**“Melody Shotade: Live”**

**Host: Pauline Vetuna**

**Guests: Melody Shotade**

**Transcription by Leilani Fuimaono**

MELODY: All right. Ready? One, two, three, four...

MELODY: *[singing]* The voices inside my head believe what you said, you love your control. I find my way home. I'm home. Some might offer self respect, cause I’m filling up, I forgot. I'm lonely and you not able to give it all to me. You love your control, I find my own, oh my own. Some might offer self respect, cause I'm filling up I forgot, I forgot, I forgot. I forgot.

MELODY: Okay. That was called The Voices. And the next song I'm going to play is called Poem, and it's about appreciating people who support you through bad times, and supporting people through bad times. So yeah, it's just a song I wrote about a friend. So here we go.

MELODY: *[inaudible]* I heard your poem just the other day. The words kept flowing in the mouth, peculiar way. So many years of tears. Oh insecurity and fears. Don't you know that I've tried my best to move on, yeah. There's no going past the people you love. Some people wear all those tears, go out and defeat your fears. We all want to be high above, of what is petty and afar, unfair of. Oh what is hopes and dreams for, a bigger, brighter future? Don't you know that I tried my best to move on, yeah. There's no going past the people you love. Some people wear all those tears, go out and defeat your fears. Go out and defeat your fears.

Pauline: So welcome Melody.

MELODY: Oh, thanks Pauline.

Pauline: I was so excited.

MELODY: I was so pumped. I just sent you a link to the music and it's like, there's no way Pauline's going to like this. This is depression talking.

Pauline: Oh, I relate to that. I would like to start by talking about your background, cause I saw on your Facebook page about your heritage, so I was just wondering if you could just say your background, your cultural background.

MELODY: My name is Melody Schotade. My cultural background, well, my father is Nigerian, he was born in Lagos State. And my mother is Australian. She's from German, Irish heritage. So I'm a bit of a mixture, bit of a cultural melting pot, my whole family are. There's different nationalities within my extended family. But yeah, I've just asked my dad to teach me a little bit about his language, which is something new that I never really went into that part of me.

I've grown up with my mum and her family, so it's been lovely, but I think you get to a point where you're like, well, what about dad and his side of things, and what's it like on the other side of the fence. Good to get perspective of both sides of the fence, I think. So yeah. And he's an awesome character. He's a great storyteller, so he can spin off any story, I reckon, just without even thinking about it. Yeah, he's very charismatic, my dad.

PAULINE: Well, we'll get to the storytelling part of your journey too later. I wanted to know also about your... How you identify in terms of disability. So if you could talk a little bit about that.

MELODY: Yeah, sure. I have a mental illness. I have a few mental illnesses actually. I think it's termed these days experience, lived experience of mental illness, and yeah. I guess it all sort of starts with depression. And so, I kind of had depressive illness through my teens. Suicide and all that sort of stuff was a big reality up until my early adulthood or... Yeah, early adulthood I'd say.

Then I also got diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, so that's been a thing. And then recently, I think it's been re-evaluated and sort of bordering on just bipolar. So it's sort of changed and morphed along my life. And I think it's made a big difference in the way... My outlook on life. I'm a lot more patient with myself now and with other people. I kind of can stop to smell the roses, so to speak, and give myself permission to do that, because that's kind of how I cope and manage the illness, I guess.

It's just to kind of vague out sometimes and go, okay, this is actually beautiful and I'm allowed to appreciate this and accept that it's something special. There's something special about everything. And yeah, I never used to do that, because I felt the pressure of society saying, you have to, things have to be a certain way.

 Don't be a dreamer, that kind of stuff and get a real job and it's all this sort of stuff. It was causing a lot of stress to the point where I was actually being hospitalized quite regularly. And so yeah, since taking that pressure off and being able to say, "Well, I've got to cut back on my workload, or I can be creative and try and do creative projects and things like that". It's managed to sort of change things around a lot.

PAULINE: Well, you sort of mentioned that allowing yourself to pursue these creative pursuits really helped a lot in your healing, I guess. And being comfortable in getting rid of a lot of anxiety and pressure that you felt that we feel in this society.

MELODY: It started when I was very young. I used to have... I used to be very imaginative. I made up games, and potions, and all that sort of stuff. And the teachers at school saw it in me, and they saw when I used to get picked on and stuff like that for being a person of color. They saw that I went out and did creative things to probably counterbalance that as a coping mechanism.

And so I've always done that as a way to balance things out. And I guess it wasn't till I had my final breakdown, that I took some time off and asked my friends whether they'd think anything different of me if I wasn't working at all. And they just said, "No, we appreciate you for who you are".

So I had a bit of a break and then a friend of mine's flatmate, Mariette, cause she was working... She's had an initiative, called Raw House, and she sort of took me under her wing and taught me a few things about community arts and development. So I was very fortunate to be on a few projects with her, and then decided after a while that I'd try and do my own sort of independent stuff. So I've just started emerging and doing my own stuff, which is pretty exciting.

PAULINE: Yeah. And some of that stuff includes theater making. I just wanted to know if you could talk a little bit about what inclusive arts practice is to you.

MELODY: That inclusive arts to me, means that it's not about you. I guess, at the end of the day it's about everyone being inclusive to everybody and trying to understand and collaborate with people of all walks of life. That understanding, and the time spent with other people. That quality time spent with people trying to make something that other people understand as well, hopefully. Yeah.

PAULINE: Can you tell us about Woven?

MELODY: Ah, yeah. Woven was a really lovely... Had a really lovely outcome and journey. It was a journey, and it basically started off with... It kicked off with some crowd funding and a lot of community support. I was fortunate to receive funding from the City of Port Phillip, from through their Cultural Development Fund. And it sort of kicked off with six sessions, working with people of all abilities and backgrounds and stuff.

And yeah, I just looked back on some of the videos that I'd taken the other day, and I've still got a long way to go in terms of directing and producing material. But I had a really lovely group, a lot of senior performers and stuff, that were in conditions of like 40 degrees in an unairconditioned church, with just fans going, and hand fans and things. Just so dedicated. It was brilliant.

We did a lot of movement-based performance. And it's held at Gasworks out in Glade, this beautiful area, which has got sort of circular seating. And I worked with an artist called Lisa Greenway, who does fantastic sound production, and we'd set up 3D sound installation, which was built up. We worked together on this sound installation, which was sort of a... Like a Woven type...

I think this is part of the Woven sort of theme, which had a story or narration by someone called Ali. And it had music, sort of world music, so it had the Cora and also some global vocals and stuff through it. And it was really beautiful, just lovely on a hot day just to have this sound wafting in and out.

And we had AUSLAN interpretations, which were incorporated into the performance, and also audio description, which was also incorporated into the performance. So, the aesthetics... And so the audience were part of the performance. So they were sitting as the performance was happening around them, rather than sitting in a formal seating sort of situation. And by the end of it, everyone was sort of in a circle holding hands, and you just can't plan stuff like that. Sort of an experience you had to kind of be there.

MELODY: Yeah. So that's Woven. I got mentored, and I had artists support. Nilgun Guven was my mentor for the theater and the directing. And then I had Trudy Redburn, who was helping with the choreography. So yeah. That's fantastic.

PAULINE: How did the performers find you, the group of people that you just described?

MELODY: Well, I'd been part of Rag Theater, and a few other local theater groups in the City of Port Phillip, and also through Royal House as well. So I already knew the performers, and they had time, and they'd wanted to be a part of it. So we all put out a call out for three different organizations, and these are the people who responded and said, "We'll be free at this time". And that's how we went about it.

PAULINE: So we're changing gears. Why don't you play us another song?

MELODY: Sure. This next song is called Cow Between Legs.

MELODY: *[playing guitar & singing]* Bring back the night when I gave you everything. We stole the gold *[inaudible]* of the world that night. Bring back everything that there is to ever know. Well I guess the answer is the best night of my life. Yeah but it’s over now. The best night of my life. Better remind myself, that it’s over. It's a really cold night in August, and we're sitting by the brook, watching the full moon rise above us as we move closer too soon. Bring back everything that there is to ever know. Well I guess the answer is the best night of my life. Yeah, but it’s over now. Ooh, the best night of my life. I remind myself, that it’s over now, that it’s over now.

PAULINE: When did you start writing music?

MELODY: It's probably about 5. Used to make up little songs in the bedroom with my brother, and then at school, I just came up with a group of acapella and stuff. So yeah, just for fun. Yeah.

PAULINE: You said that you wrote that song at 13. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

MELODY: Yeah, it's a very personal story, but I'm willing to share it. It's written about a first love, and at the time, I don't think either of us were all that happy and well. Sort of the beginning of the depression. And I thought that this person was like a big brother type situation where you know that would look after me. But really they were the opposite, I think. A little bit destructive and I guess I wrote this song to take me away from the negative side of things, and romanticize, I think a bit about it, as sort of like a double edged sword, I guess.

PAULINE: I'm really interested in finding out what your influences are in terms of your music.

MELODY: I have a very, very broad taste in music, and I was brought up with Soul, and R&B, and all that sort of stuff. And then also Punk on top of that. So I sort of got a bit of everything in there. And then I got into a folky scene in 2010 and got a bit influence through there as well.

PAULINE: And in 2013 you released an EP?

MELODY: Yeah, I worked with a great few people. The guy who produced the EP, he's name was Brendan Miller. He was very good to work with. He's very patient, and had a process. And he was able to come to me at one stage as well, because the studio was too expensive to hire out. So he was able to set up a cubby to keep all the sound in. And yeah, it was good. And then worked with a few friends from the open mike scene, and another artist with a disability as well. Tana Ramsay played lead guitar, I think on the EP. Actually, I think a few of the people on the EP actually have a disability. So yeah, it's really good to collaborate for the first time with a band, rather than doing my solo stuff all the time. So yeah, it's nice.

PAULINE: Where was it launched?

MELODY: Thornbury Theater. Yeah, that was pretty sweet. The Velour Lounge, I think it's downstairs, but it was really good. I'm trying to raise money for a roller Derby AU, but that's a whole ‘nother story.

I'd like to sort of maybe just make a little statement. We're living in some pretty troublesome times. I just don't think sometimes the stress is all that worth it. And that's all I've got to say on that matter. And I think if you can find something that you enjoy, go and do it. Don't waste time. Make yourself happy. If you want to get in contact with me, I'm on social media, and I hope to do another theater project next year with people identified as disabled. Get in contact if you think you'd be interested in something like that. Can be found on Facebook and Instagram as well. So do get in touch.

PAULINE: Beautiful. And now we're going to finish with “His Body”. Thank you, Melody.

MELODY: No worries. Thank you. One, two, three, four...

MELODY: *[singing & playing guitar]* I'm sitting here at the side of my bed. Ooh yeah, waiting for you to arrive. First door swings wide open, wide open and I've been waiting for this moment to arrive, yeah. Hey yeah, it’s been some time since you've been, oh my Jesus and, my Jesus and, my Jesus and I out of the belly I’ll be surprised. Hey yeah, took the body of his christ. It’s been some time since I've been praying on my knees boy, begging don't please boy, save my soul. I'm sitting on the hood, my Jesus and it’s been some time since I felt his heartbeat next to mine. Hey yeah, just about hear my cry. My Jesus and, my, my Jesus and, my Jesus and I.

MELODY: Sweet, thank you.