Wellness and The Arts: How Music and Live Performances Nurture Health, Joy and Child Development Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Welcome

Welcome to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. I'm Dr. Amy Coopersmith, a doctor-prepared nurse practitioner, and this show is about empowering you to live a radiant, healthy, and balanced life.

I'm very excited to introduce today's guest, Amelia Fulmer. Amelia is an arts leader, educator, and community connector. She taught music to students from kindergarten through 12th grade before moving into arts leadership.

She now serves as executive director at the Fitzgerald Performing Arts Center in Palm Coast. She brings people together through live performance and creative partnerships.

She believes that the arts have the power to energize communities and revive the spirit. Welcome. Hi, so nice to be here. Thank you for coming today. Yes, thanks for having me.

So you've been involved with the auditorium for many years. Can you share a bit about what drew you to this field? Well, actually, I've been with the auditorium for seven years.

I've been in Flagler schools for 37 years. So I taught elementary music. When I got there, I really was a little bit, what am I doing here? You know, but little children and having fun and kindergarten, you got used to it.

It's pretty rowdy time. But I taught elementary music, I taught high school chorus and then I came into arts management, I went back to school for arts management and took over for my friend Lisa McDevitt.

She was a great friend of mine and she and I had a lot of fun at the auditorium. So it just seemed natural to go there and I was fortunate enough to be hired to have that position and I've been selling tickets and kind of living that great showbiz life ever since.

putting on wonderful events for our community. Yeah, we try to bring lots of things for everybody. I think we've done a little better the last few years at bringing some shows that are a little bit different demographic or more cultural so that we can make revenue.

You know, everybody likes all kinds of music, right? Absolutely. And I think having culture in our community, everybody wants it. We want different experiences.

And so the variety of things that you offer I think really supports us. I believe that too. And I think sometimes we just have to find the niche of what people like in music.

Sometimes you can go to a concert and 15 minutes in you know it's not for you.

Amelia's Path to Arts Leadership

Right. So you try to avoid that happening very often. But there are also people that like what they know and know what they like and that's what they come to.

And that's okay, because they bring in the revenue to bring in some newer things that some of us can try on. Sometimes we're pleasantly surprised if we say, that's not usually my thing, but I'll go.

Let's say friends are going, okay, fine, I'll go. I'm like, oh, I actually liked that. Absolutely. Sometimes it's just getting off the couch and getting into the door.

So about the Fitzgerald Performing Arts Center, can you give us a brief history of how that came to be? Well, the Fitzgerald Performing Arts Center was actually the Flagler Auditorium.

We have a board, the Flagler Auditorium Governing Board. That was put into place when it was voted on by a bond issue to be built for the community way back in 1988. That was my first year of teaching here.

Oh, wow. In 1989, I brought 250 kids to that stage. So I really feel very strongly about the power of music in children's lives and adults' lives. So most of my adult life has been there.

So once Fitzgerald Performing Arts Center came to be as Flagler Auditorium, they built a beautiful building with a band room, a chorus room, a black box theater, a huge thousand seat venue with orchestra pit.

They've done some beautiful things and mainly it was for the children of Flagler County to be educated in the arts, but it's a shared facility. It's very few of its kind because we have a non-profit direct support organization, just like Flagler Education Foundation is a direct support organization.

We support the arts and keeping that building in the best shape it can be in, keeping the programming towards our mission. and classifying things so that it doesn't get used just for people to rent and town and gown.

We really take some serious thought to every time there's a show on that stage how our resources are being spent and making sure that it comes back to Flagler Schools every time and back to our community.

I love that. So you mentioned children. How do you feel that being involved in the arts helps support the wellness and development of children? Well, I think children are, from the beginning, we start with their memory.

You know, when I taught elementary school, I remember singing, you know, do you know the muffin man, the muffin man who lives on, and so we would say, do you know Jennifer who lives where?

And we'd go around the circle with first graders and find out who didn't know where they lived. That seems simple. But the power of that, they'd go home and say, Mom, where do we live?

Because I need to know for tomorrow's music class. So when it gets my turn to sing where I live, I know where I live. And so we taught them their address.

A lot of us learn the multiplication tables with music. We learn the alphabet with music. And then when students get older, when they get to be middle school and high school age, if they're performing, it's a powerful moment for them to go on stage and perform in front of their parents.

No matter what's going on at home, you got all your parents' eyes on you. And overcoming the obstacle of being afraid and going on the stage and having a positive experience helps us self-esteem.

So there's just so I've always believed that you know music leads the way. Absolutely. When my daughter was very young, we taught her our phone number that way and we just made up a song and then she could probably still sing it to you today.

Well, and that's how the radio station app operates because they get a lot of jingles and that's how we remember where to get our new cabinets or whatever, mattresses or whatever becomes in the songs and the jingles that have been put together.

I still remember the newspaper commercial from when I was a kid that they played on the radio. Once in a while I was thinking, oh my gosh, 40 years ago.

It stays in our brain, doesn't it? It's amazing. Can you share a story? Is there a particular student that you felt that just music just changed their life?

Oh gosh, well my own son.

How Music Supports Children's Growth

I mean my son went through my course classes and my drama classes and you know he didn't give us a whole lot of credit for that then because he loved math and science and he's a chemical engineer but he will tell me thank goodness mom that I took this course in drama classes because I had to do a presentation for the other engineers and they were all scared to go after him after me.

So I think having that experience of being in front, getting prepped, also musicians, student musicians learn to work on something every single day and they can't procrastinate and you think about There's a lot of people in adult life that still try to do things last minute.

And they don't ever learn that time management. And I think that's something we give to our kids that we don't necessarily think about so much is we're giving them ability to work every day towards a bigger goal.

Nice. I feel like when I was a kid we all had to do music class and we all had not had to but got to experience different aspects of the arts and when my kids were going through school I felt like they could choose that but it was in place of something else and do you feel like as a you know that our system is maybe not giving the arts as much attention as it should get?

Well, I think that's everywhere. I don't think we do a very good job of publicity for ourselves in the same way. I think we could learn a lot from sports.

If you think about if you watch the NFL and how things are hyped up a lot more, you know, being a trumpeter in the high school band could be a lot more glamorous.

But I also think the elementary is where we really sometimes we lack. We don't have enough music in the elementary levels in schools because schools are so large.

You know, if you had 1,200 kids in a school and you've got one music teacher, how do they reach all of those students? But the resources it would take to have enough music teachers for all of them and to meet all the other demands of the school system.

So I think our elementary music, those teachers are rock stars in their school because the kids just don't see them enough. But it's not an easy fix. It's a difficult resources situation because we have big schools.

So you try to incorporate music every day, maybe in the cafeteria and morning announcements and being in things after school. So I think it's not enough just to say, well, the schools have music.

Try to go out and find music for your kids. There's a lot of opportunities out there. You just have to kind of look around. They're there. Some more involvement from the parents in finding those opportunities.

Right, because we have the Flagler Youth Orchestra and they meet after school and that's a totally free free courses that they can take. They have to rent the instrument, but it's not very expensive, but it's a lot of work.

It's a wonderful program and they do three concerts a year at the auditorium. Youth Orchestra, which is an amazing thing for Flagler schools to have. But then we have band and we have chorus and a lot of the elementary schools have chorus after school, but then there's quite a few private private schools here in town that are not they do after school music and lessons and things like that.

So if they're really into it, you know, they got to go over and visit some of our friends in town that have they do that for a living. Yeah, and that can actually, participating in music can translate into math skills as well.

So it benefits many parts of their development. Well, you know, I've heard that a lot of times, but I'm terrible at

math. So maybe not. Maybe, let's fact check that.

I've heard that and I think that there is something to it. But I think music makes you better at everything just because of what it does to your overall emotional well-being.

It gives you a chance to rest and digest. You know, let's celebrate music for the sake of music's sake. Yes. So speaking of emotional well-being, so we talk a lot on the show about health and wellness, and we've talked a lot about our physical health, but how can music contribute to our emotional wellness?

Well, I mean, you go to come to the Fitzgerald and see a show. Um, we do a lot of groups singing together and it almost feels like a great big hug. You know, this, this year alone, you know, we will, we will rock you and you know, the rest of the song, right?

We have one night of queen, um, sweet Caroline, Bob, Bob, Bob will all be there for the Daniel diamond tribute. So also played at every Red Sox game. But doesn't it feel like a big group hug when you get to sing with everybody in a space like that?

You're in the dark but your brain just knows all the words and you have so much fun together. So singing in groups actually increases our level of oxytocin, which is the bonding hormone, and that's gonna enhance connectedness and reduce loneliness.

See? Yeah. So you gotta think about it.

Arts, Wellness, and Emotional Connection

You gotta think about coming to a show, because a lot of times we get busy, and it seems like a lot of work to come to the show, and once you're there and the lights go out and the music starts, 90 minutes goes by quickly, and you just have to think of it as, I deserve to go to a show.

Yes, and then you'll be better at other things when you take that time out to boost your well-being. Yeah, it gets us out of fight or flight and turns us into rest and digest a little bit.

You know, kind of sit down and take a minute. There was a study that found that just 20 minutes at a live music event increased sense of well-being by 21 percent.

I don't know where they found the 21, not 20, but 21 percent, but increases our well-being. It also our feelings of self-worth, closeness to others, and mental stimulation.

Well, I know that's true when I watch the patrons walk out of the auditorium. That's my favorite thing to do is when the show is over, I go stand on the steps of the exit and I watch the people walk out and watch their faces.

And everyone's smiling. Smiling and they look different than when they came in. Oh, fabulous. All right, I'm going to have you hold that thought. We're going to pause for a break from our sponsor.

You're listening to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. Don't go anywhere. We'll be right back. Welcome back to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy.

I'm Dr. Amy Kruper-Smith and my guest today is Amy Fullmer. And before the break, we were talking about the importance of the arts and music and how it helps our children develop and how it helps adults as well in our wellbeing.

Yes, I'm so happy to be here, Amy. I'm so glad to talk about the auditorium and all of music and all the wonderful things that music brings to our lives.

Yes. And so we were talking about how attending live music events, you know, helps us even at a chemical level in

the brain. They've also done studies that show greater life expectancy, adding up to nine years on your life because of the improvement in mental wellness.

That's a great stat. So go to the plays and you live longer. Go to the music, go to the live music, go to all the folks, go to the performing arts, whether it be a play or music.

I will say our patrons, I have subscribers, they're people that have two tickets to every single show for the entire season. And that's kind of like our little club, the front row club there.

And they all come and sit together and have a great time and talk about what shows coming next. But that, singing along and being part of the group and the nostalgia, I think that's huge.

We all have kind of a playlist in our head of what we like to listen to and what brings us and grounds us and brings us back to a calm space. For me, it's the 80s.

I might like the 80s myself. Yeah, I mean we're 80s girls here so I just love listening to you know the Olivia Newton John and you know Barry Mandelow.

All I have to hear is maybe two measures and then I'm in like eighth grade again. You know and I don't need to be in eighth grade again but that's when times were easy and times weren't hard.

So you kind of just the nostalgia of it all and I think that's what brings our audiences back time and time again is coming in and feeling like you know a little secret because I know all the words to a song and I know and all everybody around me remembers when we used to sing those songs And we still think of each other in the same way we did when we were 17. From 17 to 70, emotion does not change.

It's a very emotional thing. Absolutely. And even you had the Beatles tribute band. And, you know, of course that was… just a little before my time, but we know those songs too.

Yes, because we grew up listening to them from our parents, or from our big brothers and sisters, I should say, for me. When I taught guitar, I used to teach about the Beatles, and every child had to have a favorite Beatle to do a biography on, and we learned to play Beatles songs, early Beatles, because they weren't too difficult.

but you know a lot of those kids had never heard of the Beatles and could not name a single one. Oh my goodness. So to me it was very powerful to try to bring them teach them those songs and then bring them to the 1964 concert to connect with those generations because that's the other thing that music does is you have an opportunity to connect the generations.

We're bringing a Taylor Swift tribute And a lot of our older patrons are like, well, like, you know, they're not Swifties and they don't understand the attraction.

And I was like, well, think about buying a ticket and well, I'll give my tickets away. No, you come, come see what they see. You want them to come to your shows.

You got to come to theirs too. And that's how we can use music to bridge the generations. And that's important to our wellbeing. Yeah, I think every generation they have music that their parents…

doesn't like, and I know it made me like it more when my mom didn't like my stuff. All right, so much of it is what we're exposed to. You know, and I have friends that have music that they listen to that I do not understand at all.

But I know it's because I just haven't listened to it long enough to understand what it's coming from. And so it's really important to be open-minded and come see some other things that you don't already know about.

And it's good for your brain, expand your horizons.

Generational Connections Through Music

It brings out meaningful conversations and just having fun together too. I see the joy in my friends that have music that I don't understand. I see them talk about going to those concerts and I see their faces and the joy and I go, there must be something in that.

I've just got to go figure it out and listen to it and have an open mind. And my friends kind of have to deal with me on the other end. I'm like, let's go.

And they're like, oh, really? I'm like, yes, we're going. And I think that's true. I didn't come to concerts very often at the auditorium when I was a teacher.

When my husband passed, I was 49 and he was 57. He had cancer. And after he passed, the auditorium saved my life because I was so depressed. But I would get dressed up and go, and Lisa would let me hand out programs and hang out there.

And she basically took me in to shows, and then I started bringing dates to the shows. And before long, it was just such a happy place. And coming as a widow, a young widow, going to a place that people wouldn't look at me sad.

They were there to have fun. And I was there to have fun. And so I believe in that strongly. If you're down and out, depressed, don't sit around at home by yourself.

Come on, buy a ticket. And I walk around the auditorium and I look for people that are sitting alone. Make sure they know some people. Go sit with them for a few minutes.

Check on everybody. We're a family. You should not ever feel alone at Flagler Auditorium or at Fitzgerald because it was built for you to come have a good time.

Wonderful. So you're not just a director, but you're a motivator and a social worker. Well, I mean, that's what the auditorium was built for, is to bring the community together.

And it disappoints me sometimes that I can't get them here more. I just want everybody, not just senior citizens, not just children. It's such a unique place because it touches everybody.

You know, a four-year-old and a tutu. And their mom's seeing them perform. Oh my gosh. You know, it's nothing like that little girl that looks at you and says, I went on the big stage.

You know, they're so cute. But then you also get the performers that come here. But those performers started just like the kids in my guitar class. You know, they started at 14. They didn't start being able to play like that.

And for the kids to see them on stage and understand, you know, they started just like me. Yeah. Why not you? You could do it too. If you put the work in.

Right, exactly. Absolutely. So in the community, I mean you mentioned it, we really have a sense of belonging when we attend these events. And it's also done as in we're doing it in a joyous way.

We're coming to do something fun together. You know, I think it's very important that we all try to find a way to be around when those things happen, when there's opportunities.

Like this year we have military bands, we have the Navy Band coming at Christmas, we have the Air Force Band and the Army Field Band and Chorus and all of those concerts are free to the public.

You just have to go on our website and see where tickets are being handed out. We usually give them away at sponsors and places like that. But that's a way to bring everybody together.

And those military bands are highly trained individuals. Most of them have masters in music. And you'll never find a better band to listen to. And we bring our students from the bands from Matanzas and FPC to come see the shows as well.

Now are the military bands, are they active duty or are they just more retired? I will say most of them, they audition them and then they go through basic training.

Oh wow. Because I'll say a lot of them are college, they went to college, they have a master's degree in clarinet. and they find out, they audition to be in those bands, and then when they're accepted, when there's an opening for a clarinet player, and then they do the basic training, and then they're paid, and they become officers in the military.

So they don't, I'm sure that there might be a chance, they know that there's a chance that they could go on active duty, but most of the time, their duty is to play and work for the government, and it keeps a lot of musicians working, I will say that.

How neat. And actually, when I was on active duty as a nurse, and we did post-deployment physicals, and the band came by, and I was like, the band? And they actually, their instruments all got blown up, but they were overseas.

Oh, sometimes, yeah, when there's times for them to travel. But most of them do, some of them are in Washington, like the United States Army Field Band, they're in Washington, and then they come and do a tour during the year.

And of course we're hoping our tour holds out this year, but we're excited about having… We don't have to do that many free military concerts, but they like to come here because we always treat them well and we always have a local restaurant feed them and take care of them and we're fortunate.

Everybody likes to come to Flagler County and to the Flagler Auditorium. Artists, we try to treat them like it's home. Yeah.

Community Access, Touring Acts, and Closing Remarks

Well, I think we're up and coming here in Flagler. Oh, yes. More and more sightings of people just visiting us. And I think I think we'll see more of that and more performers come here.

Yes. Yes. Well, this year we have Gary Puckett and the Union Gap and we have Debbie Boone. The real Debbie Boone. The real Debbie Boone. She's gonna come sing You Light Up My Life and we're gonna hope to make enough money to put a few new lights in the theater.

Wonderful. It means a lot to us to have stars. Last year we had Crystal Gale and Lee Greenwood and Gatlin Brothers and so this year we're bringing Debbie Boone and we're bringing Swan Lake.

We're bringing the Texas Tenors. We're bringing groups that have national following. So people will come as far as Sarasota, people from Texas will even come.

A lot of them have residencies in Vegas and then they come and they take a tour during the year. And they come see us here. And they come right here and they love coming and they'll come and then they'll do well and then two years later we'll bring them back again just because we know those encore performances so well and they love to come.

That's so wonderful. So how do you find Axe to come here? What's that involved with? We're a Florida presenter. Okay. So that means we work with the other venues that present in Florida.

So we kind of get together and say, okay, what do you want to bring? I want to bring this and you want to bring that. And then we find three or four other theaters that want to bring it.

And then an agent will approach the agency that they hold or the band. and they will say okay you want to come to Florida this is how much money you're going to make and I got five nights for you with meals and hotels included because we put all of the performers in our local hotels.

We put them at the Hampton and the Hilton that we actually buy those rooms as part of the expense of the auditorium and a lot of people don't realize that.

and we only use local soul proprietor restaurants to feed them as well. But that's how we get them, is we route together. So like I have the Taylor Swift tribute, she's coming, she's going to be in Jacksonville, then the Van Weesel in Sarasota, and so also in the villages.

So we all kind of work together to do that. Florida's a big touring state because you get a lot of people that like to see shows. Wonderful. Is that because we have an older population or just people are cool in Florida?

I think in Florida you have a lot more people that move here with discretionary income and they also came from places that had a lot of culture. There were people that came to theater and went to see music a lot.

It's kind of a lifestyle and or they didn't get to do it enough when they were working and now that they're retired they're catching up on all the shows that they didn't make it to.

Again though, the nostalgia factor is huge. That's one thing I love about getting older because when I was a kid I didn't have money or time to do these things and now when I see somebody maybe from my teenage come through I'm like Yeah, it's fun.

Yeah, exactly. Well, if you're 17, you used to go out with your friends and see concerts. And you lose that sometimes when you're having a family and you're working in the middle of your life.

And when you start getting towards retirement age, you start thinking, you know, why shouldn't I still be going out with my friends? And, you know, if you come up to the auditorium and see a show with us, you'll see lots of people.

They just like, we're just 70 instead of 17. Age is just a number. Yes. Well, it's a little bit calmer, I will say. We don't stand as much. We sit and enjoy the concert.

But that makes it difficult, not difficult, but challenging sometimes for the auditorium because we have to have very engaging music. Because you've got people that have a lot of experience and they know what they like and they know what's good and they know what's not.

So we work really hard to work to make sure that whoever we bring has got a good reputation. We can see video, we can see where they have good numbers from other venues, and we know that they're going to give us a good time.

Well, I think you've done a fantastic job about bringing really awesome acts to our area. Well, I don't do it alone. I have a lot of friends that have good taste all over the state and fortunately we're able to be in that circuit and we've been able to keep up with the equipment and the materials that they need to have those shows because every show has a writer.

And that's important to this community and to the students because if we keep a sound system that we need for a pro show, then the students get to use that same sound system.

Wonderful. So how do people find out more about what shows are coming or how they can get involved? If you go to FlaglerEntertainment.com, you will find our website.

We are about to launch a new website, which will be a little bit more interactive. But if they go there now, it'll take you to ETICS and you can see everything we have happening from school shows to the St.

Augustine Orchestra. You know, we also have the FPC Jazz Band. This weekend, we have Motown & Mo, which is a community show of community people. But they are there.

It's a great show. They're packed. I mean, we've sold out everything except for some balcony seats. So that's a fun show. And if you know people, you don't have to know anybody in it.

You just go have a good time. They do a lot of Motown music. And that's a community rental, and we don't do that very often, because this is an off season.

But once school gets started, we have something going. We do over 100 events a year. But we have about 20 pro shows. But there are a lot of opportunities to come for $5 or $10 to see our students, and they're amazing.

Wonderful. I can't wait to go to a show and get my emotional wellness on. Well, good. Thanks again for joining me. Thank you. Thank you so much for having me, and we really appreciate it.

And thanks to our listeners for tuning in to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. If there are topics you would like to hear about, please send an email to radianpodcasts2025 at gmail.com.

Check out past episodes on Amethyst Wellness YouTube. And we are now featured on Apple podcasts and all your favorite platforms. Please subscribe and leave a five-star review with a quick comment.

It really helps us reach more listeners just like you. I'll be back next Saturday morning at 730. with more expert insights and practical strategies to help you live your healthiest, most energized life.

Until then, stay healthy and here's to your best life.