

Jeff Around Town – January 13th, 2026

Jeff: Have you ever slipped on a banana peel? I have, and so has my guest. I'm here at the Omaha Conservatory of Music talking with Melissa Holtmeier, who is a full-time artist, faculty, and string department chair, and also maintains a very busy gigging schedule with the Mahr String Quartet, the Omaha Symphony, Broadway Productions, on and on. Melissa, thanks for chatting about music and banana peels.

Melissa: Of course, this is what we do.

Jeff: This is what we do. So, before we talk about the banana peel incident, tell us a little bit about your time here at the conservatory.

Melissa: Yes, so this is, we're celebrating 10 years in this new building.

Jeff: This is amazing.

Melissa: That's insane. And there was also the old building in the old, old building, which is where I began a little over 20 years ago.

Jeff: Wow, okay.

Melissa: And yeah, and then the quartet was born in undergrad across the street at UNO, and the rest is history.

Jeff: How many, you seem to maintain, like I said, a fairly busy schedule with gigs.

Melissa: Right.

Jeff: And how do you maintain that with the performing and then the teaching and being a parent?

Melissa: It's a lot. Some days, December was not sustainable, but I'm lucky. And it's just an ever-evolving practice of, I mean, we're all busy, but yeah. But I like the balance of it, the teaching and the performing.

Jeff: And then somehow you managed to, no pun intended, slip in, slipping on a banana peel. So, we've known each other a while, but maybe didn't know that I once slipped on a banana peel.

Melissa: I did not know that.

Jeff: I know, and this is the kind of thing, like people don't talk about this enough.

Melissa: It's a small club.

Jeff: It is a small club, an elite club. So as a cartoonist, you think, oh, slipping on a banana peel, that is something that only happens in a cartoon. And yet it happened to me.

Melissa: We've done it.

Jeff: What happened with you?

Melissa: So, it was at a quartet gig. We had just finished a wedding gig at a hotel. Maybe I won't name the name, but it has a parking garage attached. They took care of it. Anyway, there's a parking garage attached. So, we were leaving, and luckily I was wearing flats that day.

Jeff: Were you dressed up?

Melissa: Yeah, I was wearing black.

Jeff: Okay.

Melissa: So, we're walking out to the car, and I'm holding my music stand in my right hand, and I slip, and I fall, and as we do, we break our fall, which we're not supposed to do, but I don't know what else a human would do. So, I broke my fall, and my right hand landed on the corner of my music stand, and it bent the stand.

Jeff: Oh my gosh.

Melissa: And I looked down, and I thought, that's gonna need stitches. My life flashed before my eyes. It's my bowing hand.

Jeff: Oh, my goodness.

Melissa: But anyway, so, and I looked to think, well, what happened? What did I slip on? And I looked down, and I was like, oh my gosh, that's a banana peel. It had been run over a few times, so it wasn't fresh. The fresh ones aren't slick. And I'm a cartoon character. So we went to the ER, and I had to get eight stitches, and the nurse thought, the nurse said, "I don't know how you didn't break your wrist."

Jeff: And were people coming in saying, that's the woman who slipped on the banana peel? Was it?

Melissa: No.

Jeff: Not unusual?

Melissa: No, but since, I am the banana peel girl. And so, this is why I have the collection. I'm wearing my banana earrings today, thanks Tom Miller. And then I have my little banana squishmallow on my music stand. I had a student crochet me a banana. I feel like there was something else. I have a banana phone holder.

Jeff: I feel left out.

Melissa: And every time someone sees a banana peel in the wild, I get a text. Banana peel awareness.

Jeff: No one has ever done that for me. And so, my thing happened. It was the old Chris Strug, now Kohls, on 50th and Dodge. I stepped out of my car, and I promptly slipped on the banana peel, flew into the air, just like a cartoon, landed on my backside. And I thought, what

on earth? It hadn't been raining. And there it is. My banana peel was more fresh. I saw the photo of yours. It looked like it had been driven over. Mine was still bright yellow.

Melissa: Okay.

Jeff: And I just looked around to see if anybody saw this, because there's that moment for me of embarrassment.

Melissa: Right.

Jeff: And fortunately, I didn't need stitches, because that would have been rough. But no one was around, and I just thought, this is the oddest thing. And I'd never met anybody before or since until I saw your post.

Melissa: Small club.

Jeff: Well, let's hope we can have more bananas. There needs to be banana peel safety.

Melissa: Awareness. This is my calling in life.

Jeff: Okay.

Melissa: Yes.

Jeff: Melissa Holtmeier. It's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for sharing your adventure.

Melissa: Thank you.