

MINGJIA CHEN: Hi, everyone, I'm Mingjia Chen and this is *The 'D' Word*. Do you love poetry, books, photography, music, or anything else that doesn't necessarily seem related to dance? Every two weeks we interview someone phenomenal who works in these fields and is directly or indirectly inspired by dance, but they aren't dancers themselves. We want to know: how is the world actually affected by dance? This week, calling in through Zoom, we have Toronto vocalist and musician Alex Samaras. Alex is the founding member of many projects, including the band Tryal, and vocal group Grex, in which I am a member. Grex explores the extremes of the human voice and the body-voice connection. Alex has worked as a composer and collaborator with choreographers, including Susan Burpee and Christopher House.

Hi, Alex.

ALEX SAMARAS: Hi Mingjia, nice to see you.

MINGJIA CHEN: Nice to see you. Well, to hear you and see you. I guess for our listeners, we are on Zoom.

ALEX SAMARAS: I'm hearing you.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yes, hearing me and seeing me. How are you today?

ALEX SAMARAS: I'm doing really well. I went for a walk in High Park, I taught a few lessons. I had some chia pudding that I made last night, you know, when you make something overnight and you put it on top of cereal. I'm feeling good. And it's sunny out. So there's a sense of inspiration and flow. I would say I'm flowing.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, I wish our listeners could see you right now, because your face is, like, glowing.

ALEX SAMARAS: I'm at the window. I sit at the window and I'm like, 'I look like I haven't slept in 10 years'. So you really can't see my face. It's just whitewashed.

MINGJIA CHEN: It's beautiful. I love it.

ALEX SAMARAS: It's nice to see you though, too.

MINGJIA CHEN: Oh, thank you, yeah.

ALEX SAMARAS: I love talking to you, and we're just having a chat.

MINGJIA CHEN: Mm hmm, exactly. And for those tuning in, Alex is somebody I've known for quite a while. You were my teacher. Actually, that's how we first got to know each other.

ALEX SAMARAS: [laughs] It's so funny to think about that. Oh my god. You are my teacher just for the record. Just for the record.

MINGJIA CHEN: We're everyone's teachers. We're teaching left and right. Teaching and learning. That's what we're doing today. Yeah, so let's jump right into it. I want to start by asking you about a group you lead called Grex, which incorporates a lot of movement and quote unquote, choreography. Can you tell our listeners a bit about that group, that project?

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah, well, right now it's sort of the culmination of about, it's a journey for me of like 10 years. I came back to Toronto from New York, having worked with Meredith Monk, and realized that I had this desire to really work with her and be in New York. And then I realized when I was there, that she was just working with her friends that she's known for, like, 30 years. And they were just doing their work together. And I was like 'Oh, okay, I'm just gonna, like, I don't need to be here'. So, I came back to Toronto, and I wanted to start a vocal ensemble, which initially was to perform other people's new music. That was the goal. So we would do sets of a lot of different types of singing so that people could hear our ability to do lots of different things. And play with the voice. I really wanted to just explore the voice with people that I trusted and loved to be in a rehearsal room with. Then it shifted into, like, a male only group where it was low voices. I wanted to explore low voices and folk songs and improvising, and like improvising around a solo singer who's performing a folk song and kind of focused on that. And then, that morphed into realizing I just wanted to work with women. Only. Exclusively. Which I get to do a lot of, anyway. Most of my working life, I would say, is, like, you know, 80% with women and I really love that. And then I decided that I needed to -- I wanted to be in a more passive, not passive, I wanted to be listening more than actively performing.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah.

ALEX SAMARAS: Which also came out of having worked with a lot of dance projects through all those years, through like the last 10 years, and seeing how a choreographer works and how they talk to dancers and the space that's created in a dance rehearsal, which is so different than music, where we're like: show up, learn the music, do the gig. Which I love too, that's the joy, as you know, it's, like, so fun and thrilling to be on the edge of your seat and come in two hours rehearsal and do a show. But I realized that there's a whole other way. And there's this whole research period. And even framing your approach as research. I had never given, never allowed myself to use that word before. And it just opened up my mind. And so now working with you, and Mara Nesrallah, and Jill Harris, it's a reaction to the work that I'll have to go back a few years as well to the work I was doing in Montreal with my friends Eugénie Jobin and Frédérique Roy. And they are just a beautiful pair of singers who are really, well Fred especially is really interested in talking about the process of making things. And so I realized

my practice was just being in a room with them and bringing my music and some other again, folk songs or other forms using the voice and bringing it to them and then working together and playing together. So that distilled a bunch of ideas in a form. And now with some singers that I admire, and just want to work with you, Mara and Jill, I realized that we could, yeah, we could work together, and I felt comfortable, quote, unquote, leading, which I don't actually, that's actually not the right word, like, just kind of facilitating you three singing together and offering, like, bits of a recipe.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, recipe.

ALEX SAMARAS: Anyway, I'm going on and on. But does that answer your question about Grex? Like, that's what Grex is now, and I think it's gonna keep on changing. I also see my work being really specific. And then some people getting it and being like 'Great, that's Alex's work. That was fun. Next.' You know, and then someone else coming in and discovering it. And that's exciting to me. I've been in that situation where I work with someone and I'm, like, I've had my era with them. Now I move on. And I'm realizing that I am now making something that again, I was ready to like, perform and crystallize what we had made. And then COVID struck. But I'm still working kind of semi regularly with my friend Ellen, who is a dancer in Montreal. And she and I have been talking about the Grex piece quite a bit. And she's helped me, she's a choreographer and a dancer, and it's helped me frame how to like, approach it when we go back into it, when we can.

MINGJIA CHEN: Ellen, who? By the way, just for those tuning in.

ALEX SAMARAS: It's on the tip of my tongue. Ellen Furey. Ellen Furey, that's so funny, because my partner's middle name is Fury Childs. Yeah, Ellen Furey. And we do an exchange. So I give her some vocal work. And she talks about the Grex piece of me.

MINGJIA CHEN: Woah.

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah. And it's always expanding and helps me. It actually allows myself to do what I've always been wanting to do, but thought like, 'Oh, I have to, keep everything open.' And she's like, 'Actually, you can ask for really specific things that will help the performers.'

MINGJIA CHEN: Really? Like she's the one who kind of showed you that it's okay to be, like, precise or like give direction?

ALEX SAMARAS: Yes, well, because a big part of it for me is that everyone is actually experiencing a feeling. And that's me. Grex is turning into this exploration of , to me, performance, colliding with experiencing something real. Which of course, we're always doing that when we perform, but there's something for me, I've always loved performing. And so I've done the thing that is

performing. And then I realized that it's possible to practice something where you are: like working on your instrument, and doing technique, quote, unquote, like something technical, that's giving you like a positive feeling, and maybe something emotional, and maybe something personal. In yourself and between someone else, and then to get to then share that in a performance I find really interesting and also subtle and worth spending time researching and exploring.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, right. Something that I've heard you say quite a bit, is that when we're singing, we're dancing, even though we're not physically dancing. Can you talk a bit about what you mean by that?

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah, well, I think there's a lot of movement in so many little parts of our body that I mean, sorry, I don't think, I *know*. We know that when we're singing, our vocal folds are moving. Our larynx is moving up and down. Our belly, our breath, our ribcage is expanding and contracting. There's all this work, gentle, subtle work happening while we sing. And the fact that you're doing it with someone else. So like blending and singing in unison is this beautiful dance. It's like choreographed swimming, where you're moving together at the same pace, the same time. And I think, again, this goes back to when I first discovered Meredith Monk, and, you know, realized that the voice, and she said this, this is her quote, but 'the voice is as flexible as the spine'. There was this documentary I saw where just the opening is her song. It's called *Do You Be*, and just the way that she was using her voice and singing, and then she goes into this, like bird, high thing, which you obviously can do with your voice. And I love when you explore your voice in those ways. But I just realized, it hit me in such a deep place that I was like, 'Oh, that's what I've always been doing.' And I didn't know. That's what I was always exploring. I recently found a tape of myself as a kid. Yeah, you saw that?

MINGJIA CHEN: I saw that. Go to @ronceyguy on Instagram. Oh, I guess it's not. [laughs].

ALEX SAMARAS: Sorry. It's gone. It's gone forever. But even as a kid, I remember my mom saying once, 'You sound like a violin.' And I was like, 'I'm trying to be a violin.' And I was always like, just exploring the voice. And I think, again, it's just for the brain. It's for your brain. If you allow yourself to think 'I'm dancing.' There's more possibilities, and there's more exploration that can happen. So I think yeah, I say that a lot. Again, riding the expression from Meredith and also I think I'm discovering for my own self, what that means. And I'll say that these days, I'm really working on stillness while singing, physically.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah.

ALEX SAMARAS: I really move a lot. And I love that. But sometimes I get out of control and I lose myself. And now I'm working a lot on stillness. And I feel like the more that I'm better at stillness, the more that I'm a dancer.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, woah.

ALEX SAMARAS: The more focus I have, you know?

MINGJIA CHEN: Can you talk about like, why is that?

ALEX SAMARAS: It's because it's, I don't want to say it's control, because that's not what singing is at all. I mean, there's a sense of like, gentleness in the control, but it's like, if I'm losing myself, then the clarity of what I'm doing isn't coming outwardly in a focused way. And I think that the care and the ability to just stand and deliver allows other people to feel more, and I can still be feeling a lot and moving, quote, unquote, in my own way. But to have that on the spectrum, like to have stillness as an option is important to me and a new practice, really, in the last, like, couple of years. I never thought about that. Because people would encourage it, you know, and be like, 'Oh, that's great' or 'Oh, you're so' and I was like, 'Okay, cool.' Like, I won't think about it. And also, people take videos of things more, and you see yourself and you're like 'Whoa, I need to chill out'. There's a lot of energy coming off and it's just sporadic.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, yeah, it's so funny that you talk about stillness, because we talked a little bit about singing as a social thing. And, you know, when you're hearing voices coming together and I'm wondering, during this COVID solitary time, has that been something that's sort of encouraged the stillness? And how has it changed you're dancing with yourself?

ALEX SAMARAS: I love that. COVID hasn't affected my thoughts about singing. I mean, I do think it's insane that it's not okay to sing with a group of people right now. That is mind blowing to me, because so much of my life was singing with other people and also working with large groups of kids and singing together and knowing that like, feeling how it affected them, and how much after a while, they really loved it, even if at first it's like, 'This is dumb'. But stillness. COVID. Dancing with myself. Yeah, I mean, I'm not a solo artist. That's not my craft. That's clear to me. I mean, I'm releasing a record next week. That's me playing piano and singing, but it's not, it's weird to be honest, it's weird to hear it. I'm like, 'This is not what I do.' But I'm trying, I'm working on it. And I'm like, it's a practice. But I would say I've been avoiding thinking about that question you asked [Laughs].

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, because it's painful. It is painful for me at least.

ALEX SAMARAS: But I mean, that's so interesting to hear you say it's painful for you, because of what you can do, like on the piano, and just with your voice to me is like,

I would never be bored. If I was you, I'd be like, 'Now I'm gonna do,' like, I mean, you inspire me, the way you play with your voice, and your journey of it is so wonderful to be a part of and to watch. And that video you did for Sou Sou is like, you know, that's really important. That's really important. Like, that's heavy. So I'll just say that. You make me want to do that. It'd be better at what, I'm sorry, not better, but just, like, keep it in my mind as, 'Oh yeah, it can be beautiful.'

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, it can be beautiful, but is one shade of beautiful, you know, and sometimes I'm like, 'I just want to dance with other people. Sing with other people.' And yeah, it's a journey. I think maybe, like, five years from now we'll both come back and be like, 'Oh, that's what I was feeling. Okay, I can process it now.'

Musical Break

MINGJIA CHEN: I want to loop back just because you casually dropped, like, 'I'm gonna be releasing an album or record next week'. Where can we find this?

ALEX SAMARAS: It's casual, very casual.

MINGJIA CHEN: Casual, but important, and I want everybody to listen to it.

ALEX SAMARAS: Thanks. Well, I'll be releasing it on Bandcamp, for sure. I'm going to put my old record up on iTunes and Spotify, and then release my new one on Bandcamp. And I'll be putting out a video as well, a little like, lyric video.

MINGJIA CHEN: And what day is it coming out?

ALEX SAMARAS: I don't know. My friend Sandro is finishing the masters today. And then I'm gonna, like, I think it'll be out probably Friday. Bandcamp Friday.

MINGJIA CHEN: Today, for people who are listening in the future, is March.

ALEX SAMARAS: Oh sorry, Friday, April 2nd. Friday, April 2nd.

MINGJIA CHEN: Okay, April 2nd.

ALEX SAMARAS: Can we do an interview next time where I interview you? Because most of the time I'm answering questions, but really, I'm thinking like, 'I really want to ask Ming about this.' Anyway, I guess I could have done that. But yeah.

MINGJIA CHEN: I mean, it's a conversation.

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah, exactly. It's a conversation.

MINGJIA CHEN: But I am having a great time picking your brains. [laughs]

ALEX SAMARAS: This brain. Oh my gosh, this brain.

MINGJIA CHEN: Okay. So, it's funny, we've never actually talked about this, even though we work with dance and movements so much. And I've known you for so long. Like, have you ever had any formal dance training? Or maybe not even formal, but like, you know, what's your story? What's your dance story?

ALEX SAMARAS: Good question. Well I wrote [down some] dance things. I was like, 'I feel like they're asking about what I've done'. If anything I grew up with a sister who was in ballet. I watched all her performances. I saw *The Nutcracker* like 100 times. She was in that every year at the Pia Baumann School, which is a place we've rehearsed at together. Pia Baumann School is a Toronto institution, so many amazing people who are now just artists or musicians or whoever have gone through that program. And so I grew up seeing all those shows, and I loved it, and I wanted to dance. But my parents were sort of like, 'Go to tennis, go do this.' And so I went to gymnastics. As a kid, I would always do cartwheels and handstands. And I got made fun of a lot when I went to public school from a Montessori school because my whole idea of recess was like, 'We do cartwheels.' And all the girls are doing cartwheels and I was doing cartwheels with the girls having a great time. And anyway, there were some issues with that. But gymnastics was my intro. And then I sort of lost any sort of sense of body practice through university, which I think happens to a lot of people. I would say, like, maybe [for] men, dance isn't encouraged. At least it wasn't for me. And then I found yoga as a movement practice and Meredith actually also really encouraged me because she was like, 'You're not a great dancer. You need to do more yoga.' I was like, 'Okay,' so I did that. And now I and then I was gonna say I took this amazing solo dance class with Dawn Carleton, I don't know if you know, Dawn, she sang in The Element choir quite a bit. She's an amazing dancer in Toronto.

MINGJIA CHEN: Oh Dawn yeah, I was thinking D o n, but it's D a w n.

ALEX SAMARAS: Dawn, Dawn, D a w n. Dawn Carleton and her class is a 10-week course. She offers it, like, once or twice every, I don't know, few years. And it's a 10-week course. And on the first week, you improvise for one minute, second week, two minutes, then you go up to 10 minutes. And there's only three people in the class, or four. It's a very small class, and you basically, the first class is just like, 'Okay, you're going to do a movement,' and it was all movement based, which for me, I needed at that time because I was so over identifying as a singer, I was like, 'My voice my voice,' and was just doing too much singing basically. And so I wanted to do something that was just movement based. And that class taught me a lot about improvising. Not even just movement improv, but just improvising and how to approach having space to make something in. And about setting intentions and

finding yourself and checking yourself to see if you're following through with what your intentions are. So that was a training. And then I always, for years, have been a part of the TO Love-In community and go to workshops and do all, any body thing I'm like, I'm there. But in terms of dance, not a lot. Like I don't do ballet barre, or I've done like maybe a modern class here and there. But it's very basic.

MINGJIA CHEN: Right, so more just like integrated body things.

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah, like getting to know your body. Because I have always been athletically inclined. But my coordination isn't amazing. So that's why Pilates is so interesting to me and Alexander Technique and all these sort of functional movements where your little muscles are being worked and reminded to wake up. And then, it's therapeutic. I mean, it's physical therapy. It's like, very good for the brain. Endorphins. You're, like, happy. I'll just name a woman, Christine Wright is a Toronto ballet teacher [who] was from New York, moved to Toronto in 2015. And her approach is just amazing. She is a ballet teacher, but it's all about function., I studied with her for many years, and still do I mean, I don't *now* during COVID, but you know, she's one of my people that I check in with. And Brent Carver, who's an amazing actor, would always be at his session before me and I was always like, 'Okay, Brent Carver's here.' He's a genius of theatre, and someone who I admire as a singer. And I was like, 'Okay,' and I used to ask Christine if I could vocalize during our work during the work we did, she was like, 'Sure'. So I would, that's when, again, that's when I started to think like, 'Okay, I'm interested in technique and singing and movement, and I need to make a piece.'

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, yeah. And it all makes so much sense, because when I see you performing, it feels so embodied, right? And you use the word 'intentions' and it kind of clicked like, oh, this is why your work is so compelling to me, because your intentions in your body and your intentions in your voice are so clear, even if you're not, dancing. But it is *not* dancing but it *is* dancing. And I'm wondering, were you always in this like comfortable, intentional relationship with your body? Did you have to cultivate it, like what's your journey there?

ALEX SAMARAS: The cultivation is what I mentioned about all the workshops, all the exploration, all the body work. It's so that a feeling can come across clearly. Not in, like, a performative way. I love when I watch someone perform, and it doesn't matter what the what it is, dancing, like anything, and I get that feeling where I'm like, I'm out of myself. I'm so present in the moment, that person has made me be present, you know? And it's not the

edge of your seat being like, 'Wow', it's more just, like, you're in yourself. You're in yourself. It's actually for that individual person. It's not about me. There's some magic there that I have always latched on to, be it with Judy Garland or Brent Carver or, like, Meredith or Glen Copeland. You know, these people who just are present. And I think the cultivation wasn't always there. The love for performing was always there, so the desire to put myself in those situations was there. But no, I mean, I also have had a lot of rejection in my life of things that I've wanted to do in terms of performing like music theatre or auditions, opera things and that's really helped me, it's helped me be like, 'Oh, that's not what I'm supposed to do.' I'm supposed to carve out my own thing, you know, and whether it be with a band with a project or with how I approach music, like, you realize that the people who are artists are just ones that are following their path. And so all the rejection, I think, has fueled my search to be more like, 'Okay, I didn't get that, or I don't have a classical sound. So how can I learn, from a body perspective, how they do what they do?' You know? And that, for me, changes every couple of months. And I know, you probably know, too, like, there's vocal stuff, there's vocal work we do that no one else will notice. Like, it's never to sound better, it's like, it feels better. It feels freer, I can do this for more years, I can do this longer and not get tired. That's what I'm always curious about with what you were talking about with that.

MINGJIA CHEN: I really resonate with that. Like, to me, I think of it as there's fast work and slow work, right? The fast work is kind of, like, it shows up immediately. People are like, 'Oh, look at this thing.' Like, you know, here it is. But then the slow work, it trickles into everything, kind of grows in you.

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah, and it's again, it's for you. I don't want to go into this world, but it's for your spiritual practice. It's forever. And I think performing too, live performance used to be my, like a deep love of mine, and now I don't need it as much. So now I'm trying to build more things that can exist on their own. As like a little building, and that could be live performance, too. But it's not going to be this moment where I was performing. It's more like I'm building that performance into the next one, into the next one, into the next one. And then that is its own practice.

MINGJIA CHEN: So I'd like to kind of zoom in a little bit into the actual process. So how does physical movement in your body come into your creative process? When you're like, throughout the different stages of making a work? Can you walk me through that?

ALEX SAMARAS: Now, you mean like with Grex stuff? Or with performance, or the song? Or like doing a show?

MINGJIA CHEN: All of it? But why don't we talk about Grex?

ALEX SAMARAS: With working with Fred and Eugénie in Montreal, it really became about being in the room with them at the same time. Yes, there'd be moments where I'd be working on my mat. I don't do dance improv on my own or anything. I'm not like rolling around finding movement. That's not a part of my work. I don't have the skill to do that. But one of the moves in Grex, for example, is you three lying on the ground and your arm is moving in this beautiful spiral.

MINGJIA CHEN: Arm loo.

ALEX SAMARAS: Arm loo. Yeah.

MINGJIA CHEN: I do that one all the time.

ALEX SAMARAS: Amazing. [laughs] Great. So that comes out of this very clear Pilates move and we did it once, we've done it a few times where you're on the ground, kind of doing this angel-like snow angel thing.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah.

ALEX SAMARAS: And I was doing that on the ground, then all of a sudden, my arm was in a spiral. And I was doing the seventh and then I realized, 'Oh, that's gonna be a beautiful, grass field moment.' But again, I had to explore that in this space with the people. I never can come to the room and say, 'We're doing this, this is in there.' Which is, I think different from the musical world where it's like, 'Here's this composition that's from beginning to end that I've worked on.' [It's] mapped out. I've done that, and I'm curious to do that again. But right now, like, I don't work on my own and bring the finished product. I love being a part of that when someone else asks me to do that. But my creative work is bringing in an idea, seeing it, asking you, Jill and Mara how it feels. Like is it relaxing? Did you feel like you were connecting to your voice? What does it feel like in your body? You know? So those questions come up. I love acting, but I love the idea of acting more than acting in a play. So for me, like a rehearsal room is a magic place where you can try things and the process is endlessly exciting. And so when I've done a show, like I did a show called *The Cave* a few years ago, and I created three characters in that show, Bear, Crow and Skunk, and we got to explore the movements, I got to be a bear and I had different voices for each of them. And then, the physicality of those characters came from the animal, but we know the director didn't make us like, act like animals. He sort of encouraged [us to] be ourselves, but then, you know, watch the videos of the animals and then mimic them a little bit, and then bring in our humanness to meet with the animal traits. So, and again, that happens just in a rehearsal room with discovery. It has to feel good.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, mm hmm. Oh, there's one thing I want to remember forever. Has to feel good.

ALEX SAMARAS: That's the secret. I used to be really intense and really, like, grab onto things and hold it and be like, 'Okay, this is it.' And I had vocal issues because of that, not like debilitating, I could always sing. And again, nobody knows, everyone's like, 'Sounds great, great gig.' And I'm like, 'I'm tired.' And I don't want to be tired. I can't deal with that. So a lot of this work, too, comes out of just wanting to be able to do anything at any time and be able to do anything anyone asked me. I love to do everything. So I'm a generalist, I want to be able to sing art song and do some rock and all this stuff. So.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, and I think it does show. You really do embody this, like, open welcoming. When I think of you I'm like, 'Alex is an explorer, like, does everything,' you know? And has fun. And yeah, it's just, yeah, it's inspiring and amazing.

ALEX SAMARAS: Cool, I mean, it also has its own drawbacks. Like sometimes I wish I just wrote songs. And did that. That would be like, I don't know, not easier. But just, I mean, it definitely wouldn't be easier. That's its own, like, endlessly. But I mean, you know, the Toronto scene is like, everyone is doing lots of things. And that's what we all do.

MINGJIA CHEN: And it's overwhelming and intimidating and awesome.

ALEX SAMARAS: Yeah. And I don't have a business card. Because of that. I cannot sell myself. I cannot sell what I do. I can't. I can't commodify it, like I just am doing, just doing it.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah. And no shame to business card owners.

ALEX SAMARAS: No, not at all. I love that. I love people that are celebrating themselves in that way. Some of the actors I know, who just do their work. And I see them perform and it's like, changes my life, you know? Or with music to like, I don't know, there's just.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yeah, I know. I just I could talk forever, but.

ALEX SAMARAS: Well, I literally want to interview you.

MINGJIA CHEN: [laughs] We'll do it. We'll make it happen. Yeah.

ALEX SAMARAS: Actually, okay, sorry. I'll let you finish, but I have something to say after.

MINGJIA CHEN: Okay, well, I just wanted to like wrap up with something fun.

ALEX SAMARAS: Sure. Yeah, let's play a game.

MINGJIA CHEN: So, okay, what's your go-to song to dance to these days? What's on your iPod? iPad? iPod?

ALEX SAMARAS: Oh my gosh. The new Kalbells record.

MINGJIA CHEN: Yes. Ooh!

ALEX SAMARAS: Robin got me into that band a few years ago. They were in Toronto, we went to a show and I bought actually, Kalmia drew this. She was selling these paintings. Aren't they beautiful? And right now, the first track which I had listened to twice, which I think is called *Red Marker*, hold on yeah, it's called *Red Marker*. But also *Pickles*. I mean, *Hump the Beach*. That record is like pumping. Also the new Ariana Grande record I'm really into.

MINGJIA CHEN: I haven't checked that one out yet.

ALEX SAMARAS: It's good. It's really good. I also had Katy Perry on a few weeks ago, just needed to listen to *Teenage Dream*. I love how she belts, I love her belt range. Actually on my next record, I want to write some songs where the choruses are me just like [riffs] really loud and annoying. Yeah, so I recommend Kalbells to people. And also any recording of Mingjia that you can find. To mess you up. Oh, I was just going to say that. I'm going to do some live Instagram interviews and my lead up to the record when I interview other people about their song writing process and their thing and you're one of the people I want to ask.

MINGJIA CHEN: Oh my god, amazing. I'm so there . Okay, great. And I love that we got that on here. So, Alex Samaras, thank you so, so much for being here.

ALEX SAMARAS: Thank you, Ming. Thank you to *The 'D' Word* and I can't wait to listen to the other interviews. This is so exciting.

MINGJIA CHEN: And that's our show. You can find Alex Samaras on Instagram @ronceyguy. That's r-o-n-c-e-y guy and his music on Bandcamp at tryal1.bandcamp.com. *The 'D' Word* is produced by dance: made in canada, a contemporary dance festival featuring Canadian dance artists who possess unique artistic visions and come from all cultural backgrounds. This year, dance: made in canada presents inTO Focus in partnership with Canadian Stage, currently scheduled Sept. 23rd through the 25th at High Park's amphitheatre. Visit dancemadeincanada.ca to find out more about this year's festival and to donate. *The 'D' Word's* creative producer is Grace Wells-Smith and the show is also produced by Sam Hale. Our editor and composer is Jamar Powell. dance: made in canada's co-festival directors are Janelle Rainville and Jeff Morris. Yvonne Ng is artistic director and also co-festival director. And I'm your host Mingjia Chen. The show is also hosted by Britta B. Thank you Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts

Council for making *The 'D' Word* possible. Find *The 'D' Word* wherever you get your podcasts. Toodles. [laughs].