

INTRO

(The following is read by Laura Colby over jazz music composed by Manual Cinema)

Hi, I'm Laura Colby and this is *The Middle Woman*, a roadmap to managing the performing arts. I'll be sharing personal anecdotes from my 30 years in the field, exploring the nitty gritty and the technicalities of this job. I'll tell you the story of how I got here and what it's taken for me to work in the industry of the performing arts.

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EPISODE 24

LAURA COLBY: Hello, this is Laura Colby, founder and president of Elsie Management, and today we're going to be speaking about answering needs in the field and also serving the field. And in my 30 years of doing this work, both of those things have been incredibly integral to my professional development. Being part of groups of people that have affected change in the field so that how I'm able to work right now is very different than when I entered the field 30 years ago. And that has everything to do with other people in the field who are busy answering needs, as well as other people in the field who are giving service to the field.

Let me just define quickly what service in the field means to me. That has meant serving on committees. Which then turned into serving on boards. And board service, as we've discussed, there are lots of different service organizations in our field. Genre-specific service organizations, like DanceUSA. National service organizations, like APAP, the Association of Performing Arts Professionals.

So board service has been hugely important to my profile as an artsworker, to Elsie Management's profile in the field, and also to my professional development and depth of knowledge that I've been able to gather, garner in the process of this service.

I am thrilled to have colleague, Beatrice Thomas with us today, for this discussion. And I will let Beatrice introduce herself.

BEATRICE THOMAS: Hello, thank you so much for having me. I'm so happy to be here. You know I love you. My name is Beatrice Thomas. I use they and she pronouns. I am a multidisciplinary artist, a creative producer. I am a consultant for arts organizations and a coach, but I think primarily when I think about myself, I think about being a storyteller. I use that in absolutely all of my many roles.

In the last 10 years, I have really been understanding the national arts field. It's an interesting thing to move from a very local place to understanding things much more on a national scale. All of this is to say, I am the founder of Authentic Arts and Media. I have a bunch of degrees. I have an undergraduate degree from Hampshire College in theater and film where they converge and diverge. I have an interdisciplinary design degree from the University of Austin at Texas where I looked at design and cognition.

I've always been in the arts as a performer. My father runs a small theater in Olney, Maryland, The Amazing Theater. And my mother's a psychiatrist. I have had art around me my entire life.

Early on when my parents divorced, art classes, art courses, art practice, that was my babysitter, you know? So, I want to apply all of that to creating equity in the arts. And specifically looking at queer, trans, and BIPOC communities, but ultimately to really see equitable representation of the great diversity, of our country, of the world, equity across all media platforms. I mean, what an exciting mission for me.

LAURA: And where are you located, Bea?

BEATRICE: I am located in the Bay Area. I work between, Vallejo and San Francisco and Sonoma, and then New York.

LAURA: And in terms of the work you're doing now, I know before I met you, because I've only known you for maybe ten years, you were in the grants field. You were in the business of distributing grant monies in the Bay Area to San Francisco specifically artists or Bay Area artists?

BEATRICE: To San Francisco specifically. I would even say that prior to being in San Francisco, I was at the city of Austin, Texas. I was the public/private partnership liaison between a festival, First Night Austin Festival, which was an arts festival that happened on the fabric of the city, so it was very interdisciplinary. People were able to write different proposals, big things could happen, and I was brought on to manage the relationship between the city and the nonprofit that was the lead in that partnership.

So there was my first place in managing grants. And I went to school at Texas at Austin. I early on became a contractor for the public art department. I then, moved out of that role and became working at a gallery and became a representative on the Public Art Committee, and at some point I think I became the chair. Just out of

graduate school is when I started understanding the power of boards, panels. Connecting the value of being in these spaces at these tables, having these conversations. With the commitment to service, right? A desire to see things change for the better. So that I think in Austin is where I really started this sort of like civic engagement and board investments.

LAURA: And so then, changing homes from Austin to San Francisco, was that because you took a job in San Francisco?

BEATRICE: Absolutely. Austin was great, it was really great, but at some point you just kind of hit a ceiling, a threshold of what can happen in that context. And I had my sights set on the Bay Area and I had community out here, there were opportunities out there. As my friend says, the water was warm. And so I applied for the job with the San Francisco Arts Commission in their cultural equity grants program. And to my surprise, I got an interview, and I flew out, and I had the interview, and I got the job. It was just kind of the best. And also understanding how the process of this funding worked.

LAURA: And then what was the need that you saw in the field that led you to put Authentic Arts and Media together?

BEATRICE: Well, even just that time in the San Francisco Arts Commission, you kind of looked at who was being funded because we had all this data and one of my first jobs was to go through all of this data. I didn't really understand that it was going to be very important at the time. I just thought it was tedious. But, we were looking and it was sort of like, okay, well, here are the demographics of San Francisco. Like, of who's making art and here's who we're funding. There are some clear gaps, like there weren't a lot of trans artists being funded, new media being funded, there were, you know, there were just gaps.

Part of the cultural equity training that I got under San San Wong was really about, how do you close those types of gaps? You close it by making sure that the panels. And the folks who are, have the cultural competency to review and understand the work. So if you don't have folks who understand drag performance, it may not get funded or if you don't understand, the work of trans artists or, you know, different, artists need different sort of sets of understanding and expertise. And if it's not on the panel, then it's going to be hard to actually start to service it. And so that was what I could do inside of an administrative environment is I could, get role-specific on making sure we have representation across a variety of intersections and that, I think it worked. I really, we saw an increase in queer arts being funded. There are more queer and trans applicants, like every year. We also did a similar kind of deep dive with the native community.

My point is, is that it was slow. It still was slow. Laura, like, gosh, I mean, glacial. I saw a lot of need. I was very directly related to a lot of the grantees. I was reading every single grant. So I was like, invested a lot of, I'm a fan. Not only know if a lot of people know that how much of a fan I am, but I just thought I can do something. I can do something. And I can also, you know, be an artist. And so what led me to put Authentic Arts and Media together was, in fact, I got a scholarship for the APAP, fellows program, the leadership fellows, program. And it put me in a cohort of colleagues. It helped me understand the value. And, the method for being able to support the work that I wanted to create and also the work that I wanted to help lift into the world. That, that is like how I think really doubled down into understanding what my purpose was.

LAURA: And, what year did you create Authentic Arts and Media?

BEATRICE: I want to say 2018. I left my job in 2016.

LAURA: The San Francisco Arts Commission.

BEATRICE: The San Francisco Arts Commission. And then was sort of in a place where I was consulting and practicing, my mission was not set at that time. I was just teaching people about grants and, you know, responding to what was out there. It was, I believe, in 2018 when I realized that my gift is supporting organizations in their organizational culture and developing practices around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

LAURA: And so since 2018, what do you consider is a shining example of providing a need out there in the field that Authentic Arts and Media has allowed you to do?

BEATRICE: As a consultant, I have been able to work with folks in a different way, right? I can help bring ideas and help them kind of, generate outside of their typical framework. So I got to do something called Let's Talk. We did it with the Raynon Foundation. We allowed it to be something that would be responsive. We wanted to hear from artists. It was sort of like, well, artists know what their key challenges and concerns are. Let's have artists inform us about who they are, what they're dealing with, then give a provocation. What is a provocation to funders through the field? Then we would just have kind of an open dialogue after that.

I think participating as a consultant with different organizations to open up dialogues that should have happened, but like to just be able to just make them happen and to have the reward or the benefit or the data from those things. That's

been something that I feel really proud of to be able to be a conduit for unleashing the artist's voice or empowering the artist's voice. That's that's one thing.

I got to help Bridge Live Arts, formerly Hope More Dance. They moved from a more of a traditional hierarchy, to a more distributed leadership. And they worked with a lot of different people to get the different aspects in alignment, but I was able to come in and help them execute on their organizational culture and division of tasks and labor and how to like execute on those things equitably. And that was delightful, right?

I love being able to get into the minutiae of things with organizations because when I get to lift people into that conversation, the solution starts to come, right? Because you're now talking about it, so that's been exciting to be on the part where people are like, how do we do it? And I have often been offering, a speculation because it's a place we haven't tried yet and that to be able to be with Bridge Live Arts through its transition, so exciting just to see it work and to see the how it works and how they had to distribute labor and how they accounted for, not leadership as one person, but leadership responsibilities.

LAURA: I want to just take this moment to point to How Elsie came into the field because at the time back in the early 90s I was doing straight-up company management for a handful of choreographers all in New York and every January would roll around and this thing APAP would happen and this these showcases would happen and all of my New York choreographers would bitch and moan because they weren't in the book back then in the 90s Everything was in a book and that book got printed And you only got the book if you registered for the conference and you only got to register for the conference if you were a member.

And these companies couldn't afford to be a member of APAP and they also weren't with an established agency. So while here I am just doing basic company management for them. And after three or four years, I, you know, I got, I got it. I understood this thing, this thing in my own backyard existed every January. And my companies were not in the game because I wasn't in the game in that way.

And I thought, okay, okay, okay, okay. I'll buy a booth at APAP, had to give myself a name. I'll produce some showcases. So I had to find space. I'll do this as a project in December of 95. And I wrote letters, actual snail mailed letters, and mailed them to my favorite peeps and the handful of choreographers I was working with and said, Okay, okay, okay, I'm going to do this thing. Who wants in? And so that was me trying to answer a need in the field. These choreographers who wanted to be, quote, on the floor of APAP, represented, they wanted their showcases in the book.

And that was the need I answered by forming Elsie management, buying a booth, going to the conference for four days, doing the thing.

People actually showed up at the showcases. Like, look at that. People actually stopped and talked to me in my booth. And this was nothing but contemporary dance with a bunch of choreographers nobody knew, except they knew them because they were incredible performers dancing with the established companies, but they had stepped out and were making their own work.

Initially, that was what happened, and here it is 30 years later, and I have a very established agency that represents not just dance, but theater, circus, and outdoor spectacle, and is a global roster from artists from around the world. So if you had told me that was going to be the result, I would have said, what on earth are you talking about? I have no idea what you're talking about. But at the time in 1995, there was a need and my little project answered that need. And I remember Sean Curran afterwards saying to me, that was great. I could really use some help. Could you be my company manager? So all of it just organically rolled into this thing that I have today.

So for me the need was also representation of contemporary, very specifically contemporary dance, not terribly popular people, certainly not established companies, you know, and that's still very much my passion. Is the contemporary voice and there's something different, the something else, but not the obvious. I still feel that I'm serving a need of that representation for the contemporary voice.

I just want to point to a couple of other things in the spirit of serving a need. We have an internship program. Thanks to Meghan Dunne who worked for me back in the day. She dragged me kicking and screaming and created an internship program. There's a tab on my website. You can see what it says. We are doing our best to grow more artswomen. We very proudly have former interns working for major companies, serving as chairs at dance departments, serving as producing managers for some of our tours, working in development departments of some major not for profits.

One other project I want to point to that has a impact on my ability to do my job. Every January there are Major, major dance showcases all over New York City and space is at a premium and it's really hard to get. And we were all pulling our hair out regarding the lease situation at New York City Center. And there was a need to have something more cooperative and more organized and much more user friendly. 10 of us got together and formed the Dance Managers Collective 10 years ago and we went to City Center and we made a proposal to them and they indeed

guaranteed us the lease in their two major studios every January and every January we cooperatively schedule our showcases.

So, this gives us peace of mind, because we know for shitsure we're going to have good space, a block and a half from The Hilton, which is where the conference is held. City Center likes working with us, because they're only talking to one person. They're not talking to 20 agents who represent 200 dance companies. They're not taking phone calls from dance companies. They're talking to one person. They have one contract. They have one insurance policy. And we self-manage, and we do it all. Without that, we would be back where we were 10 years ago, pulling our hair out, gnashing our teeth, frustrated, not having a guarantee of space, not having any agency around the money.

So, we took that upon ourselves and we did that. And we're very proud of that, but those are just a couple of examples.

I do also want to talk about board service, and you and I crossed, I think, two years on the board of APAP, and those were two very, not easy years, straight out of COVID. As I mentioned in my introduction, I have served on the boards of NAPAMA, which is the North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents. I have served on the board of Dance USA. And I served nine years on the board of APAP, and that was my last service. And I did it in that order.

And all of those years, I'm in a room with other people, in other parts of the field, with other roles. Be those big university presenters, be those self-represented artists, be that colleagues who do what I do, but run massive agencies, you know, with 200 artists and offices in London and Tokyo, and New York. And they are talent agents as well as booking agents, you know, very different constructs, commercial producers, and also rural small community college presenters, so to be in that boardroom, sharing in the communal, national voice of the field, I got delivered loud and clear, that message of representation, Bea.

For me, it was as a small business that really had its backbone in evolving dance, you know, not a commercial product hadn't worked for nobody but myself. But to listen and participate and learn and discover, just huge. Life changing, really life changing for me and the professional development I learned, I mean, just from something as simple as being able to read the budget, for example, like that budget doesn't look at all like Elsie's budget. And to sit there and really understand the budget of a national service organization, I mean, that, that's a college course right there.

BEATRICE: Yeah, I have a lot of lost time to make up for because I didn't know about this field. You know, I just didn't, I didn't even know that this was a place where you could start to set your sights. So part of answering the call was that, like, I won't go anywhere without my community. So part of Authentic Arts and Media had to be about bringing artists this connection to national touring.

One of the things that was really exciting to me about APAP is how large it was. So there was a place where you're focused on representation. This is a place where a small effort can have a big impact, you know? And in that APAP fellowship, I came to know the people who were running the program. And I just knew their hearts, their intentions, and their values. And I remember, kind of, seeing that certain people were on the conference committee. And I'm like, why am I not on the conference? I want to be on the conference committee. And I asked, like, how did you get on the conference committee? They said, Oh, do you want me to tell them you want to be on the conference committee? And I was like, yes, you know, and the next, you know, I got an email that was like, would you like to be on the conference committee? And so every time I had a little bit of a critique or something, the response was like, yes, it was a very welcoming, like, super, get on this bus, let's fix this place up.

LAURA: I have to point out that you went from conference committee to conference co-chair, honey. And as conference's co-chair, now you're up on the podium addressing the 3,000 to 4,000 attendees at this annual national conference. So, it's not that that's a walking ad, but it's unavoidable profile raising for you.

BEATRICE: The room is full of people from all across the country and the world. So the impact of being able to be known as a contributing participant to, you know, that experience, it does put you in contact with a much broader swath of your arts universe, right?

The Hilton didn't have gender neutral restrooms, you know, when I went the 1st time to APAP and now, every year, they have gender neutral restrooms. There's something wonderful about the fact that you can move, if you so choose, you can move from constituent to on the committee to co-chair, you know, to the board.

LAURA: And you can affect change in the same way with the bathrooms. We had the same situation with breastfeeding parents who brought infants to the conference and there being no place for them if they weren't staying at the Hilton, which my vice president wasn't staying at the Hilton, and she, she got grief for nursing her baby in the Hilton. That was it for me. That hit all my nerves and I happened to be on the board at that time, but even if I hadn't been on the board, the leadership was open to hearing, Oh, hello. We need a room for parents who

need to be with their babies. That, yes, they are going to bring to the conference. So make this possible for them so they don't get harassed by the Hilton staff.

BEATRICE: Right.

LAURA: And then we had to, you know, we had to work with the Hilton staff too to say that's not acceptable. These are our expectations.

BEATRICE: And that is another piece that I think I learned about in terms of large scale events. Is that the role that you may be trying to create one experience, but The Hilton or the location, the place can have these impacts that are very dramatic and they will leave people with a feeling that it is the association, and not, the place.

So, I think that the board piece is like, it is labor. Like it is labor, okay, and like, let me just spill some things. We don't get free rooms. I think we should get free rooms. We don't get free rooms. I want there to be perks. I mean, I'm a perk person. I'm like, make it easy for me to labor. But it's not that, right? It is, so dispelling that myth, like you pay in your labor and your service and in your monies to be, to give to do this service. So it is, it is work.

As a person of color, I'm like, damn, I don't know that I have, like, is it worth it? I'm going to do it because service is a part of my core foundational values. And that I do believe that like when you see something that can be better, that you feel invested in, then you should give of yourself both materially, time and, you know, heart.

It's really the people I mean, it's a great group of people. So, it's a mixed bag when you are having a tough month or a tough year, right? You're like, what am I doing? But the colleagues that I have met, and that I get to see once or twice a year in these contexts. One. Like, it keeps me abreast of what is happening in the field in a real way.

I'm a relational person. I don't really learn from studying the book or reading that book. It is through dialogues with colleagues and idea generation moments. So, in that regard, the number of voices that I have, they're a piece of their brilliance has seeped inside of me, that is invaluable.

You just don't get to meet all of these different people. You don't get to ideate on how to execute on large sums of money that you need to fundraise for or execute on, frankly, just the membership organization, understanding the body of the membership that like the, yes, we are all of this organization and yet sometimes

the board is in a place where the membership is not, and we have to come back to our core purpose, which is to support and sustain our members. Right. I like it because this is earnest work and the people who are on the board are earnest and I feel like that's the sign of a good board. You know, that feeling.

LAURA: I miss being in that room very much. I really do. And yeah, that kind of communal service, even when none of us agree on nothing is because we all agree that we want to get the show on. We all agree in the health of the industry, and it is, boy, there's nothing harder than being a servant to a membership organization, because you can't make nobody happy. You just can't please everybody. It's, it's tough work.

I, I love, love, love what you said about a small effort can have a big impact. I love that. You, this year at the January 24 conference, did something different. You produced a showcase. Let's hear about that. In very similar to what I did 30 years ago Bea, you invited your peeps and said, I'm going to do this thing in New York. So please talk about the need that that filled.

BEATRICE: It's something like you have to do it to know how to do it better or different or cheaper or whatever, right? So I when I'm not consulting about equity and such I have a circus cabaret: Black Benatar's Black Magic Cabaret, and in this cabaret, we use the spectacle of drag, magic, puppetry, to edge folks through racial discomfort. It's an interactive show we try to use passive interaction, but we also have an app, that people who are experiencing it via streaming or online or in the audience can interact with some of the scenes that we have.

But I have had this show, I received a National Theater Project grant during the pandemic, which is like, I was really poised when I say I was poised Laura to really like I just done the fellowship. We toured a creative partners work first, or we brought it to the city. So I was poised to get that grant and to slide right into a showcase and a tour and then the pandemic happened and I still had, my creative partner, you know, the University of Utah, Brooke Horesji, and I was just like, the time is nigh.

And this year, I'm like, okay. I am NOT going to go as a consultant I'm going as an artist. I'm bringing the show. We found through an APAP connection, found Jimmy Lovett, with under St. Mark's. And they have a space where they give it to you for free. It was through that connection that allowed me to bring the show. It was crazy. It was expensive. But I booked, you know, and what I've learned from my dear friend, Laura Colby, is not until the contract is signed and terms are met. What I will say is that I have had a very promising start of a conversation by someone

who I respect, I respect their values, and, they saw the work and enjoyed it. So, what I will say is, it yields. It yields.

Did as many people get to come as I would like to have come. No, that's because it's really hard to showcase. You have to be doing stuff so, so far in advance in terms of marketing and getting on people's radars. You have to learn, that's part of the learning, but I just went for the showcase. And I'm, I'm really glad that I did, and I think that I can do it again differently now.

LAURA: But also, didn't you also invite other, very specifically, trans artists? Drag queen practitioners to also have time in the space to put on their own showcases.

BEATRICE: Absolutely.

LAURA: Well, which is, that's a huge service to the field. That's incredible. Because again, there's a need.

BEATRICE: Yes, that is what the show was designed to do, was the cabaret piece is there are always two to three spots for queer and trans performers that are local or traveling. And I also work with an incredible, incredible, black trans Chinese pole acrobat.

The need also is in circus. 100%. I am not a circus person. I didn't grow up doing the rola bola since I was seven, which I work with Ori Quesada and they started rola bola at seven. But I've learned, I've learned about circus as I have sort of dumbly stumbled into it. It's just circus is where my heart is. I'm a natural ringmaster. But I, have no discernible magical acrobat talents or anything like that. So I've been learning from the practitioners that I work with. And I'm very keen on hearing what it is that they need, understanding what I need to put in a rider to work with these performers. And I am also hearing horror stories about working with folks who are paying them, but are not listening to them about their safety needs, hearing from different performers that oh, it's rare that you have more than one black person in a show. It's like a common amongst the circus performers that I am working with, queer, trans, and BIPOC,

These are just stories. But it breaks my heart, but it actually like galvanizes my resolve, because then I'm like, oh well shit, we're definitely bringing the full show so that you have a place that ensures that the temperature is right for your body that, you know, I'm learning, but I'm earnest about my my efforts to learn because it's worth it. It's worth it for people to see, for queer families to see it, but also just for, for people to see all of the things that we as humans can do, ultimately, seeing

queer and trans people just helps you understand the full magnitude of your power as a human being.

I think answering a need is just like how I always just end up doing life, but it's good to kind of like trace the arc. I can't do anything without serving the community. It just doesn't hit, you know what I mean?

LAURA: Yeah, and as difficult or as challenging as putting on that showcase was for you during APAP this past January, it did move the needle for you.

BEATRICE: It moved the needle!

LAURA: As an artist, hands down, right? It happened.

BEATRICE: I moved the needle. It's a real thing. It's some kind of witchcraft but I'll say at the very least what I have come out of that with is that I can bring my show to New York.

LAURA: There you go.

BEATRICE: I am working, always with my role in APAP to try and make information more visible. And I learned a lot. I learned a lot in the process of going through that and understanding how much we rely on past practice.

I feel like just even the fact that through our relationship with APAP, then meeting each other, then having a hot tub session where we talked about how your information could impact artists broadly. And how I have a feeling about contracts and things as this is the way to honor your work in this way. And we teamed up. And-

LAURA: Yeah. We teamed up and we created Honoring Your Artistic Integrity Through Your Contracts.

BEATRICE: Exactly. And it's a workshop.

LAURA: Yeah.

BEATRICE: That meets a need and is because of the relationships that are created inside of the field, inside of these opportunities to give your service.

LAURA: I also love that it was created by two women who couldn't be more different. Probably 20 years apart, I imagine. And just in different moments in the

field and it has been such an honor and pleasure to be able to couple up with you and work hand in hand with you to teach that artistic integrity through your contracts workshop, because that isn't even language that we had, that I had 30 years ago.

BEATRICE: Right?

LAURA: Yeah. To take that agency and, and walk through that process, which dear listener, there will be a whole glossary thing on that workshop. But that process is a very real and like you said, it's a very earnest process of knowing yourself, grow the capacity to be able to talk about yourself with a sincerity. It's not about ego. It's about reality. Like I need those gender neutral bathrooms. I need a ramp. I need, an ASL interpreter, I need these things or you don't get the artistic integrity of the work that you said you wanted.

BEATRICE: Right. And it's, it's just like, that's exactly that. I'm really a lot of just trying to breathe the wind into their- to understand that like, this is their moment, their opportunity, that this is how you love your practice. It's so special. And it just made me as we're really contemplating this topic of answering the needs. You know, I feel lucky to be the person that is just like, you should do this. You may have thought of it already, but like-

LAURA: I did not think about it in the way you touched, the way you put your fingerprint on information I've been teaching about contracting, but your stamp on it, like, brought it into today in this post George Floyd loss moment of, as we continue to seek equity, and we go through, as a country, racial reckoning, and all of that implication on our field. Because you can't be in the U. S. and be doing the kind of work we do and not be conscious and aware.

BEATRICE: Yeah.

LAURA: So, you know, my roster, half of it is, I am representing work by artists of color.

BEATRICE: Yeah.

LAURA: And I, as a white woman, I have to have a level of awareness and, consciousness of my bias and all of my training.

BEATRICE: Yeah.

LAURA: And from this place in which I work. So to be able to devise this contracting workshop with your incredible lens that like really brought it into today. And what is today's needs. I found that incredibly powerful and we've done it three times so far, and it's been very exciting, and I hope we can continue to offer that to the artists. Who we really, really, really need to hear that message and put it into practice.

BEATRICE: Yeah. I really, I love it. I like that you use the word devise because that's my most exciting word. That's where I like shine when I'm with someone devising, that's like, I, I live, I live for that to be like in vessel with someone finding the shape of it. You know, it just, anyway, it was great. And I love that we did it in a hot tub. Because that, creativity needs relaxation.

LAURA: That's right. This is what happens. People watch out. Don't get into a hot tub with Beatrice Thomas. You'll end up teaching a workshop somewhere.

BEATRICE: Might change your life, you know.

LAURA: We were having a chill moment after a conference and Beatrice turned to me, she put her hand down, She said you need to teach this this this and this and I was like, okay.

BEATRICE: I know sometimes I have just you know moments of real clarity.

LAURA: Oh, you had a really big moment of clarity about what you and I felt, What was so genuine about it, and authentic, was that I felt that you were speaking from a place as a Black artist, a black woman and an artist new to the field, you were basically saying, Laura, this information, I just can't, like, I can't walk up to a shelf and just get it off of the shelf. I need to hear more.

BEATRICE: I think that like, sometimes we forget. Like, even in our questing, that some of the things that we don't even think about, that we take for granted are invaluable for certain people and that's again a way to answer the need in the field. I don't particularly want to go to a corporate environment and give away all of my treasure, But, if I see a real need, it's like scratching an itch.

when you have that in your DNA, there's something that draws you to that, and I, see it so strong in you. I mean, I so admire you. Where we're different is I'm like, well, I'm just like waiting for the vibe to take me. But I want to tell you that I do have a little Laura in my head that helps me.

LAURA: This is good.

BEATRICE: Everybody needs a little help.

LAURA: Helps you get, helps you get to terms. Right? Just get to terms.

BEATRICE: Absolutely. It really does. It really does.

LAURA: Good. So. Well, Bea, it's been such a pleasure to be able to speak to you on this obviously far reaching topic.

You heard it here, folks, that little project you cook up in your head. That you think, I'll just try this thing, you just never know what that is going to blossom into and the artist who's going to turn to you and say, Ooh, I need a little more of that. Or can you give me some of this? And where that's going to take you. So I'm an advocate of follow your passion. Follow your passion. You just don't know where it's going to take you tomorrow.

BEATRICE: I will add to your follow your passion and I will say know your values. Really like define them. Know what they are and use that as your divining rod, you know, between your passions and your values lies your purpose.

LAURA: That's just beautiful. Thank you.

So, dear listener, you know what I'm going to say now. Go see a drag show. Go see any kind of show. Especially if there's a drag show, do yourself a favor, go hear an amazing story delivered to you by some incredible, divine person who has delivered themselves to you in all of their glory.. And sit back and listen and see what happens to your heart and your soul and please drop me a line and let me know what your experience was like. You know where to find me. Until next time.

(Fade out with jazz music by Manual Cinema)