

Living Blind S4E6 Musical Vision: A Brief History of Music and Blindness with Lucas Harris & Michelle McQuigge

Transcript: March 2024

Naomi

Hi, everyone. Welcome to Living Blind, a podcast by BALANCE for Blind Adults. I'm your host Naomi Hazlett, Occupational Therapist, and today I'm going to be speaking with guests Lucas Harris and Michelle McQuaig. They came on the show to discuss a recent concert by the Toronto Chamber Choir titled "Musical Vision, A Brief History of Music and Blindness." Lucas Harris is the Conductor of the Toronto Chamber Choir and Michelle McQuaig, was the narrator for the show. Lucas and Michelle took me through a musical journey that really paid homage to blind and low vision composers and performers. I was really taken aback just about the absolute depth of history that there is, even with a sneak connection or a surprise connection to Louis Braille. It was really wonderful to hear them speak about how all the pieces of the collaboration came together and the passion that they had in making this performance happen. So I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did, and learn a thing or two along the way about music and blindness. So first, I would like to know, where did this all start? How did the concept for this collaboration, this concert begin? And how did everybody get connected?

Michelle

This is all Lucas. So I'll let him tell the story.

Lucas

Well, I just you know, was having to think through, you know, once a year, I have to sit down and kind of plan a season for the Toronto Chamber Choir, which usually involves four concerts. And I just kind of had a lightbulb about exploring blind composers and blind musicians, and just did a quick bit of Googling, and was absolutely astounded to see, you know, I thought we, we might find, you know, a couple of examples here and there of, you know, notable blind composers. But everywhere I looked in the medieval period, and the Renaissance and the Baroque and classical period, romantic period, contemporary music, in folk music, in jazz, traditional music everywhere, I was finding references to brilliant blind musicians. And I just got incredibly excited about it. And I, the first thing I did was I phoned up my friend, Joan Robinson, who's a friend of mine who happens to be blind, and we have a pretty intimate connection because my family adopted her guide dog when she retired, and I don't want to go into too much personal detail. But her guide dog, Talula was really changed her life. And Joan is a huge music lover, and she has been to music festivals all around the world. And, you know, she's at like, probably every other concert I play here in Toronto. She just loves music. And when she got Talula, suddenly she was able to travel more. So she went with Talula to music festivals in Germany and England and Italy in Vienna, Talula wore a jeweled collar to like the Vienna State Opera. And she was even kind of like an ambassador for guide dogs. She went to one particular festival in Germany, and they weren't going to let her in. And Joan said no, no, thank you very much. I will be admitted with my guide dog. And she showed them and they went to their seat and Talula just in spite of her size, she kind of curled up into a teeny little ball underneath her chair and didn't make a sound for the entire concert. And so then the next year, they welcomed her like "Oh, Talula's here", and they even called her the "Mozart hoons", the Mozart

dog. So anyway, the first thing I did was was phone up my dear friend Joan and told her about this idea. And she thought it was a great idea. And she said you should phone up Deborah Gold from from BALANCE for Blind Adults, which I did and sort of floated the idea. And the partnership there just kind of evolved very easily. And then the way I found Michelle was there's actually a woman in the Toronto chamber choir Mary Cohen is the U of T History Professor. And I happened to mention, you know, this programming idea I was starting to develop and she said you know if you'd like I can put you in touch with this friend of mine who I used to sing with And in the Toronto Children's Chorus many, many years ago, Michelle McQuaig. And we, you know, I kind of looked at Michelle a little bit online, and Mary arranged for us to have the zoom and I just, you know, floated the idea. And and as we were talking, you know, I said at some point, you know, I'd like to find a narrator for this program. And I think it should be somebody from the blind community. And I said, you know, maybe it could be you. And Michelle said, she thought about it for a minute and said, Yeah, I think I'd really like to do that. I just had a sense right away that she was absolutely the right person. You know, being a journalist, Michelle is so brilliant and articulate. And she also understands music, you know, being not only a choral singer, but I think Michelle is also pianist. And anyway, she just fit, she just checked all the boxes, and I just love loved collaborating with her the whole time.

Naomi

kind of helps me understand that the concert kind of comes from this bigger web. I mean, I'm hearing that you had you came up with this idea, or was somehow inspired yourself Lucas, but then immediately went out there and talked to people who might be able to give you a little more feedback on developing the concept. And I think it's a good

reminder that a lot of our ideas, maybe they start from somewhere, but then they're much better they tend to grow, the more people are that are involved. And it was very interesting for me to track that development and how those connections came together along the way. So now that we know a little bit about how the background behind the concert, how it all started. We know that you did a little bit of preparation and research before putting on the concert, but maybe you can tell us a little bit more. You know, you were doing some research online and you the more you research, the more you found blind and low vision composers and artists. Can you tell us a little bit more about that process? The research the selection of artists? Yeah, go into a little more detail about that part of the process.

Lucas

I knew already a little bit about some of the blind composers. You know, as a former classical guitarist, I certainly knew about your Joaquin Rodrigo, who's you know, one of our big classical guitar heroes. And I did know about Bach and Handel. Both of them going blind at the end of their lives, and both of them having been operated on by the same charlatan eye surgeon. So there were some things that I knew already and beyond that, honestly, I really did most of my research, just kind of sitting at the computer and Googling around and I found a page that kind of listed a number of blind composers. And then I would, you know, research each name to see I was looking especially to see if any of those composers had had written choral music. And interestingly, I found some of them did. Certainly Bach and Handel wrote lots and lots of choral music. Some of the other composers I found were instrumentalists, and so I found a lot of references to like solo solo instrumental music and, and sometimes smaller genres like psalms. And I decided that I would have a harpist in this concert

because I was finding a lot of information about blind harpists. And so that was, we had one set by O'Carolyn, the famous Irish harper, and one set by John Perry, who was a Welsh triple-harper in the time of Handel, and, you know, used to perform the Handel harp, concerto and so forth. And, you know, the rest is really just kind of like a weird kind of algorithm. You know, like, I just, I wanted to tell a story kind of across several centuries. So I was kind of looking to do kind of one or two pieces from each era. So we started in the Renaissance with Antonio de Kabataan, who was a celebrated blind keyboard composer. I also found some information about composers for my instrument for the lute. And we did a song by this German composer from the Renaissance called Arnold Schlick. And then we moved into the Baroque and did the the set about Bach and Handel and this Welsh harper, John Perry. And I mentioned O'Caroline already. And then I wanted to sort of take it you know, into the modern era, so we I found a song by this Viennese lady called Maria Teresa van Paradis of van Paradis. A beautiful little song about how the piano is kind of her comfort and solace, it almost seems like autobiographical. And I also found some information about a Brazilian mixed-race composer called Joakim Manuel Dulcamara, whose music was transcribed by a Viennese composer who happened to be living in Rio de Janeiro for a few years, and wrote down some of his music and took it back to Europe and prepared for it to be published. And so that little those little transcriptions for voice and keyboard are the only scrap of musical legacy we have of this, this blind guitarist who apparently was an incredible performer but just performed on the streets of Rio. And then we got into the Romantic era with this British composer George Alexander McFerrin into the lovely Shakespeare setting of his. Then we got into the whole school of this is one of my favorite parts of the program...

Michelle

Me too, the French organists?

Lucas

The French organists. Yes, yeah. So we did a beautiful *Tantum Ergo* by Louis Vierne. And we I started to really dig on this one and I found out the reason why there are so many blind French organists starting in the kind of first part of the 19th century, going all the way well into the 20th century. I don't know if we even have time to talk about that. If we do, I'll let Michelle maybe tell some of that story. And then we did Rodrigo. Not a guitar piece, but a choral piece that he wrote when he was a young man. And then we finished with a new commission by this pianist Michael Arnowit who set a text by James Joyce. He really wanted to set some words by a blind poet. And so he chose some words from "*Finnegans Wake*" and created a new choral piece for us. And I don't even know if you'd ever written choral music before, but it was quite an interesting piece, and quite a good challenge for the choir to work on. So I managed to find, you know, sort of composers all along, all, you know, sort of, from the Renaissance all the way up into the modern day, basically. So I was trying to kind of show that, you know, blind musicians and blind composers have really been there throughout that whole period. And, and beyond as well.

Naomi

I mean, back to the research part. And I know, it may not always sound like the most exciting part. Maybe listeners want to hear more about what the concert was like. But we'll get there in due time. I do really think it's important to dig into this a little bit more. Because, you know, when we talk about research, a lot of the time we think we sit down

and open up Google. And away we go. And I know Lucas, you mentioned Wikipedia, which is another awesome resource. Was there anything that required a little more digging or maybe talking to Mary or your other contacts in terms of putting it all together?

Lucas

One thing I would just mention is that I found out by chance about a blind organist who lives in London, Ontario called John Vendertoen. And I phoned up John, I kind of got his phone number from of, you know, through some another organist friend. And I phoned him up and I wanted to just explore if like, maybe he could kind of make an appearance at this concert, maybe play one organ solo, and it didn't end up working out. But I was really interested to find out that he traveled to Paris, and basically made his organ solo recital debut in Paris as a teenager. And he studied with this person called Jean Longley, who was basically I think, one of the last Directors of the the school for blind children in in Paris that we spoke about in the concert. And so that was really exciting. I felt like you know, I was actually like in touch with a person in in southern Ontario, who was connected to this tradition of blind French organists, that went all the way back to the first part of the 19th century.

Naomi

I think this is a good place to maybe segue in terms of that combination of researching out there on the internet, but also talking to people and making those connections out in the field. I want to turn to Michelle now and I want to ask you more about your role. I know that you were narrating the concert at the time, but can we take us sat back and and tell us when did you get started in terms of preparing the concert

whether it was selection of pieces, the scripts? How did it start with you?

Michelle

Sure. Well, Lucas approached me about the opportunity to be the narrator, actually a little more than a year ahead of time, because the concert schedules are, are well planned in advance. And I actually did not have a whole lot to do. I didn't really reenter the picture until closer, I'd say a month or six weeks before the concert itself. I really cannot stress enough how much this was Lucas's brainchild, and how much that he did 100% of the research. And I would say a good 97 or 8% of the writing. So the way it worked, when I did kind of reenter the mix on this concert, was Lucas had had roughed out a script that he'd made certainly all the all of the artistic selections had been done, and then the performers lined up and whatnot. But he came to me with this draft script and said, Can you take a look at this and let me know what you think. And it was fantastic. Where I came in was in the editing and finessing process, because sometimes, words that are written out on paper don't necessarily make for smooth reading aloud. And that was my big focus was to make sure that I could narrate things in a fairly smooth and fluid way. And where I didn't have to sound too stiff. And I wanted to be able to maintain a quasi conversational tone, and all in all of this. So I went through and just sort of tighten things up a little bit to end if there was if I had questions or something was unclear, I would I would leave notes for Lucas on that front. So I would say we did three or four exchanges like that with the script with us passing it back and forth and in a cloud document. And then we got to the point where we were quite happy with it all. And I was tasked with writing a conclusion. So I wrote that and once Lucas had signed off on everything, we got together one last time in person rather than exchanging a document

and kind of read through it all together. And even in that process, we were deeply familiar with the material by them. But even on in with that last read through, we kept identifying things we could finesse or things we could trim altogether. There's, there's never an end to things, the edits you can make when you get going on something. But we did ultimately reach a point where we were happy with it. And that was the final script that I used in the concert itself. And the role that I played there was to tell the stories, and bring Lucas's research to life as best I could. By explaining the histories of these blind composers, the contributions they made, some of the anecdotes that Lucas had uncovered, and kind of setting up the performances that would then follow to to make the audience hear what their work sounded like.

Naomi

It certainly sounds like a very iterative, iterative process with lots of drafts and revisions. I'm wondering, Michelle, while you were reviewing the material and going over Lucas's research, were you learning a thing or two along the way about...

Michelle

I was learning...

Naomi

composers? I

Michelle

I was learning so many things. And I and Lucas can vouch for this to the first email I sent him in response to the script was basically all exclamation marks because it was really fun. I loved re-learning about all these things. I had, I have a reasonable background with classical

music through a long standing time of playing and singing. So I'd heard of some of these composers, but certainly not all. So some are in some cases, the composers themselves were entirely new to me. In other cases, there were just connections established that I was not aware of. Lucas had mentioned earlier about the French organist school in France in the 19th century. And we can come back to that but it was that kind of anecdote. That was really fascinating are hearing more about Turla O'Carolyn, he was the Irish harpest, almost in I don't know if it was quite medieval times, medieval Renaissance somewhere, quite a while back. And he was an itinerant harper who would travel all over Ireland and and was you know, highly sought after by by wealthy Irish residents, and nobles. All these kinds of stories were crazy, but reading about the absolute atrocities that this one eye surgeon performed on both George Frederic Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach, two absolute luminaries of the classical canon. Lucas found all the great details. So there was a ton to take in and a ton to learn and I found it really fascinating. So it was it was really fun to engage with all that content.

Lucas

I just wanted to mention, too, that it was really helpful that Michelle was, you know, kind of helping me see the material from the point of view of you know, somebody from the blindness community or from from the, you know, kind of disability community. One time that came up was when we were telling this story of Maria Teresia Von Paradis, who was this blind pianist composer from the time of Mozart and Haydn. And there was she, as a young woman was brought to a doctor of Viennese doctor called Franz Mesmer. And, and yes, the word mesmerizing in English actually comes from his name. And in her parents basically brought her to this doctor desperate to find a cure for

her blindness. And we had a really nice conversation about, you know, this attitude that so many people have that, you know, that people with blindness or another kind of disability, that some people believe that they're, they have this kind of flaw that needs to be fixed. And the kind of language that Michelle introduced into the script, to, you know, you know, kind of acknowledge that that was a very common perspective. And that perspective that we really don't need to take was very similar to the language I knew from the autism community, my I have a 12 year old daughter who's autistic, and there are many people in the autism community, including even in kind of autism organizations, who have been criticized for using that kind of language, you know, that, like adult autistic, autistic people have come forward and said, You know, when you when you speak about autism, as as something that needs to be fixed, you're raising money to find a cure for it, it makes us feel like we're broken people, and that we're not really like a full member of society. And so Michelle just added a little line, you know, in the script to say that, you know, Maria, Von Paradis' parents, were desperate to find a cure and brought her to this doctor, Dr. Mesmer. And you know, this is I'm just going to read here, "a prevalent attitude of the time. And one that persists today, despite mounting pushback from the disability community." And I thought that was great. I mean, there, I think there were a couple other places in the script, where Michelle's perspective just helped to kind of bring things into kind of a more progressive lens, I guess.

Michelle

And lot of that was informed by my not only my own lived experience, of course, but from my work. When... now I'm currently an editor at my news outlet. But prior to that I was a reporter, and I would do a lot of disability reporting whenever I could. And it was coming across a lot of

those attitudes within the disability community and in iterations, well beyond blindness. But just seeing those attitudes, I just felt it was important to introduce a bit of that nuance. And it was really great that Lewis, Lucas was incredibly receptive. And we could always have really, really great conversations around these things whenever they came up.

Naomi

So Lucas was, I guess, in a sense, bringing more of that past that history. And then not to say, of course, there were, there was the brand new composition as well, but Michelle, you were bringing your experience being a member of the community and digging in from your role as an editor, a writer, to really bring everything together, the history and the contemporary, the current views of disability and the arts.

Michelle

That's right. But really, my main role was to help bring the content to life just by we settled on the words together, but my job was to tell the stories about these composers and what they did, and, and have the sort of the music sort of wind up being helping to be the second parts of these stories. They're always sort of two parts, my verbal description of what was happening, then the performance, and every segment was treated like that. And it made it quite immersive, I think.

Naomi

Well, that brings me to my next question, which is, what was the reception or feedback from people that came to the concert? And I'm sure you had reviews or feedback from people both sided and blind. So can you tell me a little bit more about what that was like?

Michelle

Where I was, it seemed to be really well received. I had a couple of friends who came which was really nice, and that they they they loved it. We've had interest expressed and repurposing the program in a couple of different places. So Lucas would be privy to a lot more feedback than from me, but everything I heard was very positive.

Lucas

Yeah, I think I mostly heard good things. And a few people from the blind community who came to the concert basically reacted almost the way Michelle reacted to my to the script draft you know, just to say, "wow, I didn't know any of this," you know, "I knew very little of this. I really learned a lot." Yeah, it was, it was really a very satisfying project for me to work on. And I really hope we can redo this concert actually, at some point in the future.

Michelle

Me too. It was a ton of fun.

Naomi

Do you think he would do the concert as is? Or is there anything that's kind of come up since the performance that you'd want to add or change?

Michelle

I'll leave that to the artistic director.

Lucas

I found so much material. I mean, I feel like I could, you know, produce that, like, I could probably create a kind of "Volume Two"... "Musical Vision, Volume Two," with a completely different program. But in a way, I feel like that this, you know, the selection of pieces and the, you know, the way this script came out, I think it's I feel very satisfied with how it came out and I'd love to just do it again, basically, with no changes.

Naomi

Absolutely. Why not?

Lucas

Except for one, which is I think it needs an intermission. The one thing I was...

Michelle

Longer than we thought it was going to be.

Lucas

The one thing I was very embarrassed about was the running, I underestimated the running time of the concert by something like 20 minutes, even though I timed, I timed all the music and timed the speeches and even like added a little bit of time for transitions. And somehow, I basically realized at the end, like I had kept the audience there for almost two hours without a break, you know, and I thought, oh, my gosh, people are probably just going to make a mad dash for the bathroom as soon as the concert was over. So I think you know that this, this concert was in this format that my choir does, which we call the "Cafe Music." And about 20 or 30 years ago, one of the directors of the choir came up with this format, so that the choir could

double the amount of performances that it does from two to four in a given season. And these "Cafe Music's" were kind of meant to be these half programs, you know, where the choir would just prepare half the program of music. And the music director would talk half the time. And then it would be like an hour long, and people then would have baked cookies and things that the choir had made for the audience. And in my never ending quest to make more work for myself, I have turned the cafe music into, you know, kind of a scripted performance that, you know, kind of attempts to sweep people back in history and explore a certain topic. And I find I can't do that in under about at least 80 or 90 minutes. And this was the longest one I've ever done. I mean, I think including the opening speech, it came out to almost two hours. So I just I think if we do this again, I think we just have to add an intermission. There's too much material. I don't think I could cut anything fully.

Naomi

If you do it again. I don't know if you would ever consider recording it. I wish I could come to see it. But all the way out in Montreal, so But either way, I'm sure a repeat would be well received by concert goers. This might be a good time to talk about the story of the French organist because both of you remarked on how it was. It was a good one. It was an interesting one. So I'm gonna I'm gonna let you tell me all about.

Michelle

Sure...

Naomi

this legendary French organist that you both sort of alluded to earlier on.

Michelle

Lucas, please jump in if I'm omitting any anything here. I'll just I won't I don't have the script in front of me, so I won't read it verbatim. But if you need me to do that later, Naomi, I can I can always send you a recorded version of me doing that. At some point in France at an organ School got established that was essentially working to train blind students and send them out as organist. And at the time of this was all based in Paris. And at the time, Paris' cathedrals were... because of revolutionary activity that have been going on for quite some time. We're talking about the early 19th century here. This was all established... because of all the political turmoil in France at the time, there was a real dearth of organists in Paris cathedrals. So as the students got trained up, they were being sent out to work right away, in cathedrals, so we had, there were I think, at the peak, Lucas are the numbers, right? So like 14 so blind organists performing in cathedrals around the city, is that right? So there was already quite a strong basis, but a real big part of why this took root is because of a student who attended the school by the name of Louis Braille. This is where...

Lucas

Yeah, there was by 1833. There are 14 students from the the Institute "National de la vue en bleu... National Institute for the Young Blind." There were 14 of students there that were working in Parisian cathedrals, trying to fill these these vacant positions after the French Revolution.

Michelle

Right? So this is this is where everything kind of came together, I went, "Oh, what?"... when I heard, read that particular detail. So he was

himself a musician and an organist, and he was training at the school. And this is part of why he was devising the Braille code was to have some kind of notation system, because scores were incredibly cumbersome and difficult to produce at that point. And that was a major impetus for developing the system that we now use today known as Braille. So it's a really direct and tangible connection, that not only makes a lot of sense of that specific phenomenon in the 19th century, but has lasting impact now. So I found that really fascinating.

Naomi

Oh, there we go! I feel like you're not going to be alone. I mean, that was that was a new fact, for me. And I feel like a lot of the people listening to this show are also sitting here and thinking, "oh, that that's a part of the story of Louis Braille that I've never heard before."

Michelle

Yeah, I don't know how that got looked at left out of his myth. I didn't know... the fact that he was an organist in a very accomplished musician in his own right. I actually, I seem to recall reading a biography of Louis Braille. So it's possible that we've got mentioned, but it's certainly never lodged in my memory. And I don't think it's part of the collective perception of this man. And, and it should be because it's a really integral part of his story.

Lucas

And if I, if I could just mention that there's a really interesting, connected story, which is that the tradition of blind piano tuners and technicians actually started at the same time. There was this guy called Claude Montel. And he was also a student at the Institute for and he was, I mean, I think it may have just been like that the piano, I

at the institute was out of tune, and he wanted to tune it. And I think his professors said, "oh, I'm not sure that's a good idea." And he basically kind of proved to them like that he had the mechanical skills necessary to get this piano and in tune. And then they asked him to teach this to the other students there. And it developed into kind of a piano tuning school. And by 1860, he had basically established an intensive three year program of study, which had 250 students, learning to be piano technicians. And he also opened his own piano factory, and the methods that he used for working on pianos and the kind of tradition of blind piano technicians spread throughout France and Britain, and they found their way into the United States and Canada and actually continues to this day. Very often, I've mentioned this to people, and they say, "oh, yeah, I know, the blind piano tuner, he still works at the conservatory." Or, you know... so again, it's like that, that organist from London, you know, that like, there are these little ramifications that could persist to the to, you know, to our time that, you know, started in this period in France in the first part of the 19th century, which is fascinating to me,

Michelle

Lucas is brain and therefore, the script is just chock a block with nuggets like this. Like, I read every turn, there was a new little anecdote just like that. And the piano tuner legacies, a really interesting one, too, because again, that is it's an absolutely fascinating thing. And it did open up a viable career path at a time when there were not many. But over time to it also became more associated as a bit of a negative stereotype within the blindness community, because that became some people's defacto response to any kind of job prospect. So it's, it's always, there's always so much nuance to all these things.

Naomi

I know. And I wish we had now I wish we had the time to go into all of the pieces around blindness and employment and much like the concert itself, our conversation has just been a network leading out into even more topics, but all that is to say is, if this hasn't gotten people interested in going to a repeat of the concert, I don't know what will because all I can think about is I just need I need more music facts. So thank you both so much for sharing them.

Michelle

Well, and I have to say it's more than just the facts. So the performances are beautiful. The Toronto Chamber Choir is a beautiful organization. They they sound great. The guest performance, Brooker. We're all terrific organist, and that the harpist that was brought into play historical harp. So it was really it was very much a combination of the two and the music is as important as the words and the it was Lucas did a great job with both.

Naomi

Well, like I said, thank you both so much for coming on the show today. I feel like we've only scratched the surface of an incredibly deep topic, but hopefully this has given listeners an idea of what the concert was all about. Starting with Lucas, can you tell us where people can find you if they want to get in touch and learn more,

Lucas

I have a website which is LucasHarris.ca and it needs to be updated, but you can find how to contact me there. And you can also always go to the choirs website, which is TorontoChamber Choir.ca.

Naomi

Great. Thank you. And Michelle?

Michelle

If anyone wants to reach out to me, they're welcome to do so on... your best bets are probably LinkedIn or Twitter. I'm on Twitter as Mich_McQ. So Mich_McQ. And I can my DMs are open so anyone can reach out to me there another easy way to get a hold of me by email at work, which should be an mmq@cp.org.

Naomi

Wonderful. Okay, once again, thanks so much, Lucas and Michelle for coming on the show. I learned so much in a short period of time and I look forward to hearing about what projects are coming down the pipes next for the Toronto Chamber Choir.

Michelle

Thanks for having us Naomi.

Balance For Blind Adults

And now here's a word from our sponsor... Hi Deanna here Development Officer at BALANCE for Blind Adults. We recently had a volunteer and donor celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. And in lieu of gifts, asked their friends and family to consider donation to BALANCE, their charity of choice. Whether it's a birthday, anniversary or graduation BALANCE loves to celebrate important milestones with our community. Visit www.BalanceFBA.org to learn more and to make a donation. Thank you for your support and happy anniversary to the Brianne's.

Lucas

Thank you

Deborah

Well that was a fantastic conversation, wasn't it? Hello, everyone. I'm Debra Gould, CEO of BALANCE for Blind Adults and Executive Producer here at the "Living Blind" podcast. I wanted to tag on here because I found this particular discussion so interesting. I was present at the Toronto Chamber Choir "Musical Vision" concert in May of last year 2023. And I can verify that there really is nothing quite like having a concert like this narrated. The stories and Michelle's perspective on them, were the reason that I decided to ask Michelle and Lucas to join us for an episode of the podcast, so that we could talk more about how they conducted the research how they decided to construct the script, because there's really nothing quite like the richness provided by that kind of storytelling to go with music, and particularly music that many of the audience may never have encountered before. Those stories helped to transport the listeners to the time and place that the music was composed, and to envision so much better the composer in their perspective on their life, their music, and and their experiences as people who are blind or living with visual disabilities. The performances themselves were also incredible, and we wish we could share those with you as well. In addition, I think it was really important for sighted audience members to see the concert Narrator reading braille to provide the narration. BALANCE for blind adults was proud to partner with the Toronto Chamber Choir on this event. And we look forward to other such partnerships within the Toronto performing arts community in the future. Interested in accessible arts program, programming, or making your current program or curriculum more accessible to those

with visual disabilities? We're the experts. Call us at 416-236-1796 or email info@BalanceFBA.org and we would be more than happy to assist to discuss a partnership or consultation to help you make your program or performance better because it's more accessible. Thanks for listening. We'll see you here next time on the "Living Blind" podcast.