

Defining Creativity S1E10: David Hale transcript

Debbi: Hi, everyone. Thank you for joining me for this episode of Defining Creativity, a podcast that explores where and how creativity is found. I'm your host, Debbi Ponella, a creativity researcher, cultivator, and devotee. On today's episode, we're joined by...

David: I'm David Hale. I'm based in Virginia. I am a reformed artist and went to school for musical theater, have a BFA in that, went to school for music, studied vocal performance, was a member of professional opera chorus, AGMA for a little bit, did some work with yourself, with children's theater, that sort of thing, but also got into wine during the latter stages of my scholastic university career, and then made the big leap from school to Washington, D. C., worked at a restaurant called *Michel Richard Citronelle*, which was, at the time I worked there, it was fresh off of winning James Beard Award, Outstanding Chef in the United States for Chef Michel. The wine program had also just won Outstanding Wine Service on a national level from James Beard Foundation. So, I walked right into a wine cellar with a half- million- dollar inventory and was able to really work alongside some of those wines. It's just lucky for me. I got moved after about a year to their bistro, which is called *Central*.

It's still there on Pennsylvania Avenue in D. C., and I worked there for another four to five years, I think, after Citronelle. I was the GM and wine director for the last four years of that, and then when I got married, we talked about seeing each other occasionally, and so then, that became sort of a conversation about what post- restaurant life might be like. And so then I took a job. I worked with these two importers that I really liked their wines and everything that they would bring me always spoke to me.

So I asked them and I was like, hey, they didn't have a salesperson or a representative in the area. So then they made me brand ambassador of their wines. I did that for seven years until last year. I quit in June of last year and basically was still wanting to stay in wine. Luckily, I had the good fortune to be able to be at home for a little bit and just drill down on what I liked about the wine business and akin to the podcast, what creative outlets I got out of wine and hospitality and taking care of people, which I think even when I was working with theater or children's theater, like it's all the same spirit of sort of giving and putting other people's needs ahead of your own. And so I was like, I love events. I love education and I love to work alongside people.

And then I was like, I also liked the idea of sort of the anthropology of wine, like the way that historic factors or climate and cultural things all kind of coalesce into what made a wine interesting or what made a wine distinctive or from that particular region, what made it how it came to be. And so then I was like, well, I'm going to open up *Gemini Wine Company*, which is just a little retail operation. I sell monthly memberships. I drop wine off at your door in Northern Virginia and D. C. and then other states that allow me to ship and then do events and some tastings and sort of things like that. So, yeah, sorry. That was a long-winded answer, but we'll edit that.

Debbi: That's okay. I think you've made it difficult for me to have the title of this episode because there's so many aspects to what you do.

David: Yeah, it's not... Let's just keep it like, I mean, I think that you could say the creativity of a sommelier because I still identify, even though I'm not working on the restaurant floor any longer, like I identify with the spirit of what it means to take care of somebody and that's just like what I try to do. Try to do it with love, try to do it with energy and with some passion behind it.

Debbi: So David, thank you so much for speaking with me today. This is really a pleasure because not only do I get to hear about creativity as it applies to your current work, but personally, as you said, we've worked together and I get to catch up with an old colleague and friend. And it has been about a decade and a half since we've been working.

David: It's been like, it's been 15 years or so, which is crazy.

Debbi: You were a director, I musical directed and honestly, I'm so excited because I have a feeling that the incredible depth of your creativity that I was witness to firsthand is still evident in everything that you do. Even just your introduction, I can see it. It's oozing out of you. You're so creative. You always have been. So, let's do a little bit deeper dive. Let's figure out and if you'll just share, just pick one of those things, all the things, whatever, something in your work or your everyday life right now and how you see creativity applies.

David: [4:56] I think the biggest, if you view creativity just as that sort of “little c” where it's sort of that insular version of creativity where you're producing something for yourself, certainly the aspect of... It could be something as simple as making these monthly selections of wines and what to send to my members every month. It does feel sort of like because the business model is quite on a smaller scale and sort of personalized, like it feels very personal to me to pick something and then to pick things with my clients in mind.

And then also the other thing I would say is the writing. So for every wine, my two tiers of memberships I do and I send a red and a white each month for those two memberships. So I've got four little featurettes or essays or whatever. I don't know. I don't like the word blog, but I guess it's what it is. But like I have these little write-ups that I do about each thing and I really try hard not to make those just sort of straight up—this is the wine and this is where it's from. And do they tend to be like thematically based on something else, either if I've traveled to that region, it's a little, maybe a little almost travelogue that then includes some technical aspects of the wine and how it's produced, but that stuff really frees me up to see like I'm still being creative. And then the writing part is something that I really enjoy.

Debbi: Are most of your clients, um, people who know wine and know what they're asking for, or know what they want, or is that something you're helping them discover as well?

David: No, it's definitely like, I think a lot of the people that I have as clients now... I mean, I have a little mix of, some people are experienced in sort of special order things from me of wines that they want, but the memberships are more based on the people that maybe want more of an introduction to wine, and so I and I'm my philosophy about wine is not quite as maybe wild and fantastical as people are doing like more you know- quote unquote- innovative wines now, whereas I think my tastes run a little more sort of classic and something I could get into for a long time about what I think about the view of sort of classic regions and producers as sort of like outdated.

But in general, I think people are still like I bring something that I've seen for works in the market with or I've worked with for 10, 15, 20 years of restaurant and wine work, and then you know, they still haven't heard of it. So it's still... That's the part of it where you're sort of translating. You know, I always think of sommelier work as sort of like the UN translators. Someone tells you they want something, and they describe a wine in a certain way, and you have to kind of be like okay, like, okay and that's what you mean. So there you go. Yeah.

Debbi: Oh, I love that. So, what is your process then of finding these wines? For me I'm thinking... Everybody has different tastes, like you know. Even my husband and I would have, you know, different tastes of anything— food, wine, anything, um. And so how do you go about it?

David: Yeah, I think, uh, for me, it kind of again comes back to like trying to make the whole idea of this as being like things that I've learned along the way, that I'm passing along. That, like Gemini Wine Company, is like the original definition of sommelier being someone that was sort of in charge of the seller or in charge of any, like the literal verb of sommelier like to bring up, to climb and bring up, you know, knowledge it's so it starts with usually like personal things.

It's like...Hey, like, I'm gonna be sitting around and be like, what am I going to do for next month? Wow, like I remember I worked with this California Sauvignon Blanc ten years ago at a restaurant and it was amazing. Is that still available around here? Oh, it is okay. Like, how much do you have of it? Oh, only that much.

Okay, well, that'll also be some exclusivity, and it just sort of takes off from there, where I'll be looking at old pictures of wine travels that I've done and be like, well, okay, this would be really fun to find something from here so I could tell this story about the one time we got lost in this small village in Spain, or you know that, that sort of thing, and, and so for me, I really try to make it again not like this technical exercise. I include all that sort of data for people that want to kind of geek out about the wines, but it's more has to be based from some sort of sort of soulful place for me to be interested in it, and otherwise it's sort of not what I'm trying to do.

Debbi: I love that you make it personal, and I love that you brought up storytelling—that you're storytelling through wine selection. I think that probably, especially if you're looking at special occasions or something like that, it is something that becomes part of people's story and bringing taste into it, bringing another of your senses into your experience. I think that that's...

David: [09:28] I think it's huge. I think that, and just like you said too, this is something I always laugh about. Like, we have, I have clients that will tend to base things around context and it's so important. I mean, just like everything in life, context is very important. And so, you know, how many times have I had clients be like when we were drinking this wine, like we had a view of the Adriatic Sea from our cliffside villa and you know and then we got home and we bought some bottles of it home and we're feeding the children- you know, chicken nuggets in between, taking zoom calls for work, and it just doesn't taste the same, it's not quite as good as it was over there.

And you're like, well, of course, because the moment was providing a lot of what you were talking about. And so, then, for me, it's about finding wines that speak to people's experiences, that are always going to be special, regardless of whether it's Tuesday night, work night or or, or an anniversary, you know?

Debbi: [10:19] So tell me a little bit about the culture of when you were working in these restaurants and how that you were able to use your creativity.

David: Yeah, my favorite like restaurant gig still, despite sort of the ones that were arguably more prestigious as far as like the restaurants, was still a little wine cafe in Bloomington, Indiana, when I was in school there, was called *Tutto Bene*. And the reason that I say that is when you talk about creativity, like there was really no limit set to what we could achieve, provided that we could come to the ownership and say, listen, we have this idea. And so it really opened up a lot of different doors of what was possible.

So it was like, okay, do you want to do an event to celebrate Venetian Carnival? And okay, sure. Do we want to build a faux gondola and pull it down the hallway and sing opera and have, you know, masked balls? Like, yeah, okay, we can do that. Do you want to move all the furniture so that we have a songwriter

in the center and we'll do a night where it's in the round and yeah, okay, we can do that. There was really just every time something was even remotely feasible, we went for it.

And that attitude, I think, actually comes from theater, being on stage enough times to both have freedom in what you're doing on stage, but also to deal with unforeseen circumstances or issues arising, you know, you're supposed to sit in the chair and then someone forgets to set the chair. So then you're standing on stage and you're like, all right, well, now what do I do here? And you have to just kind of roll with it.

And I think that that level of creativity from the arts perspective is something that absolutely needs to be channeled into some of the more business and career oriented versions of creativity, where it's always again, I think when most people say creativity and business, they're really talking about innovation, which is like the implementation of creative ideas.

But, you know, for something you should be able to create some piece of whatever it is, if it's a writing, if it's a piece of art, if it's a piece of music. I think it could be self-sustaining more so than needing an outlet to find, you know, some sort of either professional or monetary gain out of it.

Debbi: Yeah, I think being comfortable with that in yourself, that you are creative and having experienced it in all these other ways, then it just comes more naturally.

David: It takes a super long time to do. Yeah, I think self-promotion, maybe self-love sometimes is also like something that I struggle, like it takes a long time and I'm still just now discovering it. That's one reason why I think Gemini Wine Company was so important to me. It was like starting something and realizing that like, OK, I could do this. People do this all the time. How do they have the gumption to do it? Well, they just did it.

And I think that you can make that happen with your creative process, too, where you're just I think something that actually, you know, the Bloomington guy, John Mellencamp, you know, something he said one time on an interview with Dan Rather, basically, I try to create something every day. Could be absolute terrible nonsense, but I'm creating something.

I really want to make that a mantra where you're just like putting some type of output and then the realization that even if you didn't finish something that you wanted to finish, that you're like, oh, I did do that blog for my wine company. That was creative. Like you have to give yourself some grace when it comes to like how your creativity manifests itself.

Debbi: Absolutely. And I think that so many people have a mindset differently than what you're talking about, where it is that same creativity, whether it's business or, you know, you're a singer, that they put themselves in a box. And that, maybe I'm a singer, so, you know, I'm not a business person. I'm either going to succeed or fail as this when if you just open it up and understand that you can apply all of that and still have that creative outlet and be true to yourself, who you are. So how did you get to the place where you embrace that, where you were successful? And boy, I enjoyed seeing you perform. I enjoyed seeing you direct and working with you. But how did you transition into something that's so different yet still feel true to yourself?

David: [14:28] I think it's an easy transition with given what I do for a living, honestly. Like I shouldn't get so much credit. Because restaurant work and specifically like, you know, maybe like a fine dining type of environment, you really are. It's sort of like putting on a show for people. And so that part of it is like I'm still on stage. It's just now I'm, you know, presenting wines and making people feel at ease. Some of the same aspects of people watching live entertainment and then restaurants apply, like no one comes to a restaurant to have a bad time.

They want to have a great time and they come primed to do so. All you have to do is just sort of put the cherry on top and give it to them. And, you know, it takes some reading of the audience. It takes some reading of the guests. Like it takes a little bit of good-hearted hospitality and a dose of humility. But it's easy to do and view it as that. And then moving into Gemini Wine Company again, like I don't want to overstate the operation. I just do. I select wines. I bring them to people's doorsteps.

But that's really fun for me because then that's still the relationship building. I don't have a team of drivers. You know, I don't have an infrastructure like that. Would I always say no to that because it doesn't fit my, you know, ethos? Like, no. I would love to grow. But at the same time right now, every time I walk into someone's house and they have wine and they're saying, what did you bring this month? And I get to show them what I brought. It's a little exchange and it often brings other business.

It brings more relationship and deepening of that. And it still feels like to me that I'm... You're now, you're creating instead of like a tangible piece of, say, art, like you're creating like a, you know, I hate the word brand because it does feel sort of cliché to say. But yeah, you're creating like who you are and how you're being perceived and how they're valuing you as part of their life.

Debbi: And you're creating sort of a community of a different kind and a shared experience in this way.

David: And I think just like the arts, you have to give credit to the real stars, the stars are the wines and the winemakers and the farmers and the people that have worked really hard to produce those. It's just like, you know, when you're in a show and I actually really hate when people say that they created the role in a bio, it makes me mad. I'm like, no, you didn't create the role, the author or the writer or the songwriter created the role. You might have like you've originated it. You could say that.

But as far as creativity, like I'm just the messenger in a show. I'm just the messenger as a sommelier. I'm connecting you to somebody that I love, that his work I love. And that's basically, you know, all it is.

Debbi: It is a role that you've put yourself in to be a connection between the people and the experience. And I think that's amazing that you found that outlet. And I'm guessing you do it very, very well.

David: I try to.

Debbi: [17:10] Going back to some of the environments in which you have worked and lived, is there anything that particularly stifles your creativity?

David: Well, negativity, I think, does it in a variety of ways. Whether it's a work relationship that isn't working out or something that's wrong with, you know, maybe like a workplace culture or whatnot. I think that definitely stifles it. Or if you're just your mood is such that... I mean, obviously, sometimes when you're angry or you're hurt, great art can manifest itself. But I think in a whole, like you have to be what I was talking about earlier about creating every day. I don't think you do it on a daily basis if you're not in a decent frame of mind.

I think also, like just more and more, it's sort of getting that quiet time, you know, whereas like restaurant work was fulfilling to me at one point because of the camaraderie of working with the team. And then, you know, after a while, it became a little bit stifling in the sense that you're it's just constant sort of like noise and flow and that energy is cool for a while. But then as I've gotten a little bit older, I sort of find myself trying to seek times where you're really sort of on your own and able to just think something through.

Debbi: [18:37] Thinking about some of the work that we've done, we were talking about children's theater and now you have your own children.

David: Yes

Debbi: ...which I love. Looking at the fact that you have this understanding, belief, that creativity is important wherever your journey takes you. How do you look to foster that in your own kids? How do you think even education or just the experiences, how do you see yourself as a parent, from that other point of view, nurturing that creativity?

David: I think the biggest thing is to go back to like what those cafe owners made me feel like made me feel free to do things. And I think that's the biggest thing is, you know, when my girls are being loud, I don't tell them to be quiet. Like I just let them... and my wife sometimes will be like, what is going on in here? I'm like, we're making sounds. We're making sounds. We're talking like, you know, and you know, and when they're doing their dinosaur screech off at each other and I don't know, I let that happen.

I think that watching my four-year-old be, we can debate the merits, but she's prolific. Like every single day she draws at least like three pictures, minimum. She just absolutely sits there and is like, no, I have to draw dad. Okay. I mean, singing when she wants to sing a song, she does it at the top of her lungs, running around the house in circles. And you're just like, okay, like there's a freeness to it that I don't want to siphon off if I can avoid it.

That and the self-love and self-valuation, not tying your self-value to anything other than who you are and how much you give to friends and family and colleagues. Like that's the only thing I think the legacy that you should worry about. The rest of it is all just sort of completely unimportant. And if you do those things on the micro, then I think the macro takes care of itself. And that's my thing that I would want them.

It's just like, I don't think you can really love anybody truly well until you love yourself and letting them be free to explore all kinds of mediums as crazy as it may be sometimes. That's the way hopefully they can get there.

Debbi: And I'm guessing that what you introduce into the situation oftentimes is as crazy, if not crazier than what they're coming.

David: There's definitely a lot of times where I'm with the classic household where my wife, I don't mean to make into like someone who doesn't also have her goofy, lovely side, but she's often like, you know, I sent you to put the four-year-old to bed 15 minutes ago. I come up and it's like louder than it was before. And I'm like, yeah, we hit a routine. I don't know. We had to do some comedy. Yeah.

Debbi: I don't understand that at all. Never happened in my house...

Debbi: So the fact that initially you went to school in the arts, I would think that as you were growing, your creativity was encouraged in certain ways, at least that it originally sent you down that path. In what ways do you see that your own creativity was developed and fostered growing up?

David: [21:57] I was lucky. I was so fortunate. I had a good family that was able to, you know, we weren't like economically that much different than a lot of families, but they, when I wanted to pursue something, I pursued it. When I wanted to stop doing just like choir stuff and start doing actual theater. I'd been in a high

school play and then a local dinner theater called and they had somebody that the part that I had played at the high school play, like the person was sick. They were like, you know, you know, you're only 16, but can you come do this show?

And my mother was like, of course you can. And like drove me over there the same night and like, and that started this whole thing. And then just having mentors, I just have always been really lucky. I started singing voice with a different teacher that was more classical and technique who referred me to his teacher, who was an 82-year-old Italian vocal coach that was amazing. And just like, let me come to his house every week for pennies, if nothing else, if nothing.

And then that translated into being able to go to school at IU and just meeting all of the artists there. And I think it's always been a blessing and a curse being self-aware and knowing that you're like, ah, like, I don't know if I'm really the most, if I'm the most cut out for this of performing career. And then it got to the point where, you know, I was like, well, I can do... School's over. I can go to a city and sort of start the starving artist routine and see how it works.

Or I could, at the time wine was starting to call to me, I was like, I'm going to go this way. So, I definitely looked back and a little bit hesitant to say that I absolutely did the right path. But ever since then, I've been looking for opportunities to kind of reinsert the arts in my life. But I think the best way that I can do it now is to just be like a patron and also just friends. I recently got a chance to go to, well, recently, just right before pandemic. So it's not recent anymore. It's two years ago. But I got to go.

A friend of mine was, had progressed to the point of being director of the opera program at a college in the Midwest. I went to go visit him. He was conducting *Figaro* and I got to hang out with some of his students and see what they're doing. And I just realized as I was like imparting words of wisdom that I probably wasn't qualified to impart about the arts and the business and getting away from it or coming back to it or staying to it, that it was really resonating, I think, with the kids.

And I was like, I still have what it takes to motivate artists or to inspire them. It's just, I don't have a CV that suggests that you should listen to me, but I've really feel that connection with artists whenever I get around them. And so I guess to go back to the original question, like it was fostered by mentors and I still would love to be that in some capacity to people, whether it's just my kids or other kids or artists that you meet along the way, young artists.

Debbi: Well, and I think that nonsense about a CV, I think you have so much to give. Part of it is the fact that you see your connection with that creativity and with the art beyond just the art, that you see how it connects to you and it can manifest itself and it can be more. So, I think that's just as valuable. Whether these students are going to end up in the arts as a career or not, I think that that you have to offer is that's what I'm looking for in this podcast. I have a desire to see how people do find that connection with their own creativity and then share it with others. I think it's so valuable.

David: [25:11] It's absolutely. I appreciate it. And I also, I agree. Even when you see the theater school, I went to Point Park University in Pittsburgh, was really great for that because it was very much like sort of the antithesis of a big name school. It was a lot more expanded, the number of shows that we did every year. So, you were always in something.

And then the school seemed to just foster like, yeah, a couple of people have kind of made it quote unquote big, but it fostered a lot of just working artists, professionals that just didn't care whether their name was in lights. They were just like, I'm doing what I'm doing for a living and I don't have to look over my shoulder. I'm an actor or I'm a dancer or whatever. And to me, that's a spirit that should be emulated again in other disciplines because you shouldn't have to be like, you know, top of the line or bust.

I think if you're finding something that's not fulfilling to you, then you can, you should change that. But you shouldn't be obsessed with always just being like at the top of the heap because more often than not, I think the satisfaction you'll find is from just being in the process.

And it gives me no greater pleasure than to see people I went to music school with or people I went to theater school with that are like, you know, a manager of a theater in New York City or doing some singing, but doing, you know, I just got back into community theater or, hey, I just went back to school again to get my doctorate because it's a bug's calling me. I'm like, I feel that all the time. And I'm not in a position, I don't think to act on it myself.

But when I see it, rather than like pangs of remorse or pangs of envy or anything like that, it's just more like, oh, good, like gravitas to you, like really excited about people that still are able to, that still indulge themselves in that spirit. So...

Debbi: I think that one of the important aspects of creativity that is obvious how it relates to the acting and the singing and that part- is the necessity of vulnerability and risk-taking, and it is... It's hard because you have that outside judgment on it. Do you look the part? Do you sound like... Are you exactly what I want? And to be creative, you know, one of the big things that we say is that it needs to be a judgment-free zone. Well, that's not always an option, so I was wondering, do you see how you had to maybe deal with not getting the role? I'm thinking that going out on your own and starting a business— there's some vulnerability in that- and maybe how you're able to navigate that applies in this new venture of yours.

David: [27:39] I think it's a life skill. It's not like pertains at ours, it's not take things personally. Just stop taking things personally. And I'm absolutely horrible at it whenever I don't get a gig, when I don't get a call back from a client that I wanted to reach out about certain wines, and maybe some of that is from, like, having that environment where people were sort of judging but everybody's. You know you're getting judged throughout your entire life, regardless of whether you're an actor. Maybe it's a little more, you know, kind of finite when you're in the arts and you walk in and somebody's just immediately like nope, too tall, too short, whatever it is. And my wife is really good with this. Like, Michelle is a rock star when it comes to it. She just has that like a gene that I'm now enables her to just like no, think about it. That person might have had a really tough day. They react a certain way. Or, like you know that person's busy today, they'll get back to you. Stop it. Don't let the paranoia train leave the station.

And that's what you know I really focus on is just trying to make sure that I'm aware that I am not the most important factor and most of my clients lives. And what I'm doing, especially in what I do, it's not- I'm not a doctor, so this is not a completely necessary thing in their lives. So, I'm providing what I think is a necessary thing because I believe very much in the communal spirit of wine and sharing wine and making it a component to life's best moments or life's hardest moments or whatnot. I just think it's really important. But, that said, like it's not a necessity, it's not the mortgage, so you have to just like take it into perspective and have a little bit of self-awareness, which is easier said and done sometimes, but I think it's the biggest thing.

Debbi: [29:14] Oh my goodness] I'm just thinking so many David Hale stories right now. I'm just thinking about my youngest daughter, Julia, who is now married. When she turned, I don't know, maybe eight or nine, that she had a Dr Seuss birthday party and you were the “Cat in the Hat.”

David: Yeah, yeah... That's right. I remember that.

Debbi: You gave them all those party hats, were Dr. Seuss different color hats. Oh my goodness, David.

David: I know no shame when it comes to children's happiness. I will do whatever it takes.

Debbi: And you do make them happy. It's amazing.

David: I just, I definitely miss that. That's actually like when I first quit the job working for the wine importers, free forming Gemini, I thought long and hard about pivoting completely out of the wine industry— teaching, working with children, something—and ultimately I decided that the network that I built over the last decade plus in DC and the DC Northern Virginia area was it was too much to throw away.

So I wanted to really try to rekindle that and use those connections and use the people that I've met and the relationship I've built to do something with wine that I still love to do, but it definitely crossed my mind. Being like, I wonder if I should try to get back to a more arts related path on some way.

And I think it's interesting because that's another thing I would say to just aspiring art artists or even just creative thinkers like you're, there are positions where you can come from a background that's a little bit less you know, maybe on paper qualified and make a big impact, and so ultimately I decided not to go there, but I thought about it for sure. I think working with the children, seeing the change over the...

You know, I remember even when I was in Pittsburgh, I worked for the Pittsburgh Science Center or the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh, and we used to do live demonstrations. And they showed us research that post visit, the number one thing that the children would remember, beyond any IMAX, beyond any sort of technical thing, was the live presentations, like little mini shows that you would do around the facility.

And that so translates to me with live art and theater, and it's doubly so now because of how we're just coming out of a period of being sort of deprived of it for so long. And you know, the kids, it's just the things that you learn when you can— I mean getting to creativity— like when you can empower a child to believe that they can step out on a stage and and do something that they never thought they could ever accomplish.

And you get to look them in the eye when they're done and be like, see that? You just did that. I didn't do that. You got up there and you did that and you can keep doing it, too. Welcome home. Here you are. Like this is the show. This is where you belong. That's fun to be able to show people and if it doesn't go all through their lives, it's fine because again, whatever other, like you said, whatever other aptitude they find themselves having, they can apply that hopefully.

Debbi: Well, and just what you said, it's so beautiful. Welcome home; that you're part of this; that you belong here. Wow, what a thing to impart. And that's one thing I do remember seeing you work with the kids. You just had such a... It didn't matter whether it was, you know, ensemble person number 12. Just helping them know that their voice was important.

David: You wanted to find... I've always thought, again, kind of making it foster creativity, that that topic of discussion, like you always wanted to find what thing at that moment in that kid's life would bring out some positivity. And it just required like digging a little bit because like a lot of the kids, like, yeah, you could have the lead part in this show, but that's not, it's not that you're not ready talent wise or whatnot, but it's like, that's not what you need right now.

What you really need right now is to learn that, you know, when you contribute to the show in this way... Or like, I need somebody to lead this group of ensemble people out on the stage, can you do that for me?

You can? Fantastic. And then they get to, you know, they go home and they tell mom and dad, we, I was the lead wolf in the pack of wolves that like comes out and attacks Maurice and Beauty and the Beast.

Like, you know, that's the sort of stuff. It might be that little thing, but I've definitely had people, and I've felt this way about my teachers. Like, you know, it's always those little silly stories that you were like, wow, that really meant a lot to me. And you're like, okay. So, I think I have it in now with wine. Sometimes where you drop a wine and somebody is like, wow, you know what? That one like made this night like super special for us. And so I think it's just, yeah, it's all the same idea.

So I think part of my creativity is honestly like not from me. It's just like trying to, I'm not trying to sound like Mother Teresa, but like just, it's finding those things in other people that are going to make them happy and make them excited and like find the little fire in them, whatever it is. If you bring that out, maybe that's not tangible product coming from you, but it's definitely going to be from them. And that's creativity too.

Debbi: Absolutely. So you have brought every single aspect of our conversation back to creativity, very creatively.

David: I have, yeah, no. When jabber on as much as I have, you have to sort of stay on task, you know.

Debbi: Oh, David, I miss working with you. The podcast is entitled *Defining Creativity*. So I would ask you, what is your definition of creativity?

David: Yeah, which I was nervous about thinking about. Creativity to me is about either producing something from yourself or drawing something from others that creates a level of positive energy for either you or them, whatever it is. If you're actually painting something, if you're performing something, if you're making a business deal, if you're showing a bottle of wine, it either needs to be something that you have thought about and produced a little bit of energy to that can then serve to enhance the other person. Or correspondingly, if you see a person in need of having something positive drawn out of them, then it's doing just what we said and getting your positive energy scalpel in there and pulling it out. That's to me what it should be.

Debbi: I love that.

Debbi: [35:32] All these multifaceted experiences you bring to, it sounds like every moment and what you're doing, to share with people and connect people and make their their lives better.

David: I try really hard. Thank you. I appreciate now talking about it. You're like, well, I really need to go and make sure that I'm backing up all these things that we just talked about. And I said to a friend in preparation for this this morning, I was like, I'm talking to Debbi and we're going to talk about this. And I was like, honestly, I'm really looking forward to it because I think it's going to fire me up even like again.

And talking about the arts, talking about just creativity as a as a concept, you're like every time you you do something like this, you walk out feeling a little bit more like, OK, yeah, let's go do something. And it's always important, I think, to sort of be the the making part of creativity, the real, you know.

Debbi: Well, it's fantastic for me. I get so inspired. And again, I am inspired by you. So, thank you very much.

David: You're much appreciated.

Debbi: And best of luck with all this.

David: Thank you. Bye, Debbi.

Debbi: That's a wrap for Episode 10, my discussion with sommelier David Hale. I'm so grateful for David and for you, the audience, for tuning in. Additional thanks to August Fackler for composing and recording the music. Join me next time when I talk creativity with director of innovation and process improvement for the Indiana Department of Transportation, Todd May. Meanwhile, be open to possibilities, make connections and embrace your creativity, however, it manifests itself in you.