

Defining Creativity S1E8: Megan Elyse Fulmer 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...

Megan: My name is Megan Elyse Fulmer, and I'm a performer. I do TV, film, and theater. Now that we are back post-COVID, well, we're still in COVID, but I've had to do a lot of work, but I'm thankful that right now I am doing what I love to do, what I went to school for, what I got my degree in.

Debbi: Megan, what a joy to have you join me today. I am just so thrilled. I did get to see you a couple of days ago in St. Louis, seeing you perform in "In the Heights," which was a fantastic production. And I think I just need to admit to the audience that I am a huge Megan Fulmer fan, and I really do cherish any opportunity to see you perform or interact with you in any way. This, however, is a podcast about creativity, not the Megan Fulmer Fan Club. So, probably we should just get down to business.

So looking at creativity, obviously as a performer, it seems maybe from the outside very obvious. Performing, it's a creative art. It's creativity. You get to do that. But go ahead and start by telling me a little bit how you use your creativity in what you do.

Megan: [1:48] You know, it's fascinating that we're talking about this because I feel like in my adult life, I'm truly getting to explore and be creative within this production. It's not to say that I haven't been in the past, but particularly with Luis Salgado, he really opened up a space for us to play. That was something that he really advocated for us to find.

And what's interesting is throughout college, and especially in a dance background, because dancing was my primary focus for a lot of my life, and I came from a strict ballet background, yes, there's creativity in the way that we use our body. And you'll hear certain ballet teachers or professors or actors in general tell you that dancers are some of the best actors because we are so physical. We're so grounded in our movement. We use all of our physicality to tell a story.

But there's also the structure that comes with it of having to have your finger here and your ribs here and your pinky toe there. And I've done a lot of shows that were original works or shows that were directed by people that come from that same background. So unfortunately, in my career, I haven't had endless table work or endless discovery where you're really developing from the ground up.

It's usually been fast processes where it's like, okay, we have nine, ten days, maybe if we're lucky, three to four weeks to really get it on its feet and present this final product. And even though we had about nine, ten days with this process, we really dug into the roots, the culture, the history. We took what we as humans instinctively had as kids and said, how do we find this again? And to me, that's creativity. That's exploring from the roots up.

So I think that's a long-winded answer, but I've tried to find those moments on my own in every process and figure out, how does Megan live within the world of the story, in order to find that creativity, in order to play. But this was the first time where it's like, we're going to do this collectively as a team.

Debbi: Nice. So, in this particular instance we're talking about your swing. I might have you just explain what that means.

Megan: Yes, so a swing for me I'm the only female swing. So that means I understudy every female ensemble track. There are cases that you know someone could get sick or injured so that I would go in to dance and sing and act their track. Or maybe if they understudy a principal role and the principal calls out and they'll go into their track and I'll go into the ensemble track. I also cover three leads, so I'm first cover Vanessa, I'm first cover Graffiti Pete and I'm second cover Camilla, the mother. So there are a lot of puzzle pieces that could take place in order for me to go on.

Debbi: So you were talking about your process of becoming who you are in the show, but you really are lots of people from lots of perspectives. Obviously it's a whole, another thing. I you think about somebody learning a role and really creating a backstory in that person. How do you do that? Do you create a backstory? Are you a different person each time? How do you put all that together and see this same story from all these different perspectives?

Megan: [5:37] Something that I had learned in my on-camera audition technique class that I'm trying to translate more into theater, to help ground it a little bit more, is that this is us, we are these people and it's something that you touch on a bit on musical theater. But I feel like there's a lot more character development and creating this character when it's really just us within these circumstances. You know, I relate to Vanessa in certain ways. There are certain things that she says and does that I personally don't agree with, but we all have these levels and all of these emotions within ourselves. So it's just a matter of heightening those things or channeling those things within the world of the Heights, within the world of these circumstances. Same with Graffiti Pete. You know I come from a background. I have two brothers.

I, like you, know there's, there's certain things that I was able to truly discover within all of these characters. It's just a matter of heightening them and strengthening them, and I mean definitely changing my physicality depending on age and circumstance and things like that. So, I really truly deep down believe that the character work starts with us.

Debbi: So you mentioned Vanessa and that you can relate to certain things and maybe of who she is as a character, as a person. And yet you're learning all these things and you see from these perspectives. I would think that that would translate to life. Do you find yourself able to more be in a situation, and you don't have to agree with everyone, but be able to see from different perspectives? Does it affect how you interact beyond the theater, beyond acting in life?

Megan: One hundred percent. And I mean even, just as you know, an audience member at times where I'm sitting and watching and noting the show? I mean, we spoke briefly about the parent songs and, and you know my dad is my hero. My dad is who I got my work ethic from and I think I might cry. You know. He said I'm proud to be your father because you work, work so much harder and you are so much smarter than I was at your age and like things like that and talking about his daughter strength and how he will do anything and work any job for him.

I mean I watched my dad go through that from a very young age and I still see him doing that at almost 66 years old, working two jobs, working overnight at the mint factory in Philly and then getting up. He works some nights in Philly till 6 in the morning, drives straight to Trenton, New Jersey, takes a train into New York and then will walk two miles to go to his machine shop to make artificial hearts and then come home and work straight, and he's 66 years old and he will still do that to provide for his family.

I think that's why every night I watch that and I relate to it, and the first time I watched Edward do that, who plays Kevin, I texted my dad. I was like I miss you. I just needed to talk to him immediately, you know?

Debbi: Of course.

Megan: And with the mother song, you know it's one of those things that we went through, similar circumstances in our family. You know, my mom and I, we've had such a roller coaster of a relationship and we are stronger than ever, especially as you get older. And I know you understand. You know the line she says, "What made you think we wouldn't do anything and everything for you?" Things like that. It's like, oh gosh, you... You see the generational trauma within the show and it's something that I've worked on a lot in my personal life, especially coming from Latin roots. There's a lot that's always unspoken. There's a lot of things you don't talk about, and then you put yourself within the world of the show and I sat with Luis at one point because he was like: Are you okay? I was like, Luis, this show has meant the world to me since it came out on Broadway. I was obsessed with it.

And I felt so represented for the first time because, yeah, we had West Side Story, but I'm literally a product of what that show was against the entire time. They don't want a white man marrying a Puerto Rican woman. And that's me. My father is Irish-German, my mom's Puerto Rican. So for the first time, I saw families like mine, I saw stories like mine, but now that I'm 12,, 13 years older, those stories hit on such a deeper level and I just told him all these moments in the show that directly relate to my life.

[10:14] Yes, I've worked through as me, but then now I'm portraying it through my art, through my soul, through my body, through my passion, and every single day of rehearsal I was crying.

Debbi: Wow.

Megan: In the best way, in the best way.

Debbi: So a couple things there that stand out to me. First of all, before we started recording the podcast, we were talking about a couple of my favorite moments from the weekend and I did say I'm a little sad that the mom's not in the movie version of "In the Heights," because, oh, my goodness, what an inspirational, strong character and the woman who does it in your production just incredible.

Megan: Tauren's a dream. [Tauren Hagans as "Camila"]

Debbi: Yeah, wonderful. I can relate to her. I can relate to this mom and I don't have a Latin background. It is so important, I think, for that representation and for you to be able to find that in these shows, being involved or an audience member, in every way. But also, it goes beyond that. How do you see the role reaching beyond just the Latin community?

Megan: [11:12] I'm so happy you said that, because that's another gift of this show is that every single person, no matter who you are, no matter what your background, can relate to these families and these stories. And majority of women have that maternal instinct. Majority of women are mama bears and that's this mother. She is a mama bear and she will fight tooth and nail for her family and she also won't let a man walk over her, and that's something that I think is generational.

I think that's something that is beautiful to see that, yeah, this story started 12 years ago, or I mean longer than that now, because it started developing way beyond that. But I think the fact that Camilla's character resonates even so much more now, beyond talking women's rights- we've gone through so much as a society- and to see a strong female character like that, no matter who she is, it's so important and it resonates so much more because women are really finding their voice.

We're becoming more and more empowered, especially now in a time where we have a female vice president, and not to get political, but it's just, you know, we're starting to see so many more women come forth in these strong characters in a way that not just a surprise or not just something that happens once in a blue moon. This is everyday life and... Also, whether you're a mother or not too, women can relate too.

Debbi: And not to get just stuck in "In the Heights," because it's not an "In the Heights" interview, but it's just fresh on my mind and you're in the middle of production. To bring it back to creativity too, and these characters- one of my favorite, who you mentioned, Graffiti Pete. Just the name Graffiti Pete puts into place some assumptions and some judgment. Graffiti Pete. And there's... for anybody who hasn't seen this show, first of all see it.

But at the beginning there's just beautiful bookends where the show starts with him defacing this bodega, that in the very end, this beautiful way that it's wrapped up, that, on the same bodega, on the grate that comes down, he is given the opportunity to express his creativity the way that he knows, and it's this beautiful mural that he does, memorializing Abuela who had passed away. But it's this bookend and the story. But it's more than that. As far as the creativity discussion- wow, don't judge, don't make assumptions. Find how that person's creativity can manifest itself in something so beautiful and meaningful and it changes the outcome of the story in a way. It has a role there.

Megan: And I think that that, too, speaks to how we bring creativity to inner cities. Because, yes, he was technically defacing something by putting his name where he wasn't supposed to, but then once he was given a canvas properly and respectfully, look at the art he created. And that's any kid in the city, that's any kid in the projects, in an area that's considered less than. All these kids need are a space to create, are a space to feel safe. And once they are given that, look at what can happen, you know?

Debbi: Absolutely, and it can be any kind of creative expression, you know, whether it's with a paint can or whether it's with, you know, building something and chemistry. But, you know, it's whatever it is that is that expression and that way of looking at the world and exploring the world and finding out who they are and how they relate to themselves in the world, I think then allows them to relate to the world and others beyond. Being able to appreciate diversity and the uniqueness of each individual.

Debbi: Now, getting back to your culture and your upbringing. The last show that I saw you in a few months ago was in New York... Getting back to my Megan Fulmer fan club, going all over the country to see you was "Americano." So, I find it interesting that your last two shows have portrayed a similar community. What does that mean to you and how do your experiences and culture inform your creative being?

Megan: [15:50] You know, something that “Americano” was trying to do, just briefly, is focus on one story to touch on a much larger conversation. And that is who we accept in this country and in this place. And going back to the roots of this is how this country was built. And something that I take pride in and I think really helps me grow as a human, as someone who creates and as a performer, I come from a background that was built on this land. Unfortunately, there's a lot that happened to get to this land, but I said my father's Irish-German, my mom's Puerto Rican, but also I have cousins who are Jamaican and Puerto Rican, who are African-Puerto Rican. I have cousins who are German-Irish-African. I have cousins that are German-Irish-Filipino. I have so much diversity just within my family and so many cultures within my family. And on top of that, we have the rainbow. I have cousins who are trans, who are bi, who are lesbian, who are gay, non-binary. All of that we have in our family and the vast majority got on board immediately.

Some generations had a little bit of trouble, but most people, more than most, are on board and have welcomed with open arms. And when you do that, you're able to learn from so many different people, points of views, feelings. I mean, our family would not exist if we were not open and if we were not willing to explore. And then comes the creativity with building families, with cooking different dishes, with traveling to really just find roots. Again, we go back to those roots. We are creative from the roots.

And then along the way, we get wrapped up in the mundane, the life stuff that takes over. So, with my background and with my culture, being able to be put into shows that allow me to take what I've learned as Megan Elyse Fulmer and put it out onto the stage within these circumstances, it's so fulfilling on a deeper level. These last couple of contracts, especially post-COVID. I mean, “Americano” was the first show I did post-COVID. I hadn't been on stage in almost five years just because of injury and everything else.

So to be able to come back to theater in a way that allows me to really bring my fullest self. I mean, this is how I want to do art moving forward. You know, it's allowing me to be a little pickier in what I want to do with my life, especially because I'm gonna be 30 soon, so I'm like a month and a half away from 30. So...

Debbi: Yes, that is very young.

Megan: But 30 years, yeah, you know, as a dancer, people start to look at you a certain way and luckily that too is starting to change and it's just a matter of how you take care of yourself, you know. But yeah, I'm very fortunate to be able to put myself into worlds that allow me to explore my fullest self.

Debbi: You mentioned injury, and my family made a little road trip to Chicago and saw you in the bodyguard, the musical, and we saw you get hurt. How did you cope? Did creativity help you cope? Or did you find another creative outlet as you dealt with that kind of recuperation and, relooking at you?

Megan: [19:35] I would say all of the above. You know, I think when you saw me, it was the first time I had injured my ankle, because I injured my ankle twice on that contract, and the second time is what took me out for a while. So I had to get creative within the circumstances of being on tour and, you know, having to take care of my body and my ankle after that first time never got back to a completely secure space. It was secure enough and when I needed to, I wrapped it. But that second time is what really took me out.

But I've always wanted to do TV/film. I had auditioned for TV/film straight out of college and nothing really bit for me and I was still very green. I had a lot to learn. So, after tour, after that second time that really got me out, I took this as a time to be like: You know what? I want to do more singing tracks. I want to get into more principal roles and I really want to do TV/film. What can I do?

So I started auditioning for different acting studios. I started auditioning for TV/film classes. I started just listening to podcasts and through those podcasts I found one studio, the Anthony Meindl acting workshop. I started taking the on-camera audition technique classes with Jason Buyer and to this day that's probably the best acting class I've ever taken in my life, because it was just be you and it's something that sounds so simple and people are like, oh, that's stupid. Why are you gonna pay money to have someone tell you to be yourself? But you'd be so shocked.

It's an audition, audition technique class, so you know it's like if you were given cold sides. How do you put yourself within the world without really knowing? How do you stay true to yourself without really knowing? And it sounds so simple, and I would hear him give the same notes all the time, but how you actually translate that and find that and stay grounded or heighten while staying grounded. It is so hard, so hard.

But I would not have gotten the TV/film experiences I've gotten without that class and without that space, that safe space because it really was. My classmates, Jason, everybody. I have lifelong friends from that class. We truly created a safe space to allow ourselves to do so. Because you talked about judgment earlier and there's a lot of judgment within this world, just naturally, and you know that going into it. And it's really difficult, I mean even when I went through college, it never really felt like a safe space.

You know there are certain classes I've gone into. It doesn't 100% feel like a safe space where I felt like I was confident enough to bring, yes, my strengths but stuff that I know needs work. We're in class for a reason and people forget that a lot of people sign up for class, wanting to present this finished product and to say, hey, this is what I can do, let me just keep doing it to work those muscles. No, we all have things that we need to work on. We all have our strengths and weaknesses and that's what class is for.

And I'm gonna do a side tangent. And especially in the dance world, it's gotten very lost because we want to create these Instagram videos and everyone's cheering and everyone looking a certain way and I feel like, in certain spaces and in certain studios, that element of class *to learn* and not exactly, yes, we're performing by the end, by the time we get that routine, but I think we're losing that safe space to be able to say: we're here to fall on our faces, we're here to explore our bodies, not to have that finished product quite yet, because we take this so that, yeah, we can feel really good by the last time we do that routine, but even then, I know I'm still gonna go home and still continue to work on it and I'm gonna have that finished product in my mirror.

And then from there, all those skills I learned, the finished product is when I get that job and I'm on stage. You know, injury allowed me to not only explore that in the dance world, because I was feeling that so viscerally in the dance world because of those reasons. And then I was able to go into an acting world and be like, oh my gosh, here's a safe space for me to do a scene that doesn't quite land. Maybe it's flat, maybe it's too big. Maybe they can look at it and say, my insecurity was like, oh, I can tell she's a musical theater girl. You know? There's an element of that, you know? So there's so many things that go into it, but yes. Yes and...

Debbi: Yes and... With creativity, it is the process. People lose sight of how valuable the process is. And with resilience, you have to be able to take risks and adapt and be flexible. I mean, yours, we're talking about a huge one where you can't dance at that time you're outlet for creative expression, but you do need to be able to be vulnerable. In order to create and environment is so crucial to that.

Debbi: What is your ideal environment for creating?

Megan: [25:14] My ideal environment is a space where everyone's there for the same purpose. And I think that's what's most important. We're all there for a purpose and maybe it's a little different for the individual, but when we can really come together and going back to that idea of playing and learning and growing, because you're right, it is vulnerable. We're talking about, honestly, bringing your inner child forward that was free and played and led with their belly and said, I don't care what any of you think, I'm in my happy bubble.

I was in my Disney bubble for most of my childhood, just living my best life. And yes, I saw and heard certain things, but I was happy. I was a happy kid. I danced and sang everywhere, and I wasn't afraid. And all of us had that at some point in time. So yeah, it's vulnerable to then release all of the things that took that away from us to then try to create again. And then you get to the root of the inner child.

I think you first start to break certain things away and that comes in conversation and that comes in development and that comes in conversations within the world of whatever script you're working on. So certain conversations may come up and you wanna be able to talk freely about those things. And if everyone's there for the same purpose, everyone feels comfortable in speaking on certain matters because it's like, yeah, if that's what you need to do and say, and that's what you wanna open up about, here you are, open arms, let's do that so we can help each other create the scene that we wanna create.

But then once you break all that down, you have to add some of it back because we could just talk about the injury in itself. What if I'm doing a scene where I'm injured? And that brings some of those feelings back that took away from our inner child. And again, not scary again to have to feel those things again. So, my ideal environment, my ideal space is that safe space where I know that everyone's here for the same purpose. So we're not gonna judge. We may look and say, you know what? I don't know if I would have made that choice for that line, but I like when they did this because then we're still learning, we're still growing and it's not a judgment, it's an observation.

Unfortunately, I think a lot of spaces tend to get pretty judgmental. But when you do find that space where you can just create and explore without judgment because we're already judging ourselves, it's such a beautiful, beautiful thing. And unfortunately, I've only found those spaces few and far between. But when you do, those spaces have allowed me to grow tenfold.

Debbi: And you're talking about those spaces and creating a scene. But again, I'd like to just sort of extend this out into life a little bit more. How do we create those spaces? How do we nurture and foster that kind of environment to create instead of a scene, a world, a life, an interaction beyond theater?

Megan: I think it's within listening. To be a good scene partner you're supposed to listen and it's the beauty of not knowing and that's something that Luis talked about a lot in our rehearsal process. It's scary not knowing but also there's beauty in not knowing, because then new things arise and then we're actively listening and then those conversations really happen and it hits in a deeper way. And I think in life especially with things that have surfaced within the last five six years because these things have always existed.

All of these things have always been here, but now it's heightened and now things are coming further to the surface. Certain people are feeling more confident which makes certain people uncomfortable. And there's a lot of saying and there's a lot of talking at and there's not enough listening and that comes from all parties. I actively listen to many different outlets because I want to know why people see or feel or think certain things.

It's not because I agree with it necessarily but I want to try to understand how certain people can feel and say and do certain things. I really want to understand that because it's very mind-boggling to me. Maybe if I have a little bit more understanding then I can know how to educate myself in moving forward to creating a space for someone to feel like they can freely talk about what their beliefs are even if I don't agree with them.

Debbi: Absolutely. I think that's where people get caught up sometimes is ,oh if I'm listening to this or I'm talking to this person or interacting that means I agree with them or that I'm seeing... No. I think it's important to go back to everybody is a unique individual and brings to that moment why they're saying and acting and have those understandings are their experience. But they're humans and they've experienced something that brings them to that point, and we have to be able to discuss you have to be able to creatively collaborate in this world.

Yes, we all have our individual cultures and that's beautiful and everything but they're all part of the big picture and just to respect that and it's exciting. I mean I love going and seeing and learning and speaking to people who have these differences because wow I am so much broader in my understanding and how I see the world when I'm able to do that. And yes, I'm not ever going to be able to dance on stage or speak Spanish... or yeah well I mean I guess I could to a point but just seeing it truly honestly the things that I don't understand it's music to me anyway just to hear the flow of the language and be open to see how however it works for you.

Debbi: Just real quickly if we take a quick step back you've spoken a little bit to your upbringing but I'd be interested to know how your creativity was nurtured and fostered as a young child in the way that you were raised and your experiences.

Megan: [32:07] Well it started with because I was super attached to my mom like I was always you know it's like that line in "A Chorus Line," "I was always jumping and dancing." Or when Morales says, "I've got rhythm I'm Puerto Rican." I don't know there was all of those things in one, but my mom you know now that we're having this conversation and I've told this story so many times but, you know my mom wanted me to feel comfortable in a space where I could do that in front of people.

Wow like that's the first time I'm saying it in that way but that's how it's surfacing for me right now and so at first I didn't take because I did it for about I was two years old when she enrolled me and it was about like two months and then I was like no I don't like it. And then again always jumping dancing around and my mom had put me in like a Christmas pageant and there's a video of her like holding my hand taking me down the runway and they're like okay thank you Megan and I just stand there and I'm like bouncing back and forth and she's like okay Megan let's go and I'm like no.

And then I'm like I see my dad and my brother I'm like hi Mikey and then she tries to take me away she had to carry me off stage so clearly there was something there and she knew that, so she enrolled me again the following year in dance classes. Again it was like three four months of doing it and then all of a sudden I was

like I don't want to go. But she's like we paid for the recital costume you're doing this. So, I did the recital and after being on stage and doing the recital I was like I wanna do this again.

Megan: You know, talk about, yeah, my mom didn't have a nine- to- five, she was a stay- at- home mom. But talk about a tough job of being a stay- at- home mother for three kids. And not only that, for me alone, because my brothers did certain activities- they here and there, but like they had their own creative outlets. For me it was like I was in dance classes, I was in violin lessons, I was singing, dancing, acting, doing these things. I had modeled for Wilhelmina as a kid, like I did so much, just me alone, and my mom sacrificed everything.

My mom sacrificed everything, I mean, in order for them to be able to pay for my classes. I mean she wouldn't go shopping for herself, she wouldn't like: go get her nails done, she wouldn't do this or that. Like every single penny she had went into, you know, giving us a space to do activities and do creative things that she couldn't. And same with my dad, and neither of them went to college. My mom did two years and didn't finish. My dad never went to college.

They didn't have something necessarily that they graduated school and were like, yeah, this is what I'm gonna do. My mom wanted to be a nurse, but you know she also had other passions that she didn't really get to follow in full, and my dad... just didn't know. He was good at certain things and like certain things, but you know he wasn't sure.

And here you had my older brother who was very much into music and you know he was very creative in his own way and you had me who wanted to sing, dance and act and, you know, do certain things within TV, film, theater. You had my younger brother who initially went to school for video game programming, graphic design and like wants to create apps and things like that, and they wanted us to know that whatever we chose to do, they were going to support. And that's hard to find, it's really hard to find.

So you know, from a young age, even going into college, it was like your job is to get an education. We didn't have this, so this is what you're gonna have. And obviously there were bumps along the way. It's not all perfect and there was pressure and sometimes there was guilt-tripping and sometimes there is this and that. But you know, going back to learning our roots, one thing that, especially going into my adult life, that I really chose to do on my own was talk to my elders about my family history, ask them questions that were never asked.

I found out things about my abuelo and his father that my mom didn't even know. But knowing that and knowing what they went through and why they came to America and why they did certain things helps me understand why they raised my mom the way they did and why she experienced certain things and then why she decided to do certain things and go on to, you know, raise us the way she did. You know there were so many layers, and I also read this book called the body keeps the score.

It talks about findings of how we hold on to trauma physically, even when we have it. Maybe we haven't experienced the same things that our parents did or their parents did or whatever else. Our bodies retain that. And in exploring all of that in my upbringing and now into my adult life, I mean, for some reason- I don't know why- I always said that maybe it was because growing up I played older roles, but I've always said, since I was like 13, that I was gonna hit my prime in my 30s and I truly feel that and I truly feel like all of this education and learning in this exploring and creativity has led me to now and I feel like I'm finally starting to like steamroll in my career in different ways, especially in theater, like- and you know I'm not doing as much TV/film right now, but I'm getting back to theater post-injury and I feel like things are finally starting to fall into place.

Debbi: [37:50] You had mentioned before COVID. We're just coming out of this very difficult time where everything shut down, so how did you creatively get through that? How did you make it through?

Megan: Many different ways. I mean, we, you talked earlier about how we use our creativity for everyday life beyond. I mean, I was working seven jobs at one point. I was a Tesla advisor. I was a shift supervisor at Starbucks. I was working at my old dance studio, teaching classes. I was teaching at an elementary school. I was singing at bars and restaurants and weddings.

I was, you know, just doing so many different things at one time, and it was exhausting, but I had to get creative, you know? And it's so true. And even just in the way you interact with people, especially during a time where people's levels of comfort are very different. And one thing that I was able to carry as a leader, because, you know, I was a shift supervisor. So if my manager's not there, I'm in charge.

And, you know, how you deal with customers, how you deal with your employees, when you're in a role of leadership, you have to get creative. You have to be observant. You have to listen because that's going to inform how you handle each situation. Just like you would in a scene. You have to observe what's happening around you. You have to listen to the other characters around you. That informs the intention within the scene, how you come forward. It all ties in.

So, you know, I had to get very creative. And I had little outlets here and there where, like, I did a short film. I did, like, a reading of a new musical. I did two readings. I did podcasts. I did certain things, you know, to help fulfill that part of my life that was missing for so long and was very shell- shocking for me. I also chose to stay busy and stay active in what I could do for myself in that moment and live within the world that we were in at that time, and we're still kind of in.

Debbi: [40:15] Well, Megan, you're an inspiration. This is why I do enjoy any kind of interaction with you. Tell people where they can next see you. What's up next for Megan Elyse Fulmer?

Megan: Well, I mentioned "A Chorus Line." I will be playing Diana Morales here at Stages St. Louis. So, I will be playing Diana Morales and I'm understudying Cassie.

Debbi: Which translates, comes into my ears just saying road trip. That's what it is.

Megan: Yes! You know I love to see you.

Debbi: Okay. Well, this is a Defining Creativity podcast. So, the final question I will ask you is what is your definition of creativity?

Megan: My definition of creativity is being able to live and explore within a world that allows us to play in our true self. I think that's how I would define it. You know, how can we live and explore in a space that allows us to play as we discover who we were and who we can still be.

Debbi: That's amazing. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I cannot thank you enough truly for spending the time with me and having this discussion.

Megan: I am so happy.

Debbi: And for all that you give out to the world. Truly. Truly.

Megan: Well, you too. You're creating this platform. This is absolutely beautiful. You're a dream.

Debbi: Well, as long as you don't think I'm a stalker, I still worry about that.

Megan: No. Oh my gosh. It makes me so happy every time I see you guys. Because, you know, going back to inner child, I mean, Tony and I started at 15, 14, 15 years old at Broadway Arts Alliance and, you know, we were kids. And being able to have a piece of home and familiarity and something that helped inform who I am now. Oh my gosh. It's such a blessing to have you guys in the audience.

Debbi: That's a wrap for Episode 8, my discussion with TV, film and theater performer Megan Elyse Fulmer. I'm so grateful for Megan and for you, the audience, for tuning in. Additional thanks to August Fackler for composing and recording the music. Join me next time as I talk creativity with insurance lawyer Michael Menapace. Meanwhile, be open to possibilities, make connections and embrace your creativity however it manifests itself in you.