

Ep #69: Blowing the Ceiling Off What's Possible with Dana Wilson



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

[The Art School Podcast](#) with Leah Badertscher

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Dana: It is gratifying and it is so important. It's sort of like Pilates. I remember when I found Pilates, and it was like, wait, how did I dance without this knowledge? And I'm sort of feeling that way with the thought work, like how did I create work without this, without knowing these things and having these tools?

Leah: And now, what can I create now that I do have them?

Dana: Right, it's completely blown the ceiling off.

Leah: So, let's talk about that...

Dana: Like, what's next?

Leah: What's next for Dana Wilson?

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That was a clip from my recent interview with Dana Wilson. Dana Wilson, in two words, is a creative genius. That is not in her bio, but I'm just going to go ahead and say it here. And I think, as you'll listen, you'll see why I say that. She is a brilliant content creator, a choreographer, a movement coach, instructor and performer. And, while you may have seen Dana dancing alongside pop industry megastars like Justin Timberlake, on world tours, at Super Bowl Halftime Shows, or The Oscars, she is anything but a backup

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dancer. Dance Magazine has even done a special feature on her entitled just that.

She has this refined yet bizarre style. She's thoughtful with a fresh voice and always, always, always delivers a healthy dose of humor. She illuminates everything she crosses, from classrooms to the world's biggest stages and the smallest cellphone screens.

And she, for sure, brought this same brilliant, radiant, dare I say funky energy to The Art School this past fall, 2019, as a member of our masterclass. I've told you how many times, I don't know, how much I love the extraordinary people that I get to work with through coaching, through private coaching, through The Art School, and Dana, for sure, is one of those.

She brings such a unique perspective, enthusiasm, and also so much organic solid wisdom to this work. And so, I was thrilled that she was onboard to do an interview and share that with all of you. These are fun, fun, fun episodes packed with many gems.

I know, as I listened back through, I was taking notes myself and kind of geeking out. This is exactly just the kind of podcast I love to listen to, and so, I'm so grateful. I mean, she really brings it. And I'm so excited for you to listen in.

I know that wherever you are on your creative journey, starting out or seasoned, successful creative veteran, there is something, many things I'd be willing to bet, in this episode to help you. In just that little intro clip, you heard Dana talking about how coaching and doing this work has completely blown the ceiling off what she knows is possible for her. And so, as you

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listen, be sure to do so knowing and with full intention that completely blowing the ceiling off what's possible is available for you as well.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello, everyone, and welcome back. We are going to get right to it. This is my birthday week, and I loved this conversation with Dana. It felt like totally a gift to me – happy birthday to me – to be able to talk to her and then to share it with you, it's like the gift that keeps on giving. These two episodes are like masterclasses in creativity.

And it's precisely the sort of thing – I mean, success leaves clues. And I'm also interested in a particular kind of success, a particular kind of success that's created with a focus on how are you doing it, who are you becoming, what is the way of being? It's a very conscious creativity and a very conscious way of creating creative success.

And for all of you listening, I want you to take a moment and think about what you believe is possible for you. And ask yourself if there needs to be some blowing off of ceilings for you. That is available to you. That is what's possible for you. If you have that dream, it's there for a reason.

And as you'll hear Dana talk in this interview, you don't want to have a could have, should have, would have mindset later. You'd rather have an I'm doing this no matter what, and use resources like this podcast, use coaching, use whatever it takes to become the person for whom that dream, results like that, are inevitable.

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So, before we dive right into the interview, I wanted to give you a little bit more background on Dana and her work. I mentioned she's danced on some of the biggest stages, and also on the silver screen. She was, for instance, in the opening scene of the amazing musical *La La Land*. Dana has also built this really fascinating and diverse career in the entertainment industry.

Here are just a few highlights of some of her most recent work. This past year, she contributed choreography to the feature film adaptation of the Broadway hit *In the Heights*, where she worked alongside the likes of contemporary creative greats like Lin-Manuel Miranda and Antonio Ramos, who she also did some amazing music videos for.

She also acted as the movement coach for Baz Luhrmann's upcoming Elvis biopic. And then there are The Seaweed Sisters. We are going to have resources at the end of this podcast and in the show notes so you can enjoy going down that YouTube rabbit hole.

The Seaweed Sisters are this wildly original and imaginative group. Dana makes up one third of this trio. As you'll hear her describe in this episode, the Seaweed Sisters are the otherness of the dance world. Dana has also been teaching masterclasses all over the world for the last 13 years, and then brings that masterclass teaching style right centerstage here to *The Art School Podcast*. Enjoy.

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Leah: So, I am very excited to welcome to *The Art School Podcast* today Dana Wilson. Dana, thanks so much for being here.

Dana: Thank you for having me. I am thrilled about this. I'm very excited.

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Leah: So, Dana, I've given you her illustrious bio as an introduction. And I had the great privilege of working with her in The Art School. She is a woman of many talents, and we're going to talk about those today. And one of the reasons I really wanted to have her on as a guest is because not only is she a creative powerhouse, but she is someone who is a creative powerhouse and, I'd say – correct me if I'm wrong – in love with the mindset work and the psychology of creativity.

Dana: Spot on. You're so spot on.

Leah: So, coaching her is always a delight because she has read so much and has created so much and brings this very unique and dynamic perspective to the work, and so seeing how her mind takes the material and what her interpretation is was so much fun to work with. And I thought too, would give so many insights to listeners who are uncovering their own creative careers and paths. So, Dana, my only problem is knowing where to start.

Dana: It's tough, right? Well, thank you for that lovely intro, A. and B yes, I hope this also is helpful to listeners. I am a teacher as well as being like a creative performer and producer. And this education element I can't shake. I just really love to share. I love to share things that I know and I love to be learning always. I think that's part of why I love this thought work so much is because I am constantly learning myself. So yeah, let's start somewhere. I don't know, maybe roll a dice or spin a wheel.

Leah: So, for how much of your career – and I think from an earlier conversation, maybe I had asked you, like, when you started your creative career in dance, you said something about a dance class where they have you move around like animals and you just developed a love of it.

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Dana: Oh, for sure. So, my backstory with dance more or less is that I have an older sister, she's older by three years, so when I was born, she was already in dance. She was in dance at three. And so, drives to the dance studio were a thing that happened. And I think that when I got to be three years old myself, my mom just consolidated those trips and put me in dance class too.

And at the time, I like to joke that it was really just kind of guided daycare or daycare with music because there's no – for a three-year-old, there's not a lot of technical exchange happening. But the class was called Creative Movement. And there was a record, or maybe a CD, I don't know at that time, 89, probably, I don't know, some sound system was playing this guy's voice and he would say, "Move like a giraffe." And then music would happen and then it would pause and you would pause and you would freeze. And then he'd say, "Move like a frog."

And I just, like, that was riveting to me. And it still is. How about that for consistency? I draw a lot of inspiration from animals, but character work in general, dance that's outside of five, six, seven, eight, like traditional or typical choreography still really speaks to me. So, I don't know if that's – that's certainly where it started chronologically, and that's also where a lot of my inspiration stems from now is looking around and seeing how things move. I'm fascinated by it.

Leah: So, one thing I wanted to make sure we talk about are The Seaweed Sisters. So, how does Dana at three years old moving like a giraffe, and talking about consistency, how does that relate to Dana and The Seaweed Sisters?

Dana: Leah, you just cracked the code I think because people ask a lot – and it's one of my favorite questions that people ask about The Seaweed

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Sisters, and I'll answer that question before I tell you what The Seaweed Sisters are. People ask, "What is this?" And that's my favorite thing because it is – yes, it's not easily definable, and that's so beautiful.

So, The Seaweed Sisters are a trio of dancing ladies, myself and my two best friends Jillian Myers and Megan Lawson. And we are all of similar age and education and experience, meaning we have similar training and we've been in LA working as professional movers and choreographers for roughly the same amount of time. But we rarely get hired together.

We're, all three, these, kind of, oddballs that on any given project you might have room for, like, one oddball on the roster, and we're a three. So, we had never been hired together, but we'd run in similar circles. And at one point, like six years ago, we decided to make something together. And we haven't stopped making things together.

So, we named ourselves The Seaweed Sisters because our first project, the piece of music that we used sounded kind of underwater. And we created this dance piece that we performed live, and then ultimately decided to film it. And we filmed it in a pool, partially underwater. So, this theme of water sort of stuck.

But another beautiful thing about Seaweed, other than its texture, is that it is a plant and, by nature, kind of asexual. It's not woman or man, which is so attractive to us. It's this kind of otherness. So, we are the otherness of the dance world. I guess that is what we are, but when you watch our work, it's this weird middle between dance and clown or theatre art, comedy movement. There's just something odd. It's difficult to define.

But I like to think of us as being the Disney and Pixar of dance. We're making work that speaks really strongly. And oddly, this was not the

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intention. But the work speaks to young people in a way that we did not expect nor could we have created if that was our sole goal, I think. But young people love it, and I think when older people, or even our peers watch it, they see a degree of skill and thought that speaks to older people as well. That's our zhuzh.

Leah: That's amazing. And the line, "We are the otherness of the dance world..."

Dana: Thank you for grabbing that out of my mouth. It's important to always be recording. That is the sort of thing we could have had a 45-minute meeting trying to figure out. But yeah, that's it.

Leah: That's incredible. And because it is the otherness, I think then that is why it can tend to defy definition. Because when you're doing something that is so other and people are like, "Wait, but how do we understand?" Give us a prior pigeon hole, a label, but if you are creating something that's so fresh, like you're riding the wave of pure creativity, I think it's then a sign that you're riding that wave of pure creativity if it's a little bit like you're still on the crest of it, like you're kind of preverbal when it comes to trying to explain it.

Dana: Right, absolutely.

Leah: But the experience of it – and I have not experienced it in person, but I would love to see you guys perform live one day...

Dana: It must happen. We're more live sisters for sure.

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Leah: Yeah, but I love and eat up the videos. So, do you have any, like, if somebody is new to The Seaweed Sisters and you're like, here is the YouTube rabbit hole, here's where you should start down that.

Dana: Awesome, yes, the source of all things Seaweed right now is our YouTube channel. If you search The Seaweed Sisters on YouTube, you will find our channel. That is where we keep all of our professional works, and a handful of filmed live performances. But I would say that to date, we've made one video work per year. And this is like short films that live on YouTube but we submit to festivals and we take them quite seriously. It's like a thing that we love to do with our friends.

But I think now, we've performed more live together than we have made video works. For example, we did even a small tour two years ago now with the musical group Lucius. Which, if I were to think of a time that Leah might get to come see The Seaweed Sisters, it would probably be if we ever do the folk festival – we did the Newport Folk Fest with Lucius, and Brandi Carlile performed there. So, there's an overlap. We're going to do that again. You're going to see The Seaweed Sisters.

Leah: That's going on my calendar.

Dana: But yeah, YouTube is a good place to start. We also have an Instagram account that has little snippets of all of our previous work and just kind of silliness in general. It's fun. I like following The Seaweed Sisters.

Leah: And I wanted to ask too, something you said stuck out to me, that it really connects or resonates with young people. What's your sense of why that is?

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Dana: I think because it is seriously silly. It's also bright. Our content is really vibrant and sort of fantastical. It's surreal in a way that a lot of the Disney, the Pixar, the DreamWorks, the Sesame Streets, it's very playful. It's all play-based in aesthetic, in how it looks. We're silly. We wear odd outfits and we have crazy hair and we show up in odd settings. But also, the process in which we create is also very silly and very fun. And I think that translates. I think that speaks to young people.

Leah: So then, the part too where you said it connects with people who are, I mean your peers, who have had training like you have had. And so, they're like, yeah it looks playful and it looks like anybody could do that. But if you have had even a tiny bit of dance education, you're like, no.

Dana: No, we're elite. We are. We're elite. And it is something that we focus on because when the three of us get in a room, it is very possible for us to just make jokes the whole time. And we lately have been like, "Man, let's dance." Like. We really want to get down. We want to make a dance statement and be untouchable.

And I think that the real lesson is you can be as silly as you want, as long as the skill is there. I think people will accept any amount of goofiness if the skill is there. But I wouldn't watch a five-minute video that's people recklessly throwing their bodies around. I do look for this degree of competency. And I hope that when you watch The Seaweed Sisters' work is that's what you see, that you see this like, "I feel like I could do that and I want to do that, but they're doing something special..."

Leah: And when you said that the three of you have similar training, can you talk a bit about what your background and your training has been?

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Dana: For sure. For lack of a better word, I would call all three of us studio kids. Which means we grew up training at a dance studio that offered various genres; ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, modern, hip-hop, contemporary, all of the things. And we trained in those styles so that we could compete in those styles. So, another word I guess for studio kid would be competition kid or comp kid.

And all three of us have competition background. So, we would learn choreography and then compete it. We'd wear costumes and go onstage and dance either as soloists and as groups. And I think all three of us did all of those things.

And there is kind of this idea about competition kids and the way that we train as being less valid in the art world. Like, we gluing rhinestones in our hair and on our face and on our bodies. And then there's a prize at the end, like there's this quantifiable measurable system there. And that's not so tasteful maybe to the rest of the art world. But I love my competition training. I think it prepared me very well for this working world, which my working world is the entertainment industry. So, maybe the art world would also think that that's distasteful, but whatever, I'm happy.

Leah: Right, and I think it's interesting, like, who gets to classify themselves as the art world, right?

Dana: Right, who is that? And is the art world any less competition than the actual competition world? Probably not.

Leah: So, that's interesting hearing about the comp kid or the studio kid and that background because, in knowing you and getting to work with you, I'm very impressed by – like, you're an entrepreneur too. I don't know if

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you'd identify yourself as that, but you have that pragmatism and that spirit too that, to me, appears to be a great ally for your art.

Dana: Well, I'm becoming one. I'll tell you that. I don't know if I'm completely owning that title yet. And we talked, one of my favorite things about Art School is how much we focused on our introduction, our title, what is our identity. And I really dug into what I make these titles mean. Like, what did I make choreographer mean and why did I resist it for so long?

I really didn't want to be a choreographer. Those were my famous words. If I were to look at my last 10 years, everything up until two years up to this point, so like 12 years ago, my famous line was, "I don't want to be a choreographer." It was like, "Let me perform. I want to be an actress. I want to be a dancer. I want to be a performer, like super-specialist. But I don't want to be a choreographer." Like, why? And why am I not owning entrepreneur? Why am I not owning director? I'm sorry, I'm rambling now. I's something that I do.

But I think you're right. My entrepreneurial nature stems from being a student and being curious about a lot of things and really not liking not being good at stuff. So, I'm curious, A, and then B, I want to be good at that because I don't like feeling like a beginner. I got to a level of competency with dance or specialty with dance that I'm very good at it and I like how that feels. And I don't like feeling like a beginner at new things.

So, when little sparks go up of new disciplines, for example mime, I started studying mime several years ago. And my first mime lesson, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I can't do that. Like, look at you do that and look at me not be able to do that." I hate that feeling. So, let's keep working, let's get really good at that.

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I think that is a skill that's served me really well. And anybody that's starting a new thing that wants to be good at it, it helps to not like being bad at something. It's motivating.

Leah: What I want to point out though is some people, they don't like being a beginner, and so they never try anything new. But what's implicit in what you're doing though is you don't like it but you don't quit. You don't use that as a reason to not do it.

Dana: Right, because feeling good at something, like being competent or being – the place where I've able to get with dance is I don't have to work very hard to get things that are pretty hard for beginners. For example, I can learn choreography very quickly and with minimal attention. I can basically be around it and I can watch it and it sticks on me.

I've worked really, really hard for a very long time for that to happen, but now it just happens. And that feels way better than being a beginner or stopping. I don't like stopping. I think I would always look at mimes from here until forever and be like, "Man, I could have, should have, would have. Darn it." I love feeling capable.

That's one of my favorite thoughts actually that winds up in my thought line a lot. For people who are familiar with the model, capable is one of my favorite feelings – wait, did I call it a thought? I am capable is the thought – wait, I got confused. Capable is the feeling, whatever the thought that leads to that, I really love landing at capable. It's one of my favorite things to do.

Leah: Yeah, and when I think too, the reason where you're like, is it a thought or a feeling, is because I think when you get into you've practiced an energy enough, you're not thinking it. I know what capable feels like, and then your mind is kind of clear to just channel whatever capable

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channels. I'm just so fascinated by what the intrinsic holes are for people to do what they're doing.

Again, you were drawn to a very particular kind of movement and dance. And now, it's like with the mimes. Because when you said, "For the rest of my life I would have looked at mimes and been like, could have, should have, would have," that is so wild and idiosyncratic. Because how many people out there are like, "I don't have that longing..."

Dana: Right, I think maybe the only thing more unique about me than my experiences and my education is my interests. My interests are all freaking over the place. And I can get interested in darn near anything, which I think also is a secret weapon of mine. But yeah, genuinely, mimes are fascinating. I think it's a beautiful art form, extremely underrated, and I just am smitten by it. I think it's the best.

Leah: Okay, so I want to back up there a little bit too and say – what was it? It will come. But one other thing I wanted to back up to was when you were talking about, in Art School, the introduction. And for people who weren't there, part of the reason I do that exercise and have that at the beginning and have that really a focus of the first two weeks is because so much of what we think and how we are in the world comes back to who we believe ourselves to be.

And how often in your life do you carve out intentional time to really dig deep and ask yourself, who am I and why do some of these labels, why am I comfortable with other things? Why do I resist it so much? Because it's fascinating that with choreographer, you were like, no, you know. Whether it's shadow work, or for whatever reason, that has a place in your psyche, even as, like, I'm not that.

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So, to spend time getting clear on who are we and defining ourselves intentionally in a conscious awake way, and even just the act of, “Do I get to define myself?” Because that is such a creative act. I think that’s one of the pre-creative acts. That’s commitment. That’s being the master of your own destiny because if you are like, “Okay, this is who I am. I decide it. no one else decides it for me.” It’s so powerful.

And then to line up your thoughts, your feeling, your energy, how you show up in the world, what you do don’t do, from there, that’s the great work. Which brings me to something I wanted to talk – do you have something you want to say?

Dana: That just reminded me of – there’s a quote, and I don’t know who it is. I feel like it’s Woody Allen or somebody, but it’s probably somebody, but it’s probably somebody long before that. And it’s also made up. This is not a fact. This is definitely someone’s thought. But showing up is 80% of life. 80% of life is showing up. And so if the other 20% is the work, I think I’ve spent 80% of my life thinking about the work and none thinking about how I show up.

So this coaching basically is training you for the 80% of life that’s just showing up, like how do I show up is so important. And I never took a class for that. I took ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, modern, and hip-hop. But I never took, like, who are you? So in a way, I was latching onto pieces of all these different genres of dance and, like, sticking them onto my body thinking that I’m a little bit hip-hop, I’m a little bit technical, I’m a little bit jazzy, I’m a little bit that. Like, I’m filling the holes of myself with dance styles, but not doing a lot of work on the person, on the person and the values. So yeah, it’s wildly important.

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Leah: Yeah, and it gives me goosebumps. Because you say you've done the 80%, like focused 80% on showing up without a thought to who am I and how can I be the creative authority and director in my own life. And the thing is, and you've done amazing work. And I think that's' what I get so excited about is people are doing amazing work, and then with introducing these practices and concepts, and I think space and community too having it be a dialogue and having there be a collective energy around it, because it's a lot easier to get on a belief train than it is to be riding your unicycle.

Dana: Sure, yeah.

Leah: I think it's such an exciting time to be doing the work. And doing the work with artists, I just think, is so gratifying.

Dana: It is gratifying and it is so important. It's sort of like Pilates. I remember when I found Pilates, and it was like, wait, how did I dance without this knowledge? And I'm sort of feeling that way with the thought work, like how did I create work without this, without knowing these things and having these tools?

Leah: And now, what can I create now that I do have them?

Dana: Right, it's completely blown the ceiling off.

Leah: So, let's talk about that...

Dana: Like, what's next?

Leah: What's next for Dana Wilson?

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Dana: It's one of my favorite questions. And because especially in my world, the entertainment world, especially in LA, what's next, that question happens all the time because our gigs are really short-term. Rarely, and this happened to me last year, I had a few really long-term projects, which is unusual. Other than a tour or a movie, most of my bites are small. So it's something people ask all the time, like, what's next? What do you have going on? What's coming up?

And right now is a really delicious, but also very stressful time, where I don't have big work on the horizon. And by big work, I mean other people's industry type work. So right now, the things that are on the horizon are mine, solely mine, which is hugely rewarding and also terrifying because I have to drive them. They won't happen if I don't do them.

So, one of those things for me right now is that I started a podcast. And thanks to you and The Art School actually, the podcast almost died before it was born. The podcast actually started as a book. I wrote a book two years ago. It's a collection of quotes and short stories about my experience in art and entertainment.

And it was really my way of teaching and sharing without having to travel the world and be in the dance studio, sweating and teaching. So, I do all that over a computer and then send it out to the world. So, for several different reasons, the book got paused. And one of your prompts in The Art School was to ask, what is something you have been avoiding? And that book cropped up for me. When I revisited the book, I discovered, oh my god, this isn't a book, this is a podcast. Holy smokes, get on it.

So, now I'm eight episodes into the podcast and I know it lights me up in a way that some performance work lights me up. It's very different in several ways. It's less physically rewarding. It does not give me endorphins. It does

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not, no sweat, just crinkled forehead and pulling my hair out over some technical stuff occasionally. But I really like the way that it's got me very specific with my words.

I get very specific about my nonverbal communication, the way I shape my body, the texture with which I move, the dynamics. I'm very used to being deliberate with my movement, but now I'm getting deliberate with my words and it's a very powerful thing. And it's exciting. So, that is a cool thing.

And then next up, I think for all three of us Seaweed Sisters, we're working on making that work a priority for us, whether that manifests in a live show, a larger bite of video work, or a series, or I would love a film and I would love a series. I'm putting that out there in the world for us.

Leah: Yeah, you heard it here first.

Dana: Yes, hold it, hold it...

Leah: Held.

Dana: Thank you. So, that's what my world looks like right now.

Leah: And the podcast is Words That Move Me.

Dana: Words That Move Me. Thank you for that plug.

Leah: For everyone that wants to listen to it, I love it because my favorite are those – to be a fly on the wall for other people's creative process. But from, like, you get to hear how they think and you hear how they operate. And I think even that comes across in yes, the words you choose. And I love how you said you're very deliberate about the shape you make with

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your body, because I believe our words too, whether it's thought or verbal, kind of create the shape that's like the architecture our life can fill. And I think too, podcasting is such an extraordinary medium because there's an energy that comes across in your voice where I get to know Dana Wilson on another level than if I could only know Dana Wilson from the words on the page...

Dana: Or the Instagram...

Leah: Exactly. There's something else I think that comes across in your voice.

Dana: Well thank you. And that was something that I was kind of self-conscious about in the beginning, voice. And we've talked about this before. But I have this natural rasp. And I actually have done some damage to my vocal cords from teaching for so many years, shouting over music and never having learned to project correctly, like, breathing from your diaphragm. Belly breathing is not something that a dancer is encouraged to do.

So, I was really insecure for a long time about my voice and it sounding rough or not being able to deliver a weekly podcast because I teach on most weekends and most Mondays are like vocal rest because it's thrashed. So, having this precious podcast has helped me be more precious with this instrument that I have that has been neglected for a big part of my life.

Leah: And when you were talking about the podcast too, it reminded me of the question I had earlier that came back to me; you said something extraordinary. You said, "I'm so curious. I've so many interests. And that's my secret weapon." Because I want you to speak more to that because I

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have so many people that come and say, "My problem is I have so many interests."

Dana: Look at that thought model. Oh yeah, it is undoubtedly a strength. It is a secret weapon. You know, I think any strength, if overused, could be a weakness. If I followed every one of those leads with 20% conviction, then I would land in kind of muddy waters all the time. But when I get into a thing, I get really into that thing and I go as deep as I can go before something else that requires my 100% attention scoops me up.

But especially in the dance industry, it sounds kind of dark and pessimistic to say this, but dancers are a dime a dozen. There are boatloads of new dancers arriving in LA every day and it's the little things that set you aside, the little interests and the cross training, like mime training really sets me aside in terms of dance. Also, oddly, you never know, these gigs, the things that come up, some project really might require I know how to use a firearm, and I'm a person that knows how to use firearms because my husband introduced me to it and I was like, "Whoa, that's awesome."

Or I know how to weld because my husband is really good at it, and I didn't like not being good at it. Actually, this is reminding me that I want to be better at welding. Those types of things could only enrich your experience of the world. I don't know how anything like that could take away. Me getting really into drugs, that would be distracting. I think that would not be such a good sidestep. But just about everything else I can think of, it would enrich my contributions on a project. It enriches my life. It makes me more excited to be here.

Leah: What's also so profound in what you're saying is, like, the thoughts that aren't there. For you, this is totally a strength. This is my secret weapon. And what's absent, I want to point out for everyone listening

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because I think that's so important, is there's no self-inflicted, "Oh my gosh, why can't I just focus? I have shiny object syndrome." I hear that so often, I think it's something people have heard as a criticism. But rather, they could take, "I'm curious about the world, I'm passionate about many things. That can be a strength. I can use everything to my advantage." But I think, if you've heard criticism from the outside and it's stuck to you at some point, that it can sit and turn something that's your secret weapon or your superpower and you can use it against yourself. But that it's a different possibility is like a thought choice away.

Dana: Right, I think that the idea that we can only do one thing – I think you've talked about this before, either on the podcast or maybe it was in Art School, this 10,000 hours idea is kind of shooting our creative feet a little bit because if our idea is that you have to do something for 10,000 hours, then the thought might be, "I can't waste any of my available hours on things that are not that thing that I want to be great at." And I just don't believe that.

I think that my time spent learning mime was also time spent getting better at dance, which is the thing I want to be the master of. So yeah, I think that putting that partition up in our mind that says, like, this amount of time needs to be spent doing this in order to be the best at this, and that would be distracting me from that. I think all that funnels into the same place if you're smart about it.

Leah: So, what do you mean, smart about it? Can you say more about that?

Dana: Yeah, thank you for calling me out on that. That was kind of a copout wasn't it? Like, that's the actual important part. It's the mindset. It's the extra work of bridging the gap in your brain that says those two things are

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the same. Mime is the same as dance. Somebody else defines it differently, but I think of them both as movement that call on the imagination. And that is what I want to be great at.

So, I guess, if you're smart about it means if you define and redefine in a way that gets you closer to your goal. Like, I might need to redefine mime for me to use those hours as hours spent getting me closer to my bright shiny goal. And yeah, I guess the podcast has taught me that too, like, it is so – words, how we define them and how we let them define us is extremely powerful stuff.

My husband lately has been interested in – well, he's always been interested in philosophy and so I have I, I just didn't know that that's what it was called. And he's very interested in stoicism right now. And I think a lot of this thought work, there's so much commonality between stoic philosophy and the separating circumstance from thought, you know, and this idea that I cannot control your thoughts and your feelings, like we are separate, we are accountable, and we are the authors of our own life experience. That's a stoic philosophy.

And so, he's been really digging into that and I think that philosophies in general are all about building an argument that is so airtight that nobody can pick it apart or pull the Jenga block out. And so philosophers get very choiced with the words. And I don't know, I like to be a little bit looser than that. But when it comes to how we spend our time and what we make that mean, then we do have to get specific with how we're defining our life and how we're defining things.

Leah: Yeah, and there's like a discipline to it. Like, and I think that is one of the beauties of, whether you call it coaching or philosophy. Because the stoics, philosophy then was not like tweed jacket professor in an ivory

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tower. It was about how to make life work well, individuals, like feet on the ground. And so I think realizing that discipline with how you think and getting clear on who am I, who do I want to be, what do I want to create, and how to line up all of the relevant parts with, mind, body, and spirit, because it's that aligned place, that's flow.

Dana: Yeah, absolutely. Everything works best when it's in proper alignment; your body, your car, the stars, all the things.

Leah: Pilates teaches you that and I fell in love with Pilates for that same reason too. I think too, so I'm not a dancer like Dana, but I love to dance. But it was something that I put off and, like, what am I going to do? At the time, I'm 35 that ship has sailed. But something in me was like, I would love to dance. And so I eventually found some classes and went through that being a beginner for a long-time phase, in front of a mirror...

Dana: Oh, the hardest place to be a beginner is in front of a mirror and a lot of other people.

Leah: Yes, public space where everyone else is coordinated, and they can see you and you can see you. And there's no hiding. But I thought that was such a beautiful metaphor, because similar to your mime, like could have, would have, should have, do I really want to give in or do I want to see why this is here?

But I think, to your point about being multi-passionate and awake and smart about how you use it – because sometimes how I've used it, some of it is just non-linear, brings me great joy. I love it, it's healthy. And then I was like, holy smokes, it taught me to be a better entrepreneur and coach. It develops your emotional range, and with the way you move your body, there's so much interrelated for your emotional spectrum. And the more

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rigid your body, I think, the more rigid you are in your emotions. So what are your thoughts about that as a trained dancer?

Dana: That's such a good question. I think that when all systems are going and when everything is working well together, that mind and body are so closely connected. And in my work, especially with non-dancers, like when I coach actors or recording artists, oftentimes the access point to the body or getting the body to do what I want it to do, the access point is not the body. The access point is the mind.

You have to teach it differently, explain it differently, use a metaphor, use some imagery, ask about their life experience or relate it to something else that they know, cognitively, you know. And so, the access point to the body is the mind. And then in other situations, the access point to the mind is the body. If I am blocked, if I can't get a podcast out, I go for a walk or I turn some music on or I just kind of shake things up a little bit.

So, I am very curious about the relationship, mind and body. And I think it is my life's work and it is my life's play. And I will be doing it forever. But I think that it's a powerful relationship and if we know how to tap into one or the other, or if we can even identify, right now, mind is blocked, let's try body, or right now, body is blocked, monkey see monkey do isn't working. How else can I think that will get me past this point? Yeah, I think that really is why I'm interested in the thought work, to get a better mind-body connection, is for those moments when body isn't doing what body should be doing, mind needs to help.

Leah: Yeah, and it's such a great point. Like, having the option of a different access point and having a feel for when it's time to use one or the other. Because for me, I had taken thought work to a point of, okay, I know, for instance, I wanted to grow my business and make more money as an

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artist and as a coach. I could think the thoughts. There was some sort of block. And it was dancing and realizing how recurring the thought was of, like, this just isn't who I am. Like, I'm just not that out there. I'm just not that out there. And all of these, it as really that all my self-concept came to the surface in the dance class because the self-concept that was limiting how I allowed my body to move, I had a huge lightbulb moment, same self-concepts that were limiting how I was approaching my business and who I let myself be.

So that's interesting. And it was this like moving my body in different ways that challenged thoughts that said, you can't move like that. And then it starts to create that wiggle room. And I know for sure that flowed over and there was, like, that crosspollination.

Dana: That's massive. I have a podcast episode called Dance Lessons are Life Lessons. It's incredible. My guest on that episode is Chloe Arnold. She's a woman that's, like, so ridiculously accomplished. And if you looked up entrepreneur in the dictionary, it would be her photo.

She's started businesses, collectives, companies, clothing lines. I mean, it's out of control. I mean, in the greatest way. But it's so true what you can learn in a dance class how applicable that is into other areas. Yeah, it speaks to where I was getting to with how we use our time and how we use these diverse interests to funnel them all into the same bucket. They're not separate.

Leah: No, because it's all you, right?

Dana: Yeah.

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Leah: It is all you. And I loved that conversation with her. And one of the things that she said, I had to stop the treadmill to take it in. When he said, "Do not allow other people to create your belief ceilings."

Dana: I love it. Even the people that love you, and that is something that I have done even subconsciously is I let people – I get encouragement. Let's say, for example, I went on tour with Justin Timberlake. And a lot of the feedback that I got was like, you were made for this, this is what you were meant to be doing. And I know that that, to many listeners, that's like, "Oh my god that's so cool because that's a really high level." But that also is a ceiling.

If I believed that dancing for JT was the sole thing I'm meant to do, that's really unfortunate because I don't think he'll be touring forever. I think he'll probably want to sit down and have a family and not be on the road all the time. So, what does that mean for me and my endgame? So yeah, not letting other people set the ceiling for what you're capable of is a huge, huge takeaway from that episode. I'm glad that that struck you. It a powerful point.

Leah: Well, I'm glad you illuminated it with that example because, again, I think yeah, she's made it. And to have somebody say, that was meant as great praise. And then too, I think it's why we have to these carve out this time and space and give our own attention to ourselves to say, "But who am I?"

Because I can see, if somebody thought, well that's what you are and they meant it as a compliment, you're like, why don't they see that actually I'm also, like, there's an also and then there's a more and it's so rich and it's growing and again taking the power back to define who you are.

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So, that's something that I wanted to ask for sure, as we talked a little bit before we started recording, about what do you do when you are on this journey of you are a creative powerhouse and then you come into the mindset work and the coaching work and you're like, "Oh wow, and now I have these tools and so now I am really taking full responsibility for my life, my creative life, being the ultimate creative authority in my life, I decide I'm the master of my destiny," and then you're in the entertainment industry where the narrative is going to be, "Oh sure, you can be the greatest choreographer and movement master, dancer, and all the other things, if I decide to give you the role."

Dana: Right, you're only as good as your resume or your last job or your credit on this project or...

Leah: And that there are gatekeepers and people that hold your destiny in their hands. How can you speak to that? Because I think you are particularly well situated to speak to that.

Dana: Thank you, and yes, it's a very powerful prompt. And I am sitting squarely in the middle of working on that.

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I hope you loved that conversation as much as I loved having it. so, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to really lean in here, work with me, and coach with me.

So, you heard Dana stress the importance of mindset and how she believes it's one of her secret weapons that sets her apart in the entertainment industry. I want you to consider that for yourself.

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If you are listening to this podcast, no doubt you are already a believer on some level, but are you really taking that seriously to distinguish yourself in whatever industry or genre, medium you're working within? As I mentioned in the interview, I think this is such an exciting time for creatives because, to embrace what it can really mean to be creative, I know means gaining mastery in mindset and also in the mind-body connection, which was another part of this conversation that I loved.

I do believe that this paradigm we're creating of thriving successful empowered artists will be built on rock-solid creative mindsets and also a mastery of the mind-body connection. So, for yourself, tap in and ask yourself, how can you address these areas, mindset, mind-body connection, to really set you apart and build your own personal micro-paradigm of what it means to be a very powerful and powerfully creative, successful, fulfilled, and thriving human being.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you've enjoyed this episode, if this podcast has been useful for you, the best thing you can do to pay it forward is to share it widely – wildly, I was going to say. That works too, widely, far and wide. And also, go to iTunes and leave a review. That helps me get this work to more people.

And, when you're ready to take this work deeper, when you're ready to blow the ceiling off what's possible for you, the best way to do that is to work with me. You can do that two ways this year. There is The Art School. The next session of which begins the fall of 2020. But now is the time to sign up for the newsletter at www.leahcb.com so that you're the first to know when enrollment opens. Class size is limited. For the open class, we limit enrollment, and for the masterclass, it's an even smaller more intimate group. That's the class that Dana was also a part of. It operates a lot more like a mastermind. And the masterclass is also by application only. So, be

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on my mailing list so that you're the first to know when enrollment for both of those opens.

The second way to work with me this year is through private coaching. To learn more about private coaching or to be added to the waitlist for private coaching, please email support@leahcb.com and let us know. Private coaching is now by application only, so when you email us, we'll take very good care of you and respond with everything you need to get that process started.

To close today, I just want to bring your attention back to this concept of alignment that Dana and I talked about. We talked about it in Pilates. We also talked about how coaching can help get your mind aligned. Because I think, if I had to reduce what I do as a coach, creative mentor, collaborator, to its fundamentals, it is about getting people into alignment. It's about lining up, thinking, doing, and being with who you want to be, the truth of you, your true essence, and what you really want to create that big dream, lining everything up so that energetically you are a match, and also, that energy, AKA creativity, can flow unimpeded through the system that is your life.

Alignment makes flow possible. And when things are aligned and flowing, I know you know how beautiful that is. So, that is what I wanted to give you to take away and chew on for this week. How can you get yourself, in all matter of ways, into better alignment? What in your life needs to be aligned so that you're an energetic match for the greatest version of yourself for your greatest dream?

Have a beautiful week, everyone, and I will talk to you, Dana and I, will talk to you next time.