But one of the things that stood out to me too, is you talking about your own development in terms of coming to terms, you know, and, and , and a gradual dawning about your, your fullest self, your truest self, and who you were , uh , as a child growing up musically , uh, and then , uh, who you wanted to be and how that , that came to be. And I know that , uh, there's some personal moments and milestones in your own growing up story. Uh, maybe begin a little bit musically speaking, how music came to be part of your own , uh, your own soulful medicine or soul medicine, if you will.

Speaker 4: 9:49

Well, for one thing, my family are very well known in the music in the gospel music world. And so music was pretty much the staple of our existence. Uh , my dad threatened me at four. If I didn't sing, he was going to, I was going to be in trouble. So I was a shy kid and I immediately learned to sing. As a matter of fact, it was this week. I , uh, the lady that taught me how to sing harmonies. She says , she remembers me when she was, I was like five. And then I just learned the harmonies very quickly and she never had to teach me again. So, but music was just, it was, it was the only expression we had outside of , um, church and school and farm life.

Speaker 1: 10:34

And you had, I mean, I would describe it as a lot of adulthood in your childhood. Could you talk a little bit about what that looked like in your world growing up , uh , a lot of adulthood as , as a kid and a lot of responsibility that you accepted and adopted early on?

Speaker 4: 10:52

Well, I , I like to call myself the crazy accident in my family. I was the surprise kid, the , uh, uh, parents who are substantially older than normal. My mother was like 45 when I was born and my dad was in his fifties or early fifties. So that was kind of a surprise kid. So when I came along , uh, they had already had two other children. I'll send me. Um, but , um, I had a lot of responsibilities, but at 15, my mother passed away suddenly, and my siblings had already left home and I was left to sort of sustain the household and literally took what , uh, income my mother left me through social security and paid the house notes. And I kept myself alive at 15, no health because my dad, he just suffered from extensive grief , uh, because of the loss that he sort of could not function.

Speaker 1: 11:56

So you took up sort of a , in some sense, a matriarchal and a patriarchal role in your own family growing up and fast forwarding. Just a little bit. You also graduated high school awfully early in , started your college journey awfully early. Right. Could you talk a little bit about that as well?

Speaker 4: 12:15

It was the same year that my mother died at 15, that , uh , I graduated from high school. Um , I was valedictorian in my class and , um, I'll never forget doing the speech and just barely getting through the speech for the tiers , you know, losing your mother. And I received scholarships to , uh, so university of South Alabama, and I immediately took them. It was a way out of the farm, at least something different because I desperately, I wanted to pursue something again. I was just searching for who I was going to be.

Speaker 1: 12:53

Right. And , and where , I mean, if you could think a little bit about, you know, you've described the Pentecostal holiness tradition, were you also thinking about how am I different theologically at that point, or are you kind of dealing with so many other things that you're just kind of managing life, but I'm kind of curious, like how did that also jumpstart your own theological evolution through, you know, being raised in that kind of strict conservative tradition and here you are with the world opening up to you.

Speaker 4: 13:28

I recall that just the , uh , sociological shock of being a part of a secular institution, such as a university state school , uh, that, that along was just overwhelming to me. And then to add to it, the fact that I was the youngest person on the university campus, that point , um, my peer group was basically, they were all older than me, much older than me, you know , two and three years older, which is a lot in that, you know , when you're 15. Right.

Speaker 1: 14:07

So how are you, you know, when you think about coming to your fullest self, the truest version of yourself, where were you in that process as well? Because what I loved about listening to your story , uh, with the storytelling project is how you were surrounded by so much conservatism, theologically, and really coming to terms with who Stephen really was through all of that, who your truest self, your deepest soul was. Could you talk a little bit about how all of that was unfolding as well through that process?

Speaker 4: 14:40

Sure. You know, the , the overarching , uh , reality to the story is I think that God gently guides us, even when we don't, we're not aware that that is happening. Um, I basically shoved anything that had to do with relational, sexual, anything. I just shoved it down. I just totally turned myself inward focused to , uh , education and making good grades and keeping my scholarships. And I really didn't even give myself a choice even during undergrad or grad school to even think about that. Uh, and I think it was my, it was a form of escapism for myself to just survive. Uh, you know, now that I look back, that's what I was doing.

Speaker 1: 15:23

Right. And so , so that theme of adulthood was kind of showing up, you were just doing what you had to do. So what, what, what would , what would you say would be another kind of milestone moment of moving toward , uh , coming into your gifts , uh, you know, your journey to Nashville. Uh, if you could talk about a little bit of those, those pivot points, what would you point to?

Speaker 4: 15:46

Well, I, I think, you know, unlike most people, I did have contacts here in Nashville being that there were family here. Uh, so I wasn't going into a place that was totally strange to me. I at least knew some people, uh, but I had started teaching at LSU some and just realized that I was number one. I was really young and I did not want to be a part of, I wanted to be in a creative world, not in so much the educational world where you're stuck doing the same courses every semester. I wanted something more creative. And so I made my way to Nashville, Tennessee just moved here. And the first night I was here, I walked into a big mega church and I was hired first night, but it was only because my family knew all the people and knew me. So I know that sounds weird, but that's really true.

Speaker 1: 16:48

I bet it was. And that in that mega church, by the way, is where, uh, you and I met, uh, I was grin and Grennan coming to Belmont university in Nashville, looking for voice lessons. And, uh, that's, that's sort of how we met as well. Uh, before I, when I started writing songs. And before I wrote, before I started writing sermons, there was a, there was a few years in between there. Uh, it, Steve would was a big part of, of that journey for me,

Speaker 2: 17:17

Stephen, thank you again for being with us today. Uh, this is exciting. I've heard a lot about you. And, uh, one, one thing I definitely noticed, and I hear some similarities for you is you can, one can, can get, um, in that boat of regimen and structure and formality such as comes with academia or professional environments, such as working for a church as a paid church musician. And while you can certainly have your own spirituality, your own spiritual path, um, in many ways, it's really easy to muffle that, to put dampeners on it so that it kind of keeps within those rigid structures and it hyphenated life. That's one of the things we, we, we created this podcast was to explore how, how can those things be those dualities be eliminated, or how can those structures and spiritual passions be combined and, and become symbiotic. And I wonder if there's any experience you've had as you moved along in your career and in your life where you found some of those, those seemingly opposed elements becoming, starting to work together. Um, if you have any experiences like that, you'd want to share,

Speaker 4: 18:29

I guess, you know, working in church work, you learn to become a conduit for the talent of others, and you learn to focus on other people. It becomes a, if you're doing it correctly, you're going to become a little, a lot selfless, not selfish. And so it's very easy in the pattern of trying to help others find their musical selves, find their musical excellence. I encouraging them, focusing them, directing them, teaching them. It's easy to kind of forget about yourself in which you know, for me, I think now that I look back on it, it was a way of coping with me not having to deal with, you know, who I really was, but if I could focus on other people and other people's talent, then I didn't have to focus in on me.

Speaker 2: 19:22

Yeah. That's uh, that's beautiful. I think, you know, you, you said at one point you were, you had a bit of an aversion towards possibly teaching collegiately at LSU we're teaching. Um, but we find ourselves in that role a lot anyways. Um, and you know, that, that is one of the things about that, that the, uh, markers of the importance of self care, right? If you are caring for others, but you're not well yourself because you've neglected yourself, then there's an

imbalance there, and you're not able to help them to your fullest extent. And therefore they don't get the best version of you. You're not experiencing the best version of yourself or oneself. This is not you or me necessarily, but I think, uh, you know, uh, relatable experience. So, um, I know for me, one thing that I've found is, is giving myself the opportunity to, to have focus inwardly on, on what it is that I'm doing for myself. If I'm able to do that, I find that I am able to help others in a better way. Um, and I wonder, you know, I think of, and you, as someone who studied voice, uh, and choral conducting at ACA ACA in academia, uh, there's a lot of focus on some technical, you know, if you've taught voice versus coaching voice, this is sort of two different concepts. And one thing I think that makes voice and singing unique is that the instrument is internal and we can do all the things in the world to analyze a vocal spectrum of the sound wave of what happens when you raise your soft palate or lower your jaw, or, you know, have your tongue forward or up in the back and all of the different things and how to manipulate sound. And okay, now go do that. It's not like pressing a key on the piano or a key on a brass instrument or a finger on a fret board. It's a, you have to switch gears into what is actually, from my perspective, it is like a spiritual outlook. Do you have to give a metaphor? You know, like do like you're inhaling, you're, you're smelling the fragrance of a Rose for the first time. That's how you get you the insides of your body to do things that isn't pressing a button. You know, that's one of the things I love about singing, about singing with others, about helping others is sing, whether it's an, a voice lesson or a, you know, a coaching, which is my preference a little more as well, but, um, can you tell me about how some of that is, is really, um, helped or impacted you in a spiritual kind of way?

Speaker 4: 22:06

Well, uh, the minutia of being, uh, you know, my master's degree in pedagogy, uh, it was focused on the science of how things worked and which it took you into this critical thinking of how do, uh, how does my finger connect to the note? How does my voice connect to the vowel sound? Everything was science. It wasn't some sort of extemporaneous sort of like accident, but there were techniques and capabilities of doing that. And when you start developing that thought process, you immediately can turn yourself to your spiritual world, and you want to understand what this means and what it means to you and where you are in that and what works and what doesn't work. And the connections of that. I really think that music was a great tool because I had no mentor at no one to guide me, except I do. I'm still an avid, and I don't say this to be spiritual, but I, I believe in prayer and I didn't have parents to lean on. So, um, I would just praying of God. I don't know. I just don't know. And there was not one moment where God didn't sort of intervene in some way, you know, it may not have been the ultimate answer, but it was a gentle nudge in a direction I needed to be. That makes sense. And I will never forget it. And here's the epiphany that really just blew me. I, when I came to Nashville, I was playing a lot for people, their music director, and I was sort of playing the role of keeping everybody corralled and on the same page and started realizing that, uh, I would go in the studios and they would be singing these songs and they weren't really that good. And I'm like, I can write something better.

Speaker 1: 24:09

Yeah.

Speaker 4: 24:10

And so I started, I started writing songs and again, I took my pedagogy and I started analyzing what's a good song from another song. Like for instance, I get, I got a request last last year for billboard magazine to do an overcompensating of, of, you know, the pop country world and why it affects people, you know? And , uh, so you start doing that. Well , I started writing songs and these songs were being cut. The songs were being recorded. I mean, I had no intention of that. And I remember the, I guess the most moving time was I said in a congregation of a mega church, you're probably 3,500 to 4,000 people there. And they had multiple services with that number. So you can imagine how many people were in attendance in one service. And they just kept doing the same service. So they were using the same music, but they sang two of my songs. Congregationally back to back. I sat in the congregation and I never felt so alone in my life. I felt this sense of here. Everyone knows everything. I've shared this, but they really don't know who I am. I've shared my talent, but I haven't cheered me.

Speaker 1: 25:28

Yeah. Yeah. And I think that's where from my friendship with you, Steven , well, it started out as I was your vote vocal , uh , student for awhile . Uh, and it's, it's , uh, somewhat miraculous to me how our , our friendship has grown over the years. But one of the things that I would hold up that I've, I've watched you and seen you do over and over in your life is this fine integration about your, your musical prowess. The , uh, I'll be ironic and say, humble panache you have had about your own artistry, but there was always this kind of binary thing going on, right? This, this splitting that went on, that you had to do for a long time between what you did in the church, because you couldn't be fully who you were, and then finding that integration point. And I've heard you talk about this story where you left that mega church on that Sunday, or whenever it was, they were playing your songs. And you felt like you just said, you felt so alone. And something happened though, when you left that service on your way home, could you say what that was? It's

Speaker 4: 26:44

It's really? And this is, this is where mystical, Stephen jumps up. And I do apologize, but you know, it's been my salvation. Well, I, you know, I got him a car and again, I go to praying and I'm crying, just tears. I could barely see, and I was crying and I just ran out of the church in the middle of the service. And I got in my car and said, God, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I love you. But I feel so alone. I need, I need somewhere. I need a home. I need a community. I need to feel like I am Stephen . The person, not just Stephen , the musician or the director of the piano player, whatever. And I got in my car and was driving home. And literally I looked up and there was a sign in Bellmead , you know, where MailMate is, don't you? Anyway, there were signs about me , of this church and the church service started later than normal service services. It was like, I think 1130 or something. So I said, I mean, I'd never been to, it didn't know anything about the church, but I said, I'm going to try this. I'm going to just go to another church just to see what happened I walk into. And it's , uh , I walk into the church, it's a UCC church. Uh , I walk in and sit in the back and all of a sudden I realize I'm in the middle of a lot of lesbian, gay, transgender. I am sitting right there, but I had no idea that that's what that was. Again, I feel like that was God's way of kind of quietly pushing me to a place. And when I entered there, you know, they were singing. So I was singing, they turned around because it was a small place. And so you could hear me, they were like, you can sing. And I said, yeah. And so, anyway, it started out , uh, I met, I started meeting. I met friends that that day, I mean , I

met great friends that I still have to this day. And it was just a wild connection. All of a sudden I felt like I was a part of community and I had suffered from depression, deep depression, because I was for , for many years. And that, I mean, my depression just left . It was like an instantaneous it's gone. Yeah .

Speaker 1: 29:12

It's like everything you had pushed down or suppressed, there was a release somehow with that, as you say, mystical moment, that serendipity, that made you stop in at that church that day on your way, on your way back from loneliness to integration and community.

Speaker 4: 29:29

Well, what was weird about that is that church I ended up, they ended up begging me to start a little choir and I was a little bit hesitant because I was still traveling, but I'm like, this'll be fun and will be fun for everyone. And I tend to, like, when I , I tend to like very soulful gospel music, because I think it connects with people in a passionate way. It's cathartic and being LGB, you know, being LGBTQ, there's a lot of suppression and a lot of hiding that goes on and to be able to just let it all out, you know, in song and in music. And I started this choir and this fledgling choir grew to be a formidable , uh, gay and lesbian choir in the Southeast gospel choir. Well , I mean, we, I mean, we went everywhere, but it was, it was, again, it was that day of me being obedient to my own feelings of loneliness and just following a path, because I knew that something, I needed something more,

Speaker 1: 30:38

Your powers of intuition that, that led you to that. Right. I mean, you didn't have, like you said, you didn't have a mentor, you didn't have a guide per se, telling you whispering over your shoulder. Here's where you go and what you do or leading you down that road. It was a journey of discovery pretty much that you made by yourself.

Speaker 4: 30:57

Right. Right. And I think the, the reality of that was , uh, I met people of genuine who had been on the same journey I was on. And it was, it was a place of solace. It was safety. It was, I didn't feel like I was telling, you know , I didn't feel like I was like the guy with the horns sticking out of his head. I felt like I was a normal human being. Whereas I used to feel like, Oh, I'm a little bit different than these people. And it wasn't that I was better. I just had a different perspective. Right.

Speaker 1: 31:32

Well, you are, you've always been a sort of unicorn Steven . Right. Don't sell yourself short.

Speaker 4: 31:38

Yeah . You can be one thing and that's original.

Speaker 1: 31:41

That's all right. Which you are well, you recently, and we'll, we'll head toward the finish here, but , uh, there are two or three quick things I just want to say or ask. And the first thing I would , uh , observe is that you recently, and you rarely do this because I know you're very humble. You're a humble unicorn. Uh, and, and you don't want to talk about yourself. You don't wanna listen to yourself, but what I loved about what you've done recently , uh, I think it was on your, your personal Facebook page, but you, you extended a personal challenge to people to find their creative spirit. Um, could you talk a little bit about that? Number one, and then number two, for anybody listening to hyphenated live with this episode, if they are, you know,

struggling with who they are coming to grips with, what's my truest self. What advice might you give to someone feeling some of the fear or confusion that you yourself felt along your journey , uh, to kind of coming to a place of that openness and integration, that integration point that you've talked about today. So could you respond kind of briefly to those two things?

Speaker 4: 32:57

Well , regarding the creative nature and the creative souls that we have, we're all creative human beings. Um, no matter how boring you may think you are, there's something you're creative with that might be cooking. It might be sowing . It might be writing a letter, but you are creative. And, and I think sometimes we think that to be our best creative selves and to find ourselves, we have to be the best at it. And that's not true. You know, the thing that I , I tell people all the time and I challenged them and I will perpetually challenge them. So their di is don't procrastinate with your creativity because you don't think you can do it. You don't think you're capable of doing it, just do it. And B be honest with yourself and make moments for yourself. Take time, make an appointment with yourself, whether it's weekly, daily, or even monthly, you know, start small and you get bigger, you know, and pick up the paintbrush , uh, sit down with the instrument or play that instrument, sing that song, write that song, write that poem, write that book, do whatever you have to do, you know, create whatever you have to, because I think it's a necessary journey in our spirituality to , uh, to live authentically. And when a person is living within their true, authentic creative self, there is a fulfillment that money prestige and nothing can buy . And that's something I know to be true

Speaker 1: 34:37

For anybody listening today, who is struggling with who they are or trying to find their tribe , uh , that you, that you obviously found through a long journey. What advice would you have for them today? Uh, those folks out there listening who are struggling with their own sexuality or who they are and trying to find their place, what would you say to them today?

Speaker 4: 34:59

Being honest with what you need is not being selfish and it's not wrong. And, you know, for some people it's a series of, they just have to seek and seek and seek, but , uh, you know, there's scripture seek and you will find , um, and I, I, I tell them, tell people all of a sudden, just, just experience things, go to places where, you know, people are like you, and you can find some sort of community because we all desire community. And that's innate in all of us, regardless of us being introverts or extroverts, we all desire community. So just be honest with yourself and go, I need this for me. You're not being selfish, but you're being, you're taking a step towards your own fullness.

Speaker 1: 35:51

And you found that in the church, you, you started off , uh, at one point on the compass and have landed in another. And one of the really interesting things is again, where a promise fell . We're heading to a close, but , uh, one thing that , uh, I loved recently, you know, Raphael Warnock, who is only the, you know, recently elected to the Senate from the great state of Georgia , um, and only the 11th African-American Senator, I believe who's ever served in this country. Uh, he was quoted, he was asked how his background as a pastor , uh, informed his approach to uniting people in the divided time in which we live in our country. And he said, listen, if you've ever had to get folks who like anthems and folks who like contemporary gospel

music to work together, you can do anything. And Steven , I think you said something like I should run for Senate too. Right? Uh ,

Speaker 4: 36:54

I'm running for Senate

Speaker 1: 36:56

That's right. So, so, so, so as we kind of come to a finish talking about this sort of secular sacred, you know what David and I have talked about a lot here at hyphenated life as a false binary, a false dichotomy , uh, and thinking about how you have found that community within that structure, that container within the church, what is the power of churches today in their role, in, in, in engendering, unity and creativity and blasting these binaries blasting these dualities about sacred and secular, what would you say to the church today?

Speaker 4: 37:39

Well, I would say this , not to say this a lot of times when I get to be sort of like at a convention or speak in regard to these, these , um , issues in the church that are not modern issues, they've been through decades, you know, it's just becoming more apparent. Um, and we're able to communicate more quickly regarding them, but , uh, I think organically being aware of your congregants is a necessary thing. I see so many leaders that go in and they, they , they push their, love, their musical taste onto these other people. When in fact they're consuming something totally different, whether that's a secular tune, whether it's a, him from Amar , from Luther, whatever, but knowing your congregants and giving them a chance or giving them a place where the music and for me, you know , my creativity is music, giving them a place where that's something that inspires them, but you have to be very diverse at that. Very aware of the people you're around, not every, not every conquer gets going, like the same thing.

Speaker 2: 38:52

I, I hear through your story, a lot of , um, sort of noticing of , um, you know, roles and characters that defined who you were , um, whether it's teacher, whether it's composer, whether it's performer, whether it's caretaker. Um, and I hear the transition, you know, it wasn't overnight that move from Nashville back down towards your home. You know, maybe that was point a and point B, but it was a lifetime to get all the way through that. But it seems like there was almost an epiphany moment. And I wonder how those roles changed for you and how you identified with them from that move from Nashville, where as a composer, you looked up and heard 6,000 people happily singing your song and never felt more alone to , you know, roughly 24 hours later. Not that they were singing your song, but you never felt more engaged and together and moving from there. How, how did, how did those roles that you still embrace in and , and live in today? How did they change in, in, are , are they more part of you now?

Speaker 4: 40:10

Well , uh , you know, I , I think, you know, with, with living now that I'm over 21, now that I'm now with , with living, I think you start when you first encounter, like the role of a composer, the role of all of them are separate entities within themselves, but they're uniquely worked together. And , um, they all sort of form who you are. You know, I'm , I'm a part piano guy. I'm a part rider . I'm a part vocal coach and a part , you know, clinician, I I'm a little bit like a producer. I'm a little bit of everything. And I , um, I think all those roles have helped guide me into being sensitive and being intuitive to other people and their needs because I've had to put myself in their shoes, in their creative spaces.

Speaker 2: 41:09

Beautiful. And I feel like we found yet another Andrew, we found another simpatico compatriot here with us in our journey. So many of the things that you've said today, uh, resonate powerfully with me. And I know with Andrew, and if you go back and listen to all of our episodes, you'll hear a lot of the same things. Um, uh, Stephen, it's been an absolute honor and pleasure to have you with us today. I'm

Speaker 1: 41:34

So grateful and celebratory of your journey and, um, feel really lucky that you've shared part of your story here in this format today. But, uh, Steven, you're a friend and a mentor and a confidant and your uncle Steven to my own kids. Um, and they love you. And we love you. And I know that everyone listening today can connect with your story. And I'm so glad that you've come on hyphen and did live to share it. Deep gratitude, man.

Speaker 3: 42:02

Well, thanks, Andrew and David, thanks you so much for the opportunity. And if I could say something, I dare you to pursue your creative dreams. Dance, make music here they are, right. This sucks because it will change your life. Thank you, Steven [inaudible] life is a production of pine street church in Boulder, Colorado hosted by Andrew Doherty and David podcast is produced by Phil Norman and executive producer, Alexi Moda special thanks to our guests today and the Leal Hill trust of Boulder, Colorado.