

## **Episode 5: Adaptation**

Gather introduction:

[A delightful sound of choir leading into plucked guitar and different voices introducing the show, with guitar continuing underneath]

Woman's voice: Ah everyone, you are listening to Gather

Child's voice: You're listening to Gather

Woman's voice with dog bark in background: To Gather

Woman's voice with American accent: Gather

[Same guitar doing a sweet little riff with the faint sound of pencil scribbling beneath. Sound of guitar continues beneath the host's introduction]

Amy Tsilemanis (Gather host, smooth and calming): This is Amy Tsilemanis and this is Gather, with Minerva's Books and Ideas, where we'll explore the lives of books and the ideas they ignite and illuminate.

### **Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):**

Hey, it's Amy. Welcome to episode five of Gather. We've come to the second last, the penultimate episode of season one, themed adaptation. Well, it's something we've all become very familiar with thanks to the COVID 19 pandemic. Twisting, turning, pivoting, learning things anew.

So here we explore this theme through a few different angles. Adapting to circumstance, adapting across art forms and across languages and senses and giving you space to ponder along the way. We'll hear the beautiful music of Gelareh Pour and her Garden Quartet throughout the episode too.

We have three fabulous book seeds that feed into the guests today, Fiona Murphy's must read memoir, *The Shape of Sound* published this year by Text. And we hear her reading from the book that explores her journey with deafness and provide a linked video interview that I did with deaf filmmaker and lecturer, Ramas McRae.

With Auslan and captions, a new experience for me. We think about how deaf and hard of hearing people have to adapt to the world every day and also bring us amazing creativity and ask how we can adapt to be more accessible as allies.

Then from 2017 is Odette Kelada's enthralling *Drawing Sybylla*, which explores the real and imagined lives of Australia's women writers of the past with Stella Miles Franklin at the book's heart. We talked to playwright and director Christine Davey about her stage adaptation of Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and the effects of the pandemic on this production.

Finally from 2020 is Melody Moezzi's *The Rumi Prescription*, and other books I've been devouring to learn about Persian poetry. This is a memoir in poetry, you might say. And we talk with our featured artist, musician Gelareh Pour about her life in music and how it's been inspired by her Persian culture.

For our creative segment, things found in books, we'll enjoy a brand new piece created by Gelareh for this episode. Woo. At this point, I'd like to give a shout out to

Ballarat libraries where I now work casually and also borrow lots of books of course. Including these three, which I found like friends are awaiting me on the shelves. Thank you to all libraries. And for more book love, always for our Indie book feature, this episode, we chat to Brad at Ballarat's The Independent Bookstore and the link to Shawline Publishing and hear how they help adapt to writer's ideas into fully published products for sale in their beautiful shop. Thanks for listening and enjoy the show.

### **Music by host Amy plays under her voice.**

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** As a cross art form creator myself I've always been interested in adaptation. I did my honors thesis many years back around the question of how a book can be staged and experienced theatrically. And I created a stage version of one of my favourite books, Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities. It used live music, visual art, projection, and that seems a bit twee now. The premise was three women attending a book club dedicated to their shared love of Calvino. Yes, I am a nerd. If you didn't know that already. And I think what I called their communal dreaming of the cities described in the book. I wrote this song with Julian, that the actors performed on stage inspired by the book and the line, go and grow in lightness. I love playing with the possibilities and crossover of different art forms and there are different languages to tell stories.

### **Sound of Amy and Julian playing music.**

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Hope you liked that, recorded in our tiny bedroom in Coburg over a decade ago. Now I am, as I hope all of you are too, always learning, always adapting, expanding our hearts and minds. With thanks to Creative Victoria's support of these last few episodes of Gather season one, I'm excited to be doing work to make the podcast more accessible. A work in progress. So do bear with me or feel free to send me any thoughts. Through Arts Access Victoria, I was connected with the awesome Ramas McRae, a deaf filmmaker, Auslan lecturer, and general legend in the deaf community, who has also been part of putting on the Flow Festival of deaf arts recently, where I got to discover lots of great new artists and you should too. Ramas's first language is sign language. First Lithuanian, where he was born and now also Australian, known as Auslan. I got to interview him via Soom with an interpreter. So don't miss that as well over at [minervabooks.com](http://minervabooks.com). Ramas is a bit of a joker and I just wanted to give you a little taste here via the voice of interpreter, Paul Houston.

### **Man's voice (Paul Houston):**

So with that, I have a sign name for Ramas. Deaf people have sign names. They're important. The sign name you may think. Well, that looks like a wiggle sign. It's not. I'm not a wiggle. Okay. It's Ramas. And I'm coming to you from the land of Nam. Now I actually was born, not in Australia. Some people may think I look like an Aussie. Are you related to Ned Kelly? You're a Ned Kelly lookalike. Well, I'm not. I may look like an Aussie, but I wasn't born in Australia. I actually was born in Lithuania, Northeastern Europe. If you're unsure about your geography, okay, if you can visualise Sweden. We're across the sea from Sweden or a neighbor to Russia to its west. So I grew up in a family of deaf people, my parents are both deaf.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** So go and check that out and stay tuned for more on transcriptions and other goodies we're working on. I also had the pleasure of reading our book seed, *The Shape of Sound* by Fiona Murphy. For many years, she was compelled to hide her deafness, adapting to the world around her and the description of exhaustion she'd feel at the end of the day from the sheer attention given to listening felt all through her body. The book is an amazing exploration of Murphy's journey through career choices, injury, and her relationship with her deafness. Even accidentally joining a standup comedy workshop, designed to empower people with disabilities. This bit was gold. She's a poet and essayist too, a recent piece being interpreting the pandemic. And I highly recommend checking out her work. Luckily for us, she's allowed us to include a reading here which was originally recorded for West Words, an organisation, celebrating artists from the greater Western Sydney area. So a big thanks to them. Here's Fiona.

**Woman's voice (Fiona Murphy):**

Hi, my name is Fiona Murphy. I'm a deaf poet and essayist based in Western Sydney. I grew up in Bankstown and I went to school in Sefton and Lidcombe and I'm really proud to be able to contribute to the west words, YouTube channel. I think there's a lot of really exciting writing that's coming out of Western Sydney and it's such a thrill to be a part of that. My debut memoir, *The Shape of Sound* is out now through Text publishing. And it's about my experience of growing up with hearing loss. I was born profoundly deaf in my left ear and in my late twenties, early thirties, I was diagnosed with otosclerosis, which is a condition that is causing the bones in my ear to harden. And I'm progressively losing my residual hearing. For most of my life I kept my deafness a secret. It was something I was ashamed of, and I didn't want to inconvenience anyone. And I also didn't want to be thought to be deaf and dumb. So I spent a lot of my life passing as somebody with hearing, complete hearing, and that's been really challenging. And a lot of the time I hid my confusion in conversations and I kind of downplayed whenever I was lost or overwhelmed with noisy environments. Unfortunately, this is pretty common kind of experience with hearing loss. And it's something that I hope to see change with more and more deaf writing, being published and released in the world. Today I'm going to be reading from the chapter *In Sound* from my memoir. It's about when I'm in my mid twenties and I try hearing aids for the first time, which is a pretty incredible experience. Okay, I'll read now.

"Why now?: The audiologist asked after I sat down. "I've heard the technology has changed a lot," I replied. She nodded as she delicately measured my ears. "Your ears are the size of a child's. I'll have to order the smallest pair." Two weeks before the appointment, I had typed one deaf ear into Google. I'd recently met several people with hearing aids who were ecstatic about them. "It's just like before," they said. "Actually probably even better than before."

Better, better, better. The bait of better drummed in my head. Had a new type of hearing aid had been invented? Something smaller, faster slicker, something that could make me better. The search engine suggested that instead of one deaf ear, I must be looking for unilateral deafness. I casually scrolled through the search results expecting to find brand names of hearing aids, but recoiled when I read the impact of unilateral deafness. Irritability, social isolation, jumpiness, frequent headaches. One of the entries described people with unilateral deafness as often misdiagnosed with ADHD and suffering from quote "chronic interpersonal communication difficulties."

their body language and mannerisms awkward or unusual as they stare at other people's mouths or tilt their heads frequently in an almost bird-like manner. As I read through the list, each dot point, collided with a memory. Feeling frantic with confusion during conversations. Becoming swamped with fatigue in a crowded room. The shrill headaches that took days to shake. The grip of tension. I felt whenever I walked through crowds. I pictured my head bobbing along to conversations, pecking at words without breaking eye contact. Bile racing up my midline, I kept reading. People with unilateral deafness are often perceived as boorish. Domineering, socially awkward, and evasive. The descriptors seemed like neat euphemisms. Memories are being called cold, robotic, unrelenting, calculating and unfeeling reared up. Unlike during my hypochondriac moments, I was now confronted by a clinical description. Why did I ever think I could pass as hearing? My feelings of unease were no longer self-contained. I immediately booked an appointment at the closest audiology clinic, only a 20 minute walk away. I had to wait two weeks before things could get better.

By then the list had become a subsonic hum reverberating through me each time I looked at someone's lips or tilted my head to hear better. You are boorish. Awkward. Evasive. The beat of better changed to a dull drone. Broken, broken, broken. During the fortnight before my appointment, I stared at advertisements for hearing aids. In one, the text beneath a photograph of a man holding the hand of a much younger woman said, "My midlife crisis is obvious. My hearing aid is not." The technology described as discreet. Perhaps my secret would be mine to keep.

And that's from my memoir, *The Shape of Sound*. In it, I also describe the process of becoming a part of the deaf community and learning Auslan, which was a life-changing experience to go from being so ashamed of my hearing loss to discovering it's something I could be proud of and excited and open about. One in six Australians have some hearing loss health concern, be that deafness or tinnitus, amongst a range of other issues. So it's incredibly common and more than likely that you know somebody in your life with a hearing health issue. My book covers a whole range of ways that you can communicate more clearly with people with hearing health concerns and be more empathetic to understanding what it's like to live in a body that can't hear as well as other bodies. And that this can be a proud and an exciting thing. Thanks so much for having me.

**Music by Gelareh Pour plays and continues under host Amy's voice.**

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):**

My big heartfelt thanks to Fiona for writing this beautiful book. Also to my guest Ramas McRae and to all who invite us on the journey of learning about accessibility and in discovering the amazing creativity in the deaf and disabled world. Thank you. We move now to the world of Miles Franklin and theatrical adaptation in the time of COVID. And the book *Drawing Sybylla* by Odette Kelada. This magical book was the winner of the 2016 Dorothy Hewett award for an unpublished manuscript and was published in 2017 by University of Western Australia. This was one of those books I tore through in a day, spell bound by the rich writing, each chapter, placing you in the world of a different era, style, and woman's experience of writing. Where like in the *Yellow Wallpaper*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Writing is an act often challenged or forbidden." This is the thread that ties the book together, peeling back the layers of wallpaper and revealing the talented women hidden beneath. This is a book of intertextual layers described by the award judges as, "Providing the reader with a

tremendously original and imaginative set of pictures about the ideas of creativity and using language to make stories over and over again." This book is in fact adapted from Kelada's PhD, and we use extensive research into a creative feast mixing fact and fiction, real and imagined. The pluck of Miles Franklin's character, Sybylla Melvyn, Anna Franklin herself has won over hearts since it was published in 1901. Where choosing a writing life, a brilliant career in place of accepting a rich handsome suitor is presented as such. "I am given to something that a man never pardons in a woman. You will draw away as though I were a snake when you hear it." So now we make Christine Davey and award-winning actor writer and director and head of Skin of our Teeth, a Geelong based theatre company, dedicated to presenting exciting, exhilarating, and egalitarian theatre. New works, adaptations and classics. When I spoke to her, she was two weeks out from submitting her PhD, which sounded super interesting. Practice-led and about making scripts screen or plays more dynamic beyond just text on a page with memes and images and notes. Adapting scripts into living works. Look out for it to have a read. Here she is.

**Woman's voice (Christine Davey):**

My name is Christine Davey and I own and operate a very small independent theatre company called Skin of our Teeth productions, which is based in Geelong and surrounds. We've also done work at, we did a performance of Midsummer Night's Dream at the Otway Fly. And we were of course, scheduled to do a beautiful regional tour this year of our production of My Brilliant Career, which of course every piece of that has had to be dismantled because of COVID. As a practitioner, I've been sort of doing this for many, many decades now. I've worked both here and overseas. I have two bachelor's degrees. I have a master's from VCA and in screenwriting and creative writing. And I'm about two weeks away from submission for my PhD. That last hill is always the hardest one to climb.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** What led you to adapt My Brilliant Career for the stage? How did you approach it?

**Woman's voice (Christine Davey):** I just always enjoyed it as a novel and I think everybody's very familiar with the film, probably. And I think it's still a really good film. It stands up really well, I think. And again, just because I'm very interested in kind of age and gender representation, the fact that that Stella Miles Franklin wrote that novel when she was 18, still just blows me away. For that, I would put her in the fabulous company of Mary Shelly, the fact that these women kind were writing this incredible stuff of at that age. And if they were men, they would've had a very different career trajectory. Just a fact. And then I thought, oh, because my company's also kind of dedicated to new works and adaptations. We're also always interested in the things that obviously are going to be either new or adapted from original sources that are, and again, from a purely mercenary point of view, not going to cost us an arm and a leg in royalties. So that's why one of the reasons, and also I just know what this is fun. And because it's actually written in the first person it's kind of easier to do by the same as I did an adaptation of Jane Eyre a couple of years earlier. The same kind of thing, because it's written in the first person, it's actually much easier to adapt to a theatrical setting because you've got the kind of inbuilt narrator already there. So, that was one of the reasons. And just because it's got interesting characters. And I just thought, how can I kind of do this in a, I know that you didn't get to see it, Amy. Hopefully when we do it again next March, you'll get to

see it. It's a very kind of Brechtian in style. It's a very kind of epic theatre style in that where we are not relying on sets and everybody's on stage the whole time. It's kind of a very rolling kind of fast paced thing. So that was kind of the idea as well. And then, so I applied for some, this is way back in 2019, I think now. Might be even earlier, 2018 maybe? Can't remember now. Applied for some local government funding to have some sort of creative development for it and some rehearse readings and that was achieved. So we had some lovely creative development sessions with some actors and then had some rehearse readings of it, which were very successful and welcome. And for me, it was interesting because I had the rehearse readings about a month apart, two of them. So in between that time, I actually worked on the script before the next rehearse reading. And the audience was actually also asked for feedback. So they were kind of given sign up sheets and box pop sheets and emails and things to actually let me know what they, A, liked about the thing, what they didn't like about it, what they hoped to see, et cetera. And I actually did take that advice on board to then go to the next stage of developments, which was kind of like the first draft. And then we went to full production in March 2020, and we got through two shows before we shut down. So then we basically just went into hiatus. Again, so as I said before, I used that whole kind 2020 to go, "Okay, great. All right. Well, if I can't go ahead, let's try and go ahead for next year." While I got on the VCE list and I got at the seasonal at La Mama and I booked a whole lot of venues at Bargara and Bellarine and Potato Shed out on the Bellarine Peninsula and Warrnambool and everything was set in place of course for 2021. And then 2021 happened. And I can remember now, you know what going to these venues and talking to the venue organisers and thinking and they're going, "Oh, well, in the event of COVID still around next year." And all of us going, "Yeah. Oh, as if that's going to happen because we'll all be vaccinated by then." How hilarious. Anyway, so we got through three shows at La Mama and then we got through two shows at Geelong. So we got five shows in this year. So I guess that's what 150% on last year.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** And did you say there was a radio play version of it in there somewhere as well?

**Woman's voice (Christine Davey):**

Yes. Yes. So, so a fabulous company in Geelong called Greater Geelong Creative Ink have got some funding to do some radio plays and they kindly offered to have My Brilliant Career as one of those plays. So we used pretty much the same cast as did the original readings to go and do. Yeah. So, that's available as well. And of course that was also available for the students as well for this year who didn't get to see it in person. They can still read the script and they can still read the book and they can still listen to the radio play. Geez, it's got more lives than a cat, this play.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** I love it.

**Clip from radio play. Cello music plays and woman's voice speaks over.**

My Brilliant Career by Christine Davey adapted from the novel by Stella Miles Franklin. My Brilliant Career is the story of Sybylla Melvyn, a girl growing to woman, growing to adventure. This is the narrative of a burgeoning nation, a forming feminism, a woman coming into her own as a human, an artist, and an independent

thinker. My Brilliant Career is a tale of language, landscape, and love set to the rhythm of a complicated national consciousness.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** The arts have been hit hard by COVID and there's been a mix of adapting ways of working as well as adapting expectations and mindsets.

**Woman's voice (Christine Davey):**

Like everybody in this industry, none of us have been unaffected by this. I will go on the record, however, to saying that I completely agree with following the health message. And I completely agree with lockdowns when they're necessary and all those sorts of things. So I'm not one of these small businesses that are saying, "We should open up and let it rip." Because I don't think we should. And that's again, very personal reasons for that. I've had cast members or crew members who are immunocompromised well for whatever reason. I've had cast members who are undergoing or have just finished undergoing chemo. So I want to keep those people safe. And at the end of the day, it is just a play. I think we really do have to work out what's important in life in these situations and go, "You know what, our priorities, absolutely need to change." Doesn't make it easy though. It really makes it awful and hard and horrible in the fact that I spent the entirety pretty much of 2020 planning this fabulous regional tour for My Brilliant Career and doing all sorts of wonderful things, and got it on the VCE syllabus and machinations that I've put into place every single one of them's crumbled. Which obviously doesn't just affect me. It affects every single person I've dealt with in this process.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Well, yeah, this episode is about adaptation. So I did want to ask you about, and it sounds like with your PhD area as well, your thoughts on working across different art forms, aural, to theatre, to written and how they can interconnect and what they each can do as art forms?

**Woman's voice (Christine Davey):**

Yeah. So my first adaptation was Pride and Prejudice, which I did, when was that? Oh, that was pretty much down our first year of operation, 2015. And so I've done that. I've done Jane Eyre, My Brilliant Career. I'm working now on adaptation of On The Beach. And I suppose one of the reasons I like adaptation and again, maybe this is also why I like kind of cross platform stuff, is that I just like it. It's still like it's an interesting thing to do. Obviously the original source material I think has to be good, otherwise you're just pushing it uphill. But when the original source material is good and it's still going to be resonating, I think again, that's a good kind of clue for it. If you look at any of those things like Jane Eyre and Pride and Prejudice, On the Beach, they've still got sort of incredibly resonating themes for us now. On the Beach, particularly like kind of obviously sort of a little bit in the middle of that adaptation now. And it's frightening how similar things are to 1957 when that was written. What I like about the whole concept of studying screenplay and playwriting is that, as I said before, I really think in lots of ways, there's an interesting crossover that not many of us including myself are kind of taking advantage of. We have this idea, I think, that what goes on, on stage can't for some reason ever go on, on film. And of course it can and vice versa. And I think in lots of ways, stage plays these days are becoming more filmic. They're becoming more reliant on elements of kind of media or projections or kind of soundscapes, those sorts of things. As creative

protection is, we just have to keep kind of evolving, that's how we don't die. That old saying of what's his name, Darwin, didn't talk about the survival of the fittest. You talked about survival of the most adaptable.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** How do we keep adapting and evolving as creative people? One thing that Davey did with her, My Brilliant Career adaptation was bring in other famous Australian characters from Franklin's life, such as Henry Lawson, who helped to get My Brilliant Career published and Vida Goldstein from the suffragist movement.

**Clip from radio play:**

**Woman speaker:**

Life is made up of little things.

**Group speak:**

Life.

**Woman speaker:**

To lie on the moss and drink of the beauties of nature and revolution.

**Woman speaker:**

Hello Vida.

**Woman speaker:**

Vida Goldstein ran for parliament four times.

**Woman speaker:**

Five, but who's counting. Never one, mustn't grumble, social reformer, magazine editor, fighter for women, ally.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Adaptations allow for these sorts of expansions or creative liberties, sometimes exploring the lives of a book as well. Like in the recent film adaptation of Little Women by Greta Gerwig, where Alcott's experience of publishing the book was also woven into the story of the film. Adaptation is fraught, but fun. I asked Christine a final question about the importance of regional theatre and touring.

**Woman's voice (Christine Davey):**

It's so important. And I'm sure you know this anyway, but even in Geelong here, the vast majority of stuff that we have at our Geelong art center is from somewhere else. And I find it offensive. It's basically kind of like saying, "You people, none of you around here are good enough. We have to bring in something from outside." And one of the kind beautiful things about this tour is going to be, "You know what, we're regional too." Kind of, I'm very, very cognisant of casting regional theatre makers in all of the plays that we do. We get regional theatre makers because they're good and because they also understand the concept of work and they also understand the concept of regional theatre. It's a different thing. So it was going to be wonderful. And we were going to kind of smaller halls, particularly in Birregurra and places like that. And to kind of basically say to regional audiences, "Here's a regional product," I

think it makes a difference. And we just kind of know, I think because we're regional, and because we don't always have state-of-the-art theatres to work in, because I for one, can't afford them, we.

We're used to going, "Okay, well here's our set. Here's our props where it all fits in a van. We'll see you at 11 o'clock, and the show will go on at one." I think we're very much more adaptable because of that reason. Ballarat people, I think like Geelong people, they seem to be a bit more practical about things, a bit more, "Yep, where's the work, let's do it, good." Yeah, so hopefully next year I'll be able to give you, I've got news, but I can't give it to you right now because it's all embargoed, but it looks like that we'll be able to do something, not My Brilliant Career, but something else as a regional tour for 2022.

### **Music by Gelareh Pour plays under host Amy's voice.**

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Exciting stuff from Skin Of Our Teeth theatre, keep your eye on them. And big love to all the creative people working their butts off and hearts out to bring us essential art and stories, support them wherever you can. Another one of these now, it's my pleasure to be joined by musician Gelareh Pour, then play her piece created especially for GATHER. How lucky are we? In preparation, I read lots of books about Iran, history, fiction, poetry and memoir with Melody Moezzi's, The Rumi Prescription leading the way. Structured around different themes of life, such as wanting isolation and distraction, and connecting them to her learning Farsi and poetry with her Rumi obsessed father. Just as in The Shape of Sound and Drawing Sybylla, there are questions of expression and communication, translation and adaptation. And I was struck by the Rumi quote, "Better to be of the same heart than of the same tongue." This struck me as I connected with deaf artists in the Flow Festival, and in thinking about the magic of art. Moezzi states that, in Persian, also known as Farsi, the word for poem, share, means song as well. By no coincidence, Rumi's classical Persian verse isn't meant to be read while sitting, but rather sung while spinning. I can also now imagine it being signed in a dance of the hands. But now to Gelareh.

### **Woman's voice (Gelareh Pour):**

I am Gelareh Pour. I play kamancheh, Persian spiked fiddle, and ghaychak. And these instruments are ancient instruments from Iran. And I've been playing them since I was seven. I also sing and I am a music instructor, composer and I've done some research in music, mainly at the music college here.

I describe it as a diasporic music because this is who I am. Many people who live in Australia are having different backgrounds. And so many musicians, even if they were born here, their parents were not born here, so they have a lot of different interests when it comes to music and creations.

So, even when I sit next to other musicians, they do sound diasporic as well. And imagine when we have this sort of musical interaction, I can only say diasporic, intercultural, contemporary, Iranian-Australian, yeah, this is how it sounds like. And it can be anything you can think of, or none of the things that you are thinking it is. Just listen.

### **Haunting music by Gelareh Pour plays.**

**Woman's voice (Gelareh Pour):** Yeah, I love Persian poetry, especially the modern Persian poetry, which breaks the rules. That is something that I always do in my music, knowing the traditions and classical trainings and knowing where the music is coming from, and knowing all the modes and everything is very important. So, we know the classic form of poetry, and you can write that, but then you decide to break it and do it another way. And that way, when you get out of those, sometimes those forms are limiting to me. And I find when you get out of those forms, and those limiting structures, you start amplifying more feelings and making deeper works. So, this is my interest in modern poetry, that it always amazes me how any time of my life that when I had a specific crisis or feelings, I could just go to these poems and they kind of reflex, because they're very flexible as well, you can just get whatever sort of meaning you want from them. There are many musicians who write their own lyrics. When I was back in Iran I was very good with writing poems and stuff. But when I moved here, I haven't felt it yet. Hopefully one day I will. But because our poetry is very rich in Iran, I just have too much of a resource to even be worried about, "Oh my God, I'm running out of poems to make things on." And thank God, in Iran poets believe that music brings more life to their work. So, usually when you ask them, "What about the copyright and stuff?" They're like, "Don't worry about it. Just make the music. It's all good." So we always credit them, but I got to the point that I don't have to ask them, because every time I asked, they just said, "Don't even ask us."

And it's just like, imagine words, lot of resource, music, and my love to visual art and imagination. And more than that, place and people. These are the things that are gathering in the creation of one thing for me, and this is all I think about. Sometimes I pick the poem on the stage with no preparations because I really like improvising and picking the poem on the spot is another part of the improvisation because it just reflects to how I feel and what the audience in that venue are giving me.

Sometimes I do alter. It's not like I pick a poem and it's 10 lines and I sing it all back to back. I alter a lot and I take what I like from it. So I'm very inspired by them, but sometimes I don't add things, but I take a lot of things out, and sometimes I emphasise some parts. My focus on instrumentally is on kamancheh. Kamancheh is, in English they call it Persian spiked fiddle. It looks like a little cello that has a little spike under it. It sits on your lap or on your chair and you turn the instrument around to change your string. So, you know on violin you move your right hand to change a string? With kamancheh you turn the biggest part of the instrument, which is the instrument itself, just so weird. But that's why it's called spiked fiddle. This instrument has four strings. It traditionally had three silk strings, but after the creation of violin, kamancheh is ancestor of violin. So, the violin was built based on kamancheh with four strings. And then it came back to Iran and kamancheh got inspired by violin again, and the fourth string was added to it. And material of the strings was changed like similar to violin. This instrument has animal skin under its bridge, and that is why the sound of it is so much more earthy and nasal compared to violin. The piece I made was mainly played with that using my pedals. So it's a little bit electronic as well with lots of pedals and loopings and some voice. And it is on a poetry by Seyyed Ali Salehi

The name was interesting because, the poetry is, To Fall In Love In Winter, Only To Die Before Summer. And that's the problem with being in Southern Hemisphere, because this poetry is written on Northern Hemisphere. So, our winter and summers are not the same. So I was just thinking, "Okay, if I translate this to, To Fall In Love

In, basically it'll be February. So, February is the beginning of winter in Iran, and then, To Die At The End Of, what is it, Summer. Again, it's not going to translate in Australia." So, Brian helped me with recording this song. Thank you, Brian. And he also helped me to pick the name. It is called To Fall In Love In Winter, Only To Die Before Summers End.

### **Haunting music by Gelareh Pour plays**

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Thank you, Gela. How lucky we are to have you in Australia and in Ballarat.

Well, it's been another amazing journey through books, creativity, and ideas, and before we say goodbye, between lockdowns I was able to drop into The Independent Bookstore on Skipton Street here in beautiful Ballarat and get the low down for you on this new model of supporting independent authors to get their books to readers.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):**

My name is Bradley Shaw. I'm the managing partner of The Independent bookshop here in Ballarat and the managing partner of another business, which publishes the books for the bookshop called Shoreline Publishing.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** And it all happens in this beautiful shop on Skipton Street. We can hear the traffic flowing past. It's the second day coming out of lockdown.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** It is the second day coming out of lockdown, thank goodness. We are on Skipton Street. It's a wonderful premise. It came about by fate. We were looking for an office for the publishing company. We wanted to get out of home. It was growing and growing rapidly over the last two years. So COVID has had its benefits, unfortunately, and we were driving past here and we saw this beautiful building and Hattie and the Wolf who was around the corner, moving out to around the corner, used to have this shop, so we took it on and then we decided we're going to make it a bookshop as well. How would we use the space? That's what we decided, and we thought we'll make it a bookshop. The bookshop has really taken on board, I think, a lot of people's perceptions of new authors, where books really come from and its simplicity of presenting them in a way that's not over commercialised, I guess is the word. Because retail and publishing have to be a commercial entity. They have to have a business sense, that everyone's in it for the money. We're in it more for the message as well. We want people to know they're independent. They're new authors and they're special authors who are trying to get their messages and stories out there and they just want to help and find new readers. That's all.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Amasing. Yeah. It's such a unique setup really, isn't it?

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** It is. It is, and it's fun setting it up. It's been really cool, keeping it welcoming and appealing, but also presenting the books in a way and making sure that the books have a good place in the market. They are available to all the bookshops around Australia and New Zealand, around the world, but this exclusive entity and this exclusive design is, I guess, just a stepping stone for that to

be able to ... for other bookshops to see what they look like on a shelf, to see what people's appeal is.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** It's amazing what you're doing. You've got it all going on from up here upstairs, surrounded by boxes of amazing books.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** Yes, and there's more coming. So Christmas time is going to be huge.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Ah. Of course.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** It's going to be great. We are hopeful that ... it's been such a lag in the industry of retail, and I say that on the whole general sense, but as a publisher, yes, we're in it for a business, but as a bookstore, we're in it for the benefit of helping readers find our authors. That's the end goal and that's what we want to create. I think Christmas and coming up to occasions and having opportunities for people to buy our books is exciting for us. It'll be our first Christmas. We weren't here. We moved in here in May, so we haven't been here for a lot of the ... and because the lockdown, we haven't had a lot of the ceremonial periods. We weren't here for Father's Day, Mother's Day, Easter. So all these elements of the year we've missed, we're hopeful that Christmas will be something that the community and town and online as well can buy our books and really enjoy our writers, our authors.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Would you want to show me downstairs where the shop is?

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** Absolutely.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Let's do it. Thank you very much. Oh, it's such a beautiful little unique shop, isn't it? Here's Jody.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** One of Jody's nobilities is her modesty, not just her beauty. But the design of the shop is her. There is nothing in here that ... in fact, anything I touch, I get smacked on the hand with, it is her artistry, her personable touch. I think it's the look and feel, the rustic of it, and I think the authenticity. Because the way we wanted our books to be seen was not at high end gloss and just keep it plain and simple and put them in an environment that complements that. Jody's done that really well with ... they're on trestle tables on old doors. I mean, it's...

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Oh, yeah. The teamwork.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** So she's the architect of all our children's books. She coordinates the design of the books and such through the publishing company. But one of the things too that I hope that your listeners will understand is we also support other self-published authors or other authors published by other companies. It's about being independent. That's what the store is called, The Independent Bookstore, because it's about being that independent brand. We're not part of the big

end commercial cycles and big mechanisms of publishing and retail. We're a small, independent, helping small authors looking for a stepping stone.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Oh, it's so important. So yeah. Tell us about the mix. There's so much going on in here. It's amazing.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** Well, yeah, where to start is right. These are local authors, *Winter in Ballarat* by Liv Lorkin. Another one, these aren't our books published, but they're here and they're submitted. As I say, they're put on display, and these of course are our books that we've created. The other one is *Splish, Splosh, Splash* is a local girl. She's in actually in high school in Ballarat, which is great. So Billy Cannes, he's a local author in Williamstown. Comes to Ballarat, his daughter lives here. So again, there's a lot of personal elements of the books we choose and books we work with for the authors as well. But yeah, the bottom core is, of course, hopefully having people read them and enjoy them. There's no point having them look all nice on a book shelf as much.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** You were talking before about the idea of a community, which you can feel in this space and in your whole philosophy.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** Yeah. Well, when people come in, they're a bit sort of puzzled. We have people come in and they ask if we have the new John Grisham or Stephen King book, which is fine. We're a bookshop, that's a fair assumption. But again, they also come in looking for independent books that we don't have yet, that are published by other companies. Of course, we take books as they're invited to us, we don't actually go out and seek books. We're not actually trying to be building a big retail brand. We want keep it personable to our community, as you say. The community of writers that we have and we support are selected by us as publishers, but also selected by us as retailers who we see the quality in their work. The books have to have that respect and I'm very passionate about books having a quality, because you've got to respect it as a product, not just as a story, as a person's art. It's important that it's showcased and presented, and people, when they come into the shop, are surprised that we've taken so much time and can care to help these authors become that ... What's the word we call it, Jody? Reach their dreams. Some of these stories are very personable. They're memoirs of stories of experiences a lot of these people have had, and big publishers won't take them unless you've got one million Facebook followers or you're a celebrity already. So the hard yards, to write a book and become from zero to something, that's a huge leap for a lot of people. This is a great platform for them to have that step and to hopefully grow from there. A lot of these authors have enjoyed the experience, have signed on with us for multiple books. Some of these are going to become series over the next two years. There'll be people who come in here and get a whole volume of the books and become a follower of that author, and that's exciting.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Making dreams come true.

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** It's what we're trying to do, as corny as it is.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** I love it.

**Woman's voice (Jody):** That's what we say here, that we're surrounded by people's dreams, and that's what makes it so great to come into work each day and put new books on the shelf as we put them out. This is somebody's dream becoming a reality, so it's a great feeling.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Oh, yeah. It's such a special thing to be able to do. So obviously COVID has affected things along the way. Are you hoping to have people in here for events and things?

**Man's voice (Bradley Shaw):** Absolutely. We've got every weekend up until Christmas, scheduling. We are looking to have book signings. We'll probably have one author in the morning and one in the afternoon, just to try to consolidate, because we've got a number of authors in Melbourne and local. So we really want to help build that profile and build that, I think, as you say, community awareness, that this is a place that people can meet other people and understand an artist or a writer or a person, and in a good space and help them and be a part of that as well. We're planning a lot of events, as permissible, and as things hopefully sustain without more lockdowns and grow and people get more comfortable going out again and shopping, we're very optimistic of having a good service, a good product to provide for people to enjoy.

**Woman's voice (host Amy Tsilemanis):** Fabulous. Yeah, it's a beautiful space, which I can just imagine people mingling and meeting each other and discovering books. Thank you, dear listeners. It would mean the world to us if you'd leave a review on Apple, iTunes or the like, or just drop us a line and say hi. You can find us, Minerva's Books & Ideas, on Facebook and Instagram or by email. Stay tuned for more in our accessibility work and a party in December to celebrate the first season of Gather and five years of Minerva's. We'd love to see you there, maybe through screens, but we'll be together. This episode was produced by me, Amy Tsilemanis, with sound engineering by the amazing Dav Byrn. For links to all the books, music and awesomeness mentioned, or to support the show, check out the show notes or the blog with extra images and things, including my video interview with Ramas McRae. See you for the final episode themed collecting very soon.

**Woman's voice (Leanne Hall):**

It's like the inside of Amy's brain tipped out into the computer, coming out in sound waves.