

APATA Podcast – 2022

Guest: AMANDA Waddell – 2022 APATA Performing Arts Teacher of the Year & Head of Faculty for the Arts at John Paul College, QLD.

Host: Yolande Smith – Managing Director, APATA

YOLANDE: So really big congratulations and I must admit for us in the team. It's, it's one of our favourite times of the year and to have it, I suppose, loaded up and ready to go. We kind of release it at one o'clock in the morning and just watch that activity as everybody's waking up and seeing where that's positioned and it's certainly a great pleasure from our end. So, congratulations.

AMANDA: Thank you. Thank you so much. It's yeah, it's made me kind of lessen that little demon in your head – the self-saboteur - so it's, yeah, it's been a bit of a jolt in my confidence. Realising that I'm not an imposter.

YOLANDE: We all carry that don't we a little bit so that imposter syndrome? It's always there just sitting on our shoulders sometimes and just clicking away. And you know, I think this is one of the benefits of celebrating achievements because quite often we don't reflect on the journey that we've, we've travelled. The body of work we've put in. The blood, sweat and tears, you know, it's a lot of work, especially when you're working in school environment and there's extra-curricular activities. So, what do you see is, you know, you've got the imposter syndrome it gave it a nudge - fantastic. But there are some real benefits to celebrating people's body of work.

AMANDA: Yes. I um, when I look back at my career trajectory and I think of where I came from. I started at Marsden State High School here in Brisbane, which is a low socioeconomic area and that was my biggest learning curve. Was learning how to engage students in the Arts who might not have ever been exposed to the Arts before. So, looking back on my journey and seeing where I've come from to where I am now. It's so amazing to be awarded something for that journey. And I still, I still look back on my first years as a teacher with such love for those times because it really taught me the beauty of my discipline in dance and drama. But also, how important those art subjects are to students from any walk of life. So, it's just yeah, I think it's really important to celebrate the journey and I can't recommend enough for people. To throw their hats in to be celebrated. I think sometimes as artists, we don't tend to, especially as teaching artists, we always say to ourselves we don't do it for the applause. We don't do it for the accolades. We do it for the students. But I think it's...I think it's just really nice to have given myself a little bit of confidence in knowing that I know, what I know. If that makes sense.

YOLANDE: No, most definitely it does. How long have you been teaching in performing arts Amanda?

AMANDA: This is my 22nd year.

YOLANDE: Well, see and it's that journey, I know for us, when we were really looking at some expressing awards and capturing those in Performing Arts education and on all different levels and for us the Performing Arts Teacher of the Year was just such a pivotal award. Not a lot of recognition, I think, out there for this amazing body of work that start. Because teachers are the, the first - I know from my experience, teachers are definitely the first, group of people that opened that door for me and yeah and led me on the journey and they always have. I still have a great mentor today and it's one of my very early instructors and just that understanding of knowing who I am, and where to take that path and it's just an invaluable relationship and a lot of - it's that exposure and understanding, as well as giving so much for people to find their own foundation. Not everyone's going to be an artist. They might be teachers. They might be on the front of the stage. They might

end up working in promotion or whatever those areas are, but it just opens up so many avenues for people even in day-to-day life whether that be speaking, or you know, feeling comfortable in front of a group of people and especially thinking quick on your feet when things start to go a little bit pear-shaped from our lives. So, you know, just, just amazing. What do you, what would you say the must have as a teacher working in the Performing Arts education to encourage young people to develop their creativity and enhance awareness? What are your, what do you think the must-haves are for teachers out there working in this area?

AMANDA: I really believe that must have for a teacher working in the Performing Arts and in engaging young people is that you have to have a positive attitude. You have to bring an element of positivity into the classroom every single day because you're, you're the role model in the classroom for students and you are the one that they are looking up to, to kind of gauge the mood of the room. So, I think positivity is a really key element that you must have. And definitely a passion for advocacy as a teacher in the Performing Arts. I don't think there has ever been a moment where I've stopped advocating for the Arts. And that is something that is definitely a must-have. You need to be able to walk into a staff room into a meeting with powers that be to say why dance, drama, music is important to be in the curriculum and you need to have a very clear way of speaking about that so that people hear you. I think you need to have a collaborative spirit. And being able to share your knowledge and your skills with other teachers. I think those three, those three things are the key to being a successful performing arts teacher and engaging students in the classroom and being passionate about the Arts.

YOLANDE: Most definitely and you know, I'm big advocate for education myself, and sometimes as we know we have other areas in the curriculum that are pushed harder or recognised harder without understanding the benefits of Performing Arts across multiple disciplines. So, it sounds to me you've had quite the experience of advocating to keep that in the schools that you've worked.

AMANDA: Absolutely. Absolutely and you know dance. My First Love is dance and being a dance teacher and that has been my biggest area of advocacy. Even when I first started teaching, I had to do a big presentation to the principal to say why we should have it (dance) in our curriculum and then when we got it the kids were just so thankful and loved the fact that they could be passionate about a subject that was so important to them, that they could study, in their seniors, so I think for me probably the top one is the passion for advocacy. I take my hats off and take my hats off, like I've got several heads. (Laughter) I take my hat off to all of those teachers who are advocating at a higher level as well because we are in the middle of having subjects which are being considered not as important in the curriculum through ATAR. And so those advocates who are going to Parliament to advocate for our subjects. They are amazing and something that I would eventually like to do at some point in my career is you know, going further with the advocacy for the Arts because it's so important for kids, not just as a subject leading to a pathway, but for well-being and for their mental states, their feeling of who they are and becoming who they are. The Arts just encapsulates everything that you would want to see in a young person and developing young people. And as you can tell I'm very passionate about that. Anything to do with the Arts.

YOLANDE: So, yes one thing that you know, really struck a chord with the judging panel and reading through all the applications for the Performing Arts Teacher of the Year Award with APATA - was this incredible program that you have built now with John Paul College, and I know that you've been with them for a little while so I'd really love to kind of flesh out an understanding so people can see just the breadth of work that you cover. So, in your program one of the things that we absolutely loved was your guided well-being and mentoring programs in the school. Can you tell us a little bit about

that and what that's achieved for not just teachers but also the students where you implemented this amazing program in the Performing Arts.

AMANDA: So, I find the time to take a list of any students that I know want to develop a pathway into the Arts. So, I look at our top achieving artists within our subjects and I will organise a time to meet with them. Just to go through some questions about where they see themselves. So, a lot of the time it's just me asking really simple questions that they haven't actually thought about themselves and just putting that down on a piece of paper to kind of give them a guide as to what they've said and how they might achieve those goals. So, we talk about who they aspire to be in the future? What student has inspired them in the past? What they see their life as once they've graduated? And sometimes these conversations are happening with students who are year 10 and who are kind of still thinking that their life is just all about being at school forever. They can't see past graduating. So, it's a really nice way for me to tap into what students are wanting from the performing arts. I had a student just recently, we were just talking about where she wanted to go and she was talking about wanting to do something with gender studies and two weeks later she came back to me and said I found the course I want to go to, and she pulled up all the information and she said thank you so much for just sitting and asking some questions and listening to what I had to say and even though it's got nothing to do necessarily with the performing arts, it's something that, she can take the skills that she's been learning and place it into this course that she's wanting to do. So that was that was kind of a nice moment where just hearing that it was something you know, I hadn't really done much but just asked her questions. So, it's yeah, it's all about me asking questions and giving real life applications. Always interested in talking about areas that they can go into that aren't necessarily artistic or considered an artistic pathway. I talk about how you can use dance in advertising, how you can use dance in becoming an architect, how you can use your knowledge of music and drama skills in really any career that you aspire to be in and kids kind of look at me and go I didn't see it that way because I'm talking about skills, like collaboration and problem-solving and perseverance and team building and non-verbal communication and they're like, oh yeah. Oh, yeah, we learn all that and I'm like, yeah, and so these things can actually go into any career. It's not specific to just the Arts. So, yeah, so that's one of the parts of my, of my program that I really love is sitting down and talking to students about where they want to go to. But one of my one of my ideas in the wings is to have a bank of past students who our current students can go and talk to who have gone on to do other things, other careers and for them to be able to talk to past students. So, to talk to alumni about where they are and how the Arts helped them. Um, but yeah looking back at past students who can maybe take the time to mentor some of our students in the Arts. So that's kind of a little idea I have in the wings at the moment too.

YOLANDE: Sounds amazing.

AMANDA: Yeah, some students, they don't know how to get to where they want to go. And when I say hey, do you remember this person and they go yeah, like well, this is what they did. You know, maybe we can set up some time on a zoom call to have a chat about that and they'll be like, oh, yeah, that'd be great. So that's one of my ideas that are coming up because I think that's a really important element for our students to see that you can go into a pathway and still take dance, drama, and music and be successful and be amazing in the world.

YOLANDE: Oh, it sounds amazing, isn't it? And I think we hear time and time again and especially the number of people that I that I talk to they'll say, you know, their career ten years down the track their career's established and one of those this year was a writer and had this passion for writing, knew that's what they wanted to do. But the question was how do I get from where I am to where I want to go? Yes, and really walked his own path in order to find that so the more we can facilitate

and the more that we can assist with that. 1. This is where I am 2. this is where I'd like to go....and the steps involved to help them move forward that's what we're all here for.

AMANDA: Absolutely

YOLANDE: How, I know another area of your work is really strongly based in making sure that you develop safe places for students. Can you tell us a little bit about that one?

AMANDA: So, we have a, I guess it's an expectation within the Performing Arts at John Paul College and we call it the safety net. And so, it's like being at a circus where acrobats where they have the safety net underneath the high-flying acrobatics

YOLANDE: The trapeze, so they're flying we're doing these most amazing astounding work from one bar to the next but there's always that safety net under us.

AMANDA: Correct, so the idea is that we as the people in the class we're that safety net. So, whilst the performer is up doing all the tricks because performing can be quite scary, and it can be quite daunting for a student to get up and perform and be so vulnerable. So, we talk about the fact that this safety net is there for when a student falls off the trapeze. We're there to catch them and it's all about no put-downs. No, talking while someone is performing. No laughing in the wrong moments because that puts a dint in someone's confidence when they're performing. So, the safety net is there for all of the teachers and the students to have a shared language about what we want when people are performing, it's also about creating audience expectation. So, we as the audience, when our performers are up, watching - what do we expect from the audience? We expect engagement, we expect eye contact, we expect no phones. We expect that you are clapping when someone has finished to show your appreciation. And I know that sounds as though it's something that we should just automatically know but this is something that we find helps to create a safe environment for a performer. And then we just use it as our general classroom management tool. So, when we are learning the concepts and skills of our areas that is something that we talk about because we as the teachers are also part of the safety net. So, it becomes this community of safe practice for teachers and students to understand what it means to be in a collaborative, safe environment, which is so important when you're experimenting with movement, you're experimenting with character, you're experimenting with sound, these things are so important to be able to guide your practice.

YOLANDE: Most definitely and look I'd have to say, I'm not sure how you feel about this, but teaching in performing arts and in schools today it's certainly come a long way since I was a student there was barely really a program. I went to the most wonderful school. Now, they've actually got a Performing Arts Centre which gives me excitement every time I'm down in Victoria and I see it. I truly wish it was there for me. Most of my learning came from you know, really great studios outside of school hours and you went to school and you did your maths and science, all those things are really important, but for me what I love doing, it wasn't really there and you could do music and some music lessons which I did and I loved it and you know, everything else come from outdoors, but while we're advocating and we are you know, really got some fight out there to make sure that where we're at doesn't go backwards. We keep going forward as we've discussed earlier, our subjects and our versatility, people don't understand when we're taking on roles with it being drama. It's also the same in dance, the same in Circus, but students are coming to grips with pulling all those things together. Like you've just said there's memorising what they need to do. And that's just not words its movement. That's backstage choreography from where I come on, from where I go through a set door. I mean, it's a really big skill that students are building on taking on another character and working through the depths of what that character is. I know at University I lived with

mainly actors and we're going through university. I was in arts management. So it was a very interesting household quite often you'd have to fight for the bathroom for the simple fact, they were working through their emotions for what they're about to do in front of a mirror so wonderful experience and you know, there's also work in poetry and how that works in Play text and this is where English and English Department comes in, you know, so importantly for how that leads into drama. So, you know, there's a lot that goes on that gives us these foundations. So, when you are building your curriculum and what you're driving in lesson plans, whether that be you know each term and semester, how do you go about really picking that engagement for students? Setting the criteria? I'm sure you've got a very broad learning capacity in your room between students that really want to be in the front line and students that really want to take a seat on the sidelines because they're building confidence and whatnot. What are the key things you focus on in your lesson planning when you're developing for creative content?

AMANDA: One of the first things I look at is understanding my students and where they are in their journey. So, if it's a senior class, I'll look at what skills they have and what skills still need to be developed. If it's a middle school class, I'll look at where they've come from in terms of their knowledge of the subject. But it's mostly about looking at where they are in their journey. In terms of knowledge and skill. Skill-wise. I feel that our subject's practical is the key so, you know students are taking our subjects because they are they're passionate about dancing, they're passionate about acting, they're passionate about playing an instrument, or singing, and so engaging the students in as much practical work as possible is, I think, is really key and making sure that you're backwards mapping. So, starting at the end and going backwards. So, I always start by looking at; What is the assessment that I'm going to have to I'm going to have to take the students through? And where are they sitting with their knowledge and skills so far with that assessment? And then we work backwards from there. So always starting with the end in mind. What do I want as my outcome? What do I want the student's outcome to be? And that's kind of where I start in terms of how I create my lessons. But in terms of engaging them in the process, in a practical subject like a dance or a drama subject, I think it's always about making them get up and move. And always about them engaging with the skills within the subject. So, for example, my dance students at the moment. My Year 12s are at the stage where they are about to take their mock exams. So, they've been doing a lot of intense writing. And as you can imagine for some dance students that's kind of hard not being able to engage in some physical, practical elements of the subject. So, when I'm looking at my year 12 dance students, I combine a lot of the physical aspects of the subject with their written, with what they need to be learning for their written exam. So, I will often, at the moment, I'm teaching 10, 11, 12 at the same time and the 10s and 11s are learning a practical dance piece called 'Toxic' and the year 12s they're also learning it but instead of them just learning it for a performance task. I'm actually asking them to speak to me about the skills and the concepts whilst I'm teaching the tens and 11s. So, they're verbally telling me the things that they need to put into their exam. So, it's connecting. It's a fine line of connecting that practical side with what they need to achieve by the end of the course. So, I hope I answered that question a little bit.

YOLANDE: Absolutely and it's understanding that context, isn't it? So, I think the other thing that we really try to express in my work with students is that there's so many options that available. So having a diverse skill set can assist you and I learned that from my first year in university actually for me. So very close working relationship with the faculty at the University I went with. And those that were practicing straight drama and acting they were a little bit second year they had to go and do the technical production sides, had to learn about lighting and audio and you know, call the show and all those types of things

AMANDA: Yes.

YOLANDE: I can see them go, 'That's not what we're here for!' but it worked out that the drive, when it was explained to them, that is once you leave University, you're in audition. That's your love. That's where you're going. That's where you're driving and we want to see you on the stage, but in between work as you're building your portfolio, you might be able to pick up something where if you understand how to do Props Master and run that backstage, then you're still in the area that you love and you're working through and it was probably one of the most invaluable lessons that I learned because I sat there and I went, 'Oh, I need to have a better understanding of the whole package as careers adapt and change and you know availability of work. So yeah, no, absolutely. So, it's great to see that trade. I have actually been to one of your fabulous showcases at John Paul College and I loved every second of it and congratulations to all that were involved in it. It was a wonderful performance, and the level of delivery and execution was just amazing. Had a really great night and I'll be back for more most definitely.

AMANDA: Was that the Ruby Gala?

YOLANDE: It was

AMANDA: Aw!

YOLANDE: I'm just going to put that out to anyone who's listening - go to school showcases because they're professional like it was yeah execution on every level and what everybody did it was just magnificent, but probably hard for you to choose but do you have a favorited from your body of work 22 years of teaching and if so, why?

AMANDA: Oh, okay. This question when I read the brief, I wrote down everything that we do at JPC and there is a lot! We offer so many opportunities for performances and getting the kids up on stage and looking over the plethora of work that we do and because I am, my passion is dance and drama. Probably the thing that I most hold to my heart is the musicals that we put on. That is probably something that just I think that we do so well at John Paul College, we have such a high calibre of students who rise to the occasion to create such an amazing piece of work. And I can't decide between when I directed 'We Will Rock You' or 'Chicago' just recently, so I'm really proud of how we do musicals at John Paul College and I'm actually a past student at John Paul College as well. So, I'm an alumnus. And when I was at school, we were taught about high expectations. So, the high expectations are something that the team kind of has taken on as a bit of culture that John Paul College passes down through each year. I think that I love musicals so much is because it's a legacy. It's something that John Paul College is known for and I'm proud to be a part of that past and obviously into the future. I love the collaborative nature of a musical. It's you know, you said that you, when you came to the Ruby Gala, that was collaboration to the nth degree, but musicals are just...It's just beautiful to watch musicians, and dancers, and actors, and singers all come together to create this beautiful piece of work. It just shows how Dynamic a team can be when they work collaboratively. Not just the students, but the staff I work with, and the staff I have worked with in the past. You know, some of my best friends have come from me working in a collaborative team to create a piece of work for students. So, it holds such a special place in my heart and I just yeah, I just love watching students present this piece of work and how proud they are when they've realised what they've done.

YOLANDE: I couldn't agree more. It was interesting after the Ruby Gala I had the opportunity to talk to a couple of students as they were milling around and you're listening to their excitement at the end and there was this just overwhelming, smiles all around, but they did it, they did it as they'd

been training so hard for, they were so proud of their accomplishment. You watched a student body be extremely connected it brought all these different groups together and that understanding of we all need each other to do a really great dynamic show and the whole spirit, I think is how I put it, of the night was just you could feel it crackle through the space and it was wonderful. So, congratulations because yes, I'd have to agree. I'm not surprised to hear that musical favourite because you can actually feel that build at the beginning when you take your seat and then just to see that pleasure of accomplishment and delivery at the end, across the board, and the students carry and deliver just all of it all the way through with teacher support and yeah, congratulations to all of you that are involved in that each year. It's a big program.

AMANDA: It's a massive program and you know; we commit to making sure that our students have as much performance time on stage as possible. And when we have musicals, we don't we don't stop our other programs to make that musical happen. We have we have our other programs still running because we realise how important musical is and it's our you know, first goal, but we need to make sure that students understand that when you commit to the Performing Arts it's a commitment that is not just one opportunity, life doesn't just go here's one event that you have to deal with. Now that event's finished, you'll deal with this next event. Life is all about throwing events at you all the time. And I think that's the beauty of the Performing Arts is that whilst you're working on one major project. You're still working on 12 other major projects, but you're juggling and you're able to focus on one. When that one's done you chuck that out and you focus on another, and all those balls are still up in the air, but you're able to kind of decide which one is important.

YOLANDE: Amanda let's talk about your journey. So, from my understanding and listening to you talk today. It's always been performing arts. And I know for me apparently, I started dancing at five and I just continued that journey, and you sound very much the same. Yes, and looking at the education and all this, you know advocating that also really trying to build for students and the benefits and how they can use these tools and these wonderful skills that performance across all genres and elements can give us to carry on into other careers or to you know, work through, and stay within the business that we love. What has been your journey if we look at how you've you know developed through schooling and where did you settle going it's teaching for me because that's you know, that's a big decision. I think early on in life to go. I love what I do and for me, it's the education side and how did you know I suppose industry assist you or how did you tap into that thought process?

AMANDA: So, I pretty much grew up on the stage. I, like yourself, I started bugging my mum to do dance lessons. I saw I was a massive Young Talent Time fan. Yes. And I loved I loved watching Young Talent time every Saturday and I just it just sparked something in me. So, my mum enrolled me at the Johnny Young Talent School here in Brisbane. So, I just fell in love with dancing, and I grew up. You know, my formative years were me performing every weekend, performing every school holiday, just loving. loving performing. Just loved getting up on that stage singing and dancing, you know, it was my world. Expo '88 came along and spent six months of my life dancing every day, that was just amazing. When I went to university or when I was deciding what I wanted to do with my life. I just wanted to act. I just wanted to be an actor, that was that was my thing. I wanted to be on Broadway. I wanted to be a musical theatre star and I think doing an audition for a musical theatre course, they told me I was a fabulous dancer excellent actor, but not so good in the singing department.

YOLANDE: So that the triple threat wasn't there.

AMANDA: I thought I had it and I didn't really and you know, that's okay because then I was looking at what I could do and you know sitting with my mum and talking about what are the options for someone who is so passionate about dance and drama, you know, what can you do and my mum being the very practical woman that she is she said, you know, if you want to do this you need to have something behind you that you know, you like the good things in life, you like to eat food, you like to have a house over your head. So, you know, if you're going to pursue a career in the Arts and let's make sure you can do something on the side that can get you, you know, work permanent or permanent or full-time or something. That's always going to bring in some money for you. And so, we discussed how being a teacher you can go overseas, you can travel, you can you know do part-time work. And so that was kind of how I fell into teaching. It wasn't necessarily something that I had a passion for, but I definitely have a passion for dance and drama and wanting to pass it on to people and once I started it, it just clicked. It was just something that I just happened to be really good at, I think, if I'm not being too up myself. I just really loved not being on the stage for the first time and watching my students be on stage and performing the routines I had choreographed and performing the scenes I had directed. And I felt that that definitely was where my calling was definitely aimed at. So yeah, I just I loved. I loved teaching as soon as I started.

YOLANDE: That's so wonderful. I mean teaches in Performing Arts education are just so critical. They're critical to our pipeline, our supply chain. Now, you know all that talent, whether students become teachers, in their futures or artists or Arts managers and you know, it's a big part of some had a student say to me only a few weeks ago. I think my calling is I love the Performing Arts like I love working with students and I'm going to be a teacher and I was like, that's exactly who that's exactly you need.

AMANDA: Yeah. I often tell my students; look you may love performing now. But when you start to mature a little bit, you might find that you actually love the behind-the-scenes part of it, which is about all about the teaching side of it. How you teach someone to be on stage. And yeah, I love it when I have students who get that ding moment, where they go. 'Oh, I don't I don't have to be on stage. I can teach. I can pass my love on to other people.' We have, John Paul College, our Dance Program actually employs dance students who are past students at the college. So, our dance program is run by our wonderful Maddy Garner is a past student as well. And she's a past student of mine from when I first started at John Paul, and she has now passed on her knowledge to past students and it's just a beautiful little family of dance students that loved to be on the stage. But then also now have seen that they love to teach.

YOLANDE: It's a beautiful connection that you built there too with past students who come back, they talk about their journey. They share their knowledge.

AMANDA: Yes!

YOLANDE: They feed straight back into where it started for them. It's a beautiful life cycle that you've built there in education.

AMANDA: It is.

YOLANDE: It's wonderful and it's the first I've heard of it actually hence why we loved it so much with all the body of work that you do, but also all these, you know, extra innovating processes that you've put in place to, you know, really be there for students. It's amazing. Next question I have, and I only have one. So, this is why I've asked it. About your career whether you know that Beyond stage or when you went to teaching, what was the best class that you ever took in the Performing Arts and why was it so good?

AMANDA: Oh, yes. I really struggled with this one because obviously my life is my life is pretty much one big Performing Arts lesson.

YOLANDE: That's a great way to put it.

AMANDA: I think that I'm always I'm still always learning so yeah, it's something that is a constant for me, but I spoke about my Johnny Young Talent School days and that as a time in my life, I can't pinpoint one specific class, but I think this was something that I kept writing down was it wasn't necessarily about a particular class it was about how the teacher made me feel. So, my dance teacher Briony, she created this beautiful community at John Young which we as a team just loved. It was like this beautiful little family. She was like, I think she was only 19 when she was teaching me, but she was just someone that I adored and was this person who made everyone love performing. And a lot of us still are in contact with her, which is amazing, and I reconnected with her just recently. So that was really nice. And the other thing I wrote down in response to that question was I took acting classes with an actor called John Dommett. I believe he was an actor that did a little bit of time on Neighbours. When I took classes with John Dommett, he actually opened my eyes to what drama meant and how to approach drama and the passion that he made me realise was the key when you're reading a piece of work, being able to connect with a character, being able to connect with some part of that play, you know at one point, I think I was I think I was studying Ophelia. And he the way he made me look at Shakespeare was just it opened my eyes. So, when I talked when I think about what my best performing arts class was it's not necessarily about the content. I don't think, it was more about the teachers that taught me about passion.

YOLANDE: Absolutely and that's the big takeaway too. It's I think sometimes we get so focused on you know technique and skill and all those things depending on what we're studying but it's how we build that ambience, that trust that connection within that space for us all to do our best work. Yes. We'll feel comfortable and confident, with no judgment, is where we really start to provide a space for people to really tap into their best in their inner self. And it's that teacher that can bring that out that really allows us to discover, make mistakes, learn, and keep moving forward. So absolutely it's it always comes down to that that feeling in that room and that connection in that room. When we talk about Arts education, what impacts would you say Arts education in and out of school has had on your life so far, we've talked about many to them being has been just wonderful, but it's really driving home that Arts education plays such a day-to-day role for us in our everyday lives.

AMANDA: Yes, um, so the impact that it's had on my life has been pretty big. It's you know, I live and breathe Performing Arts. I love going to shows, I love talking about dance and drama, and music and I think one of the biggest things that it has one of the biggest impacts it is a let me try that again. One of the biggest impacts it has had on my life is that it has taught me a love of learning. So, I try and pass that on to my students that there's not just it's not just about um, I'm going to use dance as my example. It's not just about you know, I teach you a dance, you perform it, and it is about learning about parts of our world and how we connect with the world and how we learn through a dance or how we learn through a piece of drama work. So, I think it has impacted me by wanting to always learn about different things and how I can how I can use that as an inspiration for a piece of work. I'm actually studying a course in screen and media at the moment so that I can update my skills to further figure out how I can put them into my other areas of Performing Arts. So, I think it's just always tapping into that love of learning, and I had written down a quote here that I think that this kind of sums up the impact that it's had on my life is that "I see inspiration in the shadows. So, I don't look at the sun. I look at its Shadows" so that it's when you're looking at a particular theme. If you look at it specifically you might be blinded by it. But if you look at the Shadows that it casts you

can actually see different perspectives. So, I think that's what the impact that the Arts has had on me is that I like to look at the Shadows.

YOLANDE: That's just so beautiful.

AMANDA: I don't know. I don't know where I got that quote from.

YOLANDE: I haven't heard it before and it's beautiful

AMANDA: Just whenever I get stuck that's what I say if students get stuck when they're you know, creating work I talk about don't look at the sun. Look at its Shadows. What are the perspectives that this the sun is casting so yeah, great. I hope others take that with them.

YOLANDE: What advice would you give to support teachers and students that are navigating careers out there and Performing Arts?

AMANDA: Oh, yes. What advice? Learn from your mistakes so I'm a big believer that mistakes aren't bad failures aren't bad. They're actually beneficial for learning to step out of your comfort zone because that's where we learn the best. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you don't know the answer because I often tell my students. I am not the I'm not the be all and end all of knowledge when it comes to dance & drama. I'm just here to facilitate and guide you in the knowledge. So, it's all about just being honest with yourself and always enjoy that learning pathway learn from your students. I'm constantly learning from my students. They are they're constantly challenging me; you know, they'll ask questions that I haven't thought of before and I'll have to say look. I don't know the answer, but I will find out and so being honest with them I think is it's a really important key to being a successful educator. Yes.

YOLANDE: Looking at the next generation of Performing Arts teachers or artists or Arts workers or managers and having been through a lot everyone being through a lot in in, you know all areas and industries teaching adapting when we went into covid mode and all that that we've adapted and really jump some big hurdles to get through, I think. Looking at the next generation that are coming through what do you think? The biggest challenge is ahead?

AMANDA: I think the biggest challenge is that we are mentally, physically, and emotionally connected to our students. We are mentally, physically, and emotionally connected to our subjects our you know, the passion that we have for dance, and for drama, and for music, it is it is a strong connection that we have with those areas. And I think the biggest challenge is it takes time for us as teaching artists to create, it takes time for us to rehearse, it takes time for us to prepare, and reflect, and revise on what we're doing in the classroom. So, I think the biggest challenge is to give yourself time to remember that. Because it is hard. We are connected in such and interconnected way that we want the best for our students, but we also want to inspire and challenge our students and I think that we have to be kind to ourselves. That's one of the things I've learned these last couple of couple of years is to be kind to myself and to give myself time to just breathe sometimes. My partner often will say to me. You just need to slow down a little bit. Can be good advice this sometimes we're all go, go, go.

YOLANDE: What do you think is a risk for the Next Generation?

AMANDA: Do you mean the next generation of Educators or students?

YOLANDE: I know the next generation of Educators for me, is to mind we keep advocacy front and centre. What would it be for you?

AMANDA: Burnout is something that is a real, is something that teachers have to or Educators have to be mindful of like I said just before we as teachers tend to sometimes considered perfectionists in you know, making sure that everything in our classroom is perfect and we have to remember that we are we are just human, and that it is okay to stop and take some time to just breathe and I think burnout is a very big risk for a lot of teachers, especially a lot of Performing Arts teachers, you know Performing Arts teachers we do go above and beyond after school curriculum, co-curriculars. And I think that is a big risk, but I think the other thing is being vulnerable is a big risk for teachers and learning how to how to balance that vulnerability. You know, we want to connect with our students, but sometimes we just need to show them that it's okay to have bad days. I will, you know, I will often say to you know, my students. It's okay to have a bad day. And if you have a bad day and you don't feel like you're 100%, you just tell me because I know exactly how that feels and there are days when I don't feel 100% as well, and we just have that open conversation. So, I think some teachers might see vulnerability as a risk. I don't necessarily think it is. But I do think that some teachers don't know how to be vulnerable with their students and it's okay to be that.

YOLANDE: I always say that it's okay to be human, right?

AMANDA: Yes.

YOLANDE: It's okay to be human. It's okay to understand that not every day can be, you know above the 90 to 100% and it's just understanding that human context that we all carry day to day and looking after each other when you're having a bit of a downer day versus you know, today is just all coming together has it should because they're not all like that.

AMANDA: Correct. And enjoy the wins. Like you have a win, celebrate them celebrate them, correct? Like I am such an advocate for teachers. And making them want to make them understand their full potential and how they can walk into a classroom and be the best that they can be and it's okay to be human.

YOLANDE: Oh, Amanda. It has just been an absolute delight and a rewarding experience to speak with you today, and I cannot thank you enough for sharing your insights and your invaluable time and true speaking from the heart to share with our community and personally very big. Thank you. It's been just a great day and today definitely one of those 100% so really great to chat to you because I just know how busy your schedule is, and we appreciate everything that you do and the way that you advocate and support students in performing arts and their hopes their dreams, and you know their futures are in teachers' hands. So, thank you for expressing that today for everybody out there listening to us today, please jump on to John Paul College's website, you'll see amazing body of work numerous courses that are open to encourage and delight all in students with an amazing faculty and team out there who as we've heard today collaborate connect and really strive for the student experience, which was all about, and you'll find that at www.jpc.qld.edu.au. Thank you so much Amanda. It has been a wonderful morning.

AMANDA: Thank you so much for having me. And I really appreciate everything the Australian Performing Arts Teachers Association has offered me. And yeah, I just really thankful.

YOLANDE: We're thankful to have you with us on the journey. So wonderful, take care, and certainly look forward to coming out to John Paul College for that next because I'm a little bit taken. Excellent. We'll make sure we invite you wonderful and talk soon.

AMANDA: Talk to you soon.