

HAMLET TO HAMILTON

Bar(d) Talk
Colin and Emily

October 2020

[music]

HAMLET 1. To be...

HAMLET 2. To be...

HAMLET 1. ... or not to be?

HAMLET 3. To be or not to be?

HAMLET 1. That is the question.

HAMLET 3. ... or not?

[music]

EMILY. Hi, friends. Welcome to Hipster Shakes- Hipster Verse?

COLIN. I don't know. Hipster's a little – we should have talked about this first. Hipster's a little dated.

EMILY. Verse in your Pocket?

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. You Ain't Even Heard This Yet? (laughs)

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. That's right, you, dear listeners, can name this portion. But basically, Colin and I are going to talk about the podcast and give some...

COLIN. Kind of a back- Talking Backstage, maybe?

EMILY. Yeah. Exactly. Over a Pint Podcast. This one, we're going to allow ourselves to swear, so any teachers that are like, "Go forth, children, and listen to everything on Hamlet to Hamilton," this is your content warning. And all of you

teenagers that are listening to this and like, “Is your teenager getting into blank verse? Here are the signs.”

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. Welcome. We’re going to swear. (laughs) Right.

COLIN. And surprise, in modern blank verse, characters can swear, as they have-

EMILY. No they fucking can’t.

COLIN. Oh, sorry.

EMILY. Are you talking- you dipshit! Sorry. (laughs)

COLIN. Well, I seem to recall having read-

EMILY. NO you FUCKing CAN’T you DIPshit. That is iambic tetrameter.

(Editor’s Note: Nope! It’s trochaic tetrameter. Get your scansion right.)

COLIN. Great. We’ve already learned something.

EMILY. Yes we have. This is not... This is not your professor’s podcast. Except it probably is. All right, so Colin, what were you going to say?

COLIN. I...

EMILY. No, you don’t know. Okay, great. I’m going to start us off, then. Welcome to Hamlet to Hamilton, an audio drama podcast- no, it’s not an audio drama podcast. It’s just a sheer old podcast exploring verse drama, and we’re going to drop this – actually, I was thinking if we could do this up real quick, we might drop this sooner rather than later, just for kicks and giggles. We’ll see.

COLIN. Sure.

EMILY. We’ll see how it goes. But we want to give you sort of a backstage pass. I know that actually... So anyone that’s been in theatre, you know that there’s the portion of the show, like part of the ritual of the show is to go to a cast party or to go out to a pub afterwards or to invade Applebee’s or Denny’s or (laughs) to invade someplace where people cannot really kick you out and where you can kind of just sort of talk and be, so this is kind of our virtual pub.

COLIN. Yeah. Yeah, that’s a good way to put it.

EMILY. Yeah, where we will talk and be about what the show is like. And actually, I am so sad because when I was... I spent a month in London and Stratford-upon-Avon right after coming out of college, and that's where I learned the beginning of the John Barton method, and more formal stuff about Shakespeare. When we were in Stratford-upon-Avon, we were told that there was this one pub where all the actors went afterwards to have a pint, but you had to get in by, like, 11 p.m. Otherwise they shut the door to anyone so that the actors could have a little bit of *privacy*. And I was maybe just 21 and just so unsure of myself, and I felt like such a fraud being there, and just so much of "I'm not worthy" stuff that I never had the guts to go.

COLIN. No!

EMILY. I never went, and I also had come so much from a teetotaler type background that I was still a little afraid of pubs and things. Yeah, and no one forced me in. But I would go to the bar in whatever hotel we were all put in, because it was... Because that was safe? I don't know why. And so there were a few nights, because it was this weird program where it was a bunch of college students that were taking classes during the days and then going to the shows at night, and then a bunch of incredibly rich, old, white bankers that came every year-

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. I know. That came every year on this trip just to see the shows.

COLIN. Oh, yes, okay.

EMILY. Right, but these guys, they were seeing Anthony Hopkins when the RSC had started with Dame Judi Dench and the two of them in *Antony and Cleopatra*. So they would sit and they would piss on the shows that we were watching, but then also piss on Sir Anthony Hopkins, and be like, "Oh yeah, when we saw Tony, he did this." (laughs)

COLIN. How?

EMILY. And again, I soaked up a little bit of it, but man, if I had a TARDIS, I would go back and do things very differently.

COLIN. That's funny to hear that, because I took the opposite career approach.

EMILY. Oh?

COLIN. From the time I was in college, if I went to ACTF, I was networking like cra-

EMILY. ACTF?

COLIN. I should, yeah, the American College Theatre Festival, right?

EMILY. Grazie.

COLIN. For the uninitiated. Now the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

EMILY. Well, are you in fact that same award-winning Colin Kovarik?

COLIN. Yes, I am, in fact, the same one who won first in the nation for the first show he ever sound designed. I love...

EMILY. Darn tootin'.

COLIN. Thank you for providing me that setup.

EMILY. Anytime.

COLIN. That I could mention that again.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. But, yeah, when I was in college, even community college, and I was fortunate enough to be at a community college that was an ACTF participant, so I went four years in a row. I think so, yeah, and then went to nationals on my fourth year.

EMILY. Nice. But you networked with everyone.

COLIN. Yeah, I was...

EMILY. You knew to network.

COLIN. I was aggressive. I was, well, not aggressive, but I was assertive about it.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. To the point that at the first festival I went to, the other students that were there with me were mocking me for being a social butterfly. And I was like, "What do you think we're here for? What are you doing?"

EMILY. Are you naturally extroverted, though?

COLIN. No. God, no.

EMILY. You're not? Really?

COLIN. I just play one really well.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. And I didn't realize how calculating I was as a networker until I went to a – so this was, through my school I had a connection in the office at Milwaukee Repertory, which at the time was a company I really had my eye on trying to work at.

EMILY. Right, yeah, you did.

COLIN. I actually have since worked there, which is kind of cool.

EMILY. Hey, good for you.

COLIN. There was an alumni who worked in the office and had free tickets, and so I went to see *Man of La Mancha* with a friend of mine, and we got-

EMILY. You lucky, that's one of my favorite musicals ever, and I have never, ever, ever, ever seen it live.

COLIN. Oh no. It was a very good production.

EMILY. Arrggh!

COLIN. (laughs) And actually the lead in it, I forget his name. It might have been Nathan Stampley? The show was closing and the next day he was going to New York to join the Broadway cast of *The Color Purple*. He was excellent.

EMILY. Nice.

COLIN. But we also, through the same contact, shout out Mikayla Durkee, who now works in Minnesota, she got us into the cast party, like the closing night cast party upstairs in the bar.

EMILY. Yeah she did.

COLIN. And I worked the room, but this was the first time, because I was with my friend, who was a couple years behind me in school. I was giving her a play by play of how I planned to work the room. And I wasn't aware of having these plans until (laughs)

EMILY. You Machiavel.

COLIN. Until I had to tell somebody how I planned it. And after that day, I was like, “God, who am I?”

EMILY. (laughs)

COLIN. Because it was like, “Okay, so last time I saw him, I blindsided him. I don't want to do that again. I'm going to give him a minute.”

EMILY. No, no, but it's a skill.

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. And you do need to learn it, because when you're in the arts, you're a business of one.

COLIN. Yeah, exactly. And I had layers of preparation for this, I remember now.

EMILY. See, I'm still very much a pantsner, yeah. Good for you.

COLIN. A pants- (laughs) Well, because the position I was gunning for at the time was Emerging Professional Resident, which is kind of this residency for young actors that you understudy a lot. But-

EMILY. But would there be any jobs for you in what you would type into?

COLIN. As I have since learned, no. (laughs)

EMILY. Aw, boo.

COLIN. No, not at all, but-

EMILY. You were great the other day as LeBoeuf. You were really great and wonderful and sexy and charming.

COLIN. Well, thank you. The thing is, though, I look so much older than I am, that it's going to be maybe 10 years before there's actual room for me in those companies.

EMILY. Or, or.

COLIN. Or I lose...

EMILY. They could- no. No.

COLIN. I know, that's-

EMILY. Or we stop casting stupid, first.

COLIN. That would be great. I would love that.

EMILY. Let's start casting according to who the person actually frickin' is and what they can do and what's inside them, and then let's also do some plays that are not the same old same old.

COLIN. Yeah, which is an issue among (clears throat) certain repertory (clears throat) regional theatres that...

EMILY. What? No, not a problem at all.

COLIN. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. No, that didn't come to light recently. No, that hasn't been evident from day one. Are you kidding me? No.

COLIN. Yeah, yeah. But I do want to mention these layers of preparation.

EMILY. Sorry, yeah, yeah, yeah.

COLIN. Because I hadn't... This was completely unconscious. It was just me thinking in terms of how to make connections, not realizing what a conniving plan this was. (laughs)

EMILY. A cunning plan? (laughs)

COLIN. Yeah, so there were three stages before I even got to this. Over the summer, I'd worked at a major regional theatre. It was my first regional contract, and I was a production assistant, also helping with sound, which incidentally was where I discovered sound design and where I met the guy who became my professional mentor.

EMILY. Great.

COLIN. Hi, Josh. Who I still work with on a regular basis. Which is wonderful.

EMILY. Well done, Josh.

COLIN. But I also got to audition for a bunch of companies that would come through that place. One of them was Milwaukee Repertory, and the casting director gave me his card and was like, "Hey, you should apply for this

residency.” That was step one. Like, great. Cool. He knows who I am. He thought I’d be a good candidate. Awesome.

EMILY. Right.

COLIN. Next, I’m back at school. I get an email about free tickets for this staged reading that the current Emerging Professional Residents are doing out at Ten Chimneys, which is the estate of Lunt and Fontanne, who were old Broadway stars who just built this massive house in Waukesha, Wisconsin that has ten chimneys.

EMILY. Like you do.

COLIN. They were BFFs with Laurence Olivier. He had his own room there. Lot of history, and they also every year have a resident actor- it’s a center for actor training now.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. And historical theatre-y stuff.

EMILY. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

COLIN. So I went out there. I was like, “Hell, yes, I’m going to take this free ticket.”

EMILY. (laughs)

COLIN. I went out there, saw the staged reading, liked it, re-introduced myself to the casting director.

EMILY. Nice.

COLIN. And then introduced myself to some of the current residents, but I didn’t want to be that guy that was like, “Hey, I want to be you next year.”

EMILY. (laughs)

COLIN. I introduced myself to a few of them and then went home. And then I find myself at this party.

EMILY. Nice.

COLIN. I’ve posted up by the pizza where everyone is guaranteed to come by at some point.

EMILY. (laughs) That is sneaky. All right, go ahead.

COLIN. And then I made my plan from that point, and I was like, okay, so I blindsided the casting director last time. Because he did that thing where it was like, loading, where do I know you from? Oh, right, right, right, right.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. I was like, I don't want to do that to him again, so I'll give him a minute. But then I was like, I know him. I know him. I know her from the reading, so I can say hi to them again. And then all the rest of the Emerging Professional Residents, I can be like, "Hey, I saw you in that staged reading. By the way, I'm Colin."

EMILY. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Nicely done.

COLIN. (laughs) So that's the story of the day I realized I was incredibly conniving about making connections. I've chilled out on that since.

EMILY. Sure.

COLIN. Once I had a stable network, I stopped being so gung ho about building connections, but...

EMILY. Well, that's the thing. I was kind of thrown into the deep end, where I learned a lot of skills at my undergrad, but only because they were like, "Sure, take the theatre. Do something with it." (laughs) And then I did have a professor that would not let me settle for good enough as a director.

COLIN. Good.

EMILY. Yeah, which was why I had changed my major to theatre.

COLIN. Oh.

EMILY. Yeah, from creative writing, actually.

COLIN. Okay.

EMILY. Because they weren't pushing me. They were just giving me As. Which is awfully nice, but, I don't know, I wanted a challenge. Anyway, but I didn't have any networking skills at all, and I didn't feel that I had any leg to stand on. I didn't feel like I had any achievements. I didn't feel like I had a resume or a CV, and so that's where I got a lot out of going to England. A year after I graduated, I spent a year in a terrible office job. It wasn't terrible. Just all office jobs are terrible.

COLIN. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. And then went to England, and then came back and was teaching, even though I had no right to teach, but someone had hired me as a teacher, so I was teaching and doing drama. Really, what they wanted was a teacher for drama, but they had to hire you for something else, because it was a Catholic school. I taught kids perspective, like little kindergarteners, “This is the foreground, background, and middle ground.” And then, whatever, doesn’t matter. (laughs) But really, they just wanted me to do their *Wizard of Oz* with 425 kids in the cast.

COLIN. What?

EMILY. 72 munchkins, yes. (laughs)

COLIN. How? That-

EMILY. And they wanted a finale. They wanted everyone to come on again at the end. (laughs) Oh God.

COLIN. Oh no.

EMILY. That is a story for another day.

COLIN. Yeah, okay.

EMILY. But that was my first major directing gig out of college, and every day-speaking of *Man of La Mancha*, every day I would drive to work to teach and then to have rehearsal in the afternoon, and I would have on in my horrible little junk car, the tape of *Man of La Mancha*. And I would have it cued to “The Impossible Dream.”

COLIN. Yep.

EMILY. And I’d be like, weeping, going, “If I can survive this, I can survive anything.” It was so... (laughs)

COLIN. That is actually what I expected you to say, somehow.

EMILY. Really?

COLIN. It was like, at least that song, absolutely, definitely that song.

EMILY. Oh, 100%, that is absolutely one of my heart songs. And then I got sent out to do a month in LA screenwriting, where I learned screenwriting and LA are not my cup of tea. The final thing of this whole class was we were supposed to talk to producers and pitch. And I thought it was all an educational thing, and they

were all like, “No, actually, we’re looking for a script.” And so one guy actually got up in the middle of my pitch and just laughed.

COLIN. Oh my God.

EMILY. And the burgeoning Ms. Snyder, because I now had a year of teaching under my belt, really nearly came out to yell at him and be like, “Who do you think you are, young man?” You know? But I was, what? 22. I was like a kind of vaguely failed schoolmarm and a vaguely failed office assistant. (laughs) So it wasn’t until the following year, because then I did a year of student teaching, but our parish priest had a Catholic school that was empty, hadn’t been a school for years. So he just had this extra building that had a terrible, *terrible* 1950’s gymacafetorium.

COLIN. Oh no.

EMILY. No, but he just gave me the keys, literally gave me the keys. So for a year and a half, I kind of could do whatever I wanted.

COLIN. Oh my gosh.

EMILY. Yeah, and so I-

COLIN. And where was this?

EMILY. This was up in Marlborough, Massachusetts.

COLIN. Okay.

EMILY. Yeah, where I lived right after college.

COLIN. Gotcha.

EMILY. Where I just did a ton of work, because it was similar. Actually, that was kind of like my... My undergrad was like, “I don’t know, the theatre’s free. I guess you could do an extra play if you feel like doing a junior thesis. I guess you can.” (laughs) And same thing, the priest, who was really, really one of the few really good ones, was just like, “We have a free building if you want to do stuff,” and just let me. Even then, when I started teaching at the Catholic high school the year after that, until they actually decimated- not decimated, but they sold it off with all the church closings.

COLIN. Oh, yes.

EMILY. We had rein of that, because there was no stage at the school that I was hired to teach at, which is a whole other story.

COLIN. Other story. (laughs)

EMILY. But it was a lot of just sort of here's a group, do things with them. Then in 2003, I finally, I composed, directed, produced, choreographed an opera-ballet (laughs) because of course I did.

COLIN. Why not? (laughs)

EMILY. Why not? It had... There are a lot of things I would revise about it now, but it was one of those experiences where you felt like you did something.

COLIN. Oh yes.

EMILY. Yeah, and so after having been in LA, where everyone's like, "Well, this is what I'm working onnnn," I'm like, "I have hair down to my butt and I don't know fashion? But somehow that's important to writing."

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. You are telling me. Literally, someone told me that. They told me I needed to lose weight in order to be a screenwriter in LA.

COLIN. What?

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. (sighs)

EMILY. And there was no such thing as body positivity at that time.

COLIN. Oh, of course.

EMILY. None whatsoever, so I just took that on board. (laughs)

COLIN. I mean, a lot of it now is performative anyway.

EMILY. Right, so...

COLIN. At least it's a vocab word we have.

EMILY. Right, yeah. But yeah, so a lot of it has just been like, here's a thing. Do a thing. So actually I've been bizarrely... I kind of learned how to network backwards, because then there started to come a point, like with parents of kids as I'm doing the school play. But then also, then I started my own theatre company because Father Larry had sort of let me do that for a year, and so when

I was ready to really do it, it was kind of nothing. And then again, you have people coming up to you because you're the public face, and people's hands are out because they want jobs, and you're apparently giving them out. So I do meet people like you three or four times. I'm like, "Please tell me your context." Please tell me your context, because you're all coming at me, and you just watched me be like, "Hi guys, so this is Turn to Flesh Productions. This is what we do." And there's only one of me and there's a crowd of you. (laughs)

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. And I've never been good at names, never.

COLIN. Oh no.

EMILY. That's why I name my characters weird-ass things. Because if I'm like, "I've always wanted to play Bob Smith." I'm like, Bob Smith from what? I don't know. But if you're like, "I want to be Voltemand." You're like, there is one Voltemand. He is frequently cut from *Hamlet*. But if you want to say, "I want to play Voltemand," I know what you want to play.

COLIN. Uh-huh, okay.

EMILY. In fact, there's only one other Ophelia, really, in sort of canon.

COLIN. Oh?

EMILY. There's Shakespeare's, yeah, and then in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Yeah.

COLIN. Interesting. I did not know that.

EMILY. Yeah. Not a very good play, but yeah, there you go. Yes. Yeah, but before we go, because we're going to keep this a little bit short, I did want to let you all in on how this podcast came to be.

COLIN. Oh right. (laughs)

EMILY. Right. (laughs) Since we have been asked this question before. Do you want to tell it, or shall I tell it, Colin?

COLIN. I suppose I can begin.

EMILY. Okay, great.

COLIN. This might sound kind of weird, but I've been a fan of Turn to Flesh Productions since before I even went to college. I've been following their work because I applied to two colleges, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, where I

ultimately went, as well as Franciscan University, which I honestly... Well, there were a number of reasons for not going, but the first one was how stingy they were with the scholarship.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. Which was a nice little direction away from it.

EMILY. And can we just say, debt forgiveness is a very Christian thing to vote for.

COLIN. Yes. (laughs)

EMILY. But keep going on. (laughs)

COLIN. Yes. But because I'd been to conferences and stuff, and I had made it known that I was interested in being a student there, I got their promo magazine, and I guess when Turn to Flesh was founded, they did a two-page spread on it.

EMILY. Yeah. I went to Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio for my undergrad, Emerson for my grad work about ten years later. Actually, I haven't told this part of the story. The reason why Turn to Flesh came to be is I had reached a glass ceiling in Massachusetts. I was being hired consistently, and even hired through the recession, as a director. It was very weird. Theatre was suddenly my lifeline and was the thing that was paying me, which was very cool. But there was only so far I could get, and New York City had always been calling my name, so I did an exploratory trip down here, because the alumni network is really pretty strong just for the drama section of Franciscan University. I don't know about the other mini colleges, but anything theatre/drama, the professors have been really good about getting us in touch with each other. So Michelle Kafel was someone that was on the alumni, the theatre list, and she mentioned that she was in a play down in New York City, and I honestly just wanted a reason to go down and check out and see whether I wanted to live in New York City and take the big jump that I'd been feeling very much like... I was very much doing the (sings) "Could be, who knows?" Every "I want" song, you know, (sings) "I want adventure in the great wide somewhere."

COLIN. Yep. (laughs)

EMILY. That was all me. Michelle was willing- this was the excuse. I was like, "Oh, you're in a play. I should come see you as a fellow alumni." (laughs) And so I came down. We were talking about it. I was talking about I wanted to set up a theatre company, maybe in New York. I wasn't sure whether to come. She brought me out to a bar after the show, where it actually, and this is such (sings) "another hundred people just got off of the train."

COLIN. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. You know, we'll meet at the party of a party of a friend that we don't know. Because that was exactly it. We went to a birthday party in a bar in Soho of a friend of a friend of hers, that I'm not sure if I was introduced to or not. Screaming over the loud music. I'm being introduced to this Catholic financier that's a very Wall Street guy, going, "So why are you going to come down to New York?" And I'm like, "Well, I like theatre. And I've been doing this new verse thing, and the people in Massachusetts only kind of seem to get it, and I think maybe New York would get it better." And as we were walking out the door – this is my favorite story, because this literally happened. It was like a movie, but it happened. As we were walking out the door at, like, 2 a.m., and me, little Massachusetts girl, 2 a.m. in Soho, New York City after a off-Broadway show that had been reviewed by the New York Times, hanging out with the cast, or one member of the cast, anyway, at someone else's birthday party. (laughs) As we're walking out, he said, "I'm going to tell you the reason to move to New York, and it's not for the money and it's not for the fame. It's not for the success, because if you come here for that, you will fail. But it's because this is the cultural center of the world, and tomorrow morning," and as we're walking out, he points to this guy on a barstool, that guy on a barstool, totally random, but also very New-York-in-suits type guys. He says, you know, "That guy and that guy and that guy are all going to wake up and make decisions that affect the entire world. So you can keep playing to the audiences in Massachusetts, or you can come down here and do something." And then I swear to God, he kissed me on the cheek and walked off into the fucking mist. (laughs)

COLIN. What?

EMILY. Really. Really, that's what happened, and in that moment with perfect clarity after years, because it had been four or five years, but really longer. From middle school, I had literally been looking over New Jersey and singing Belle to the skyline. So really, it was like most of my life was tending in this direction, and I'd always been like (whiny noises) doing the damn thing of not going to the pub, not living. At that moment, I knew there was just no escaping. I was just going to have to... I had to finish out my season, which included four Shakespeare plays, including *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*. (laughs) You know, small things. Small things.

COLIN. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. And then find a way to live in New York City. When I came down, all I knew how to do was to just start shit. And Michelle was willing to sort of help me, so that's where I'm a co-founder of Turn to Flesh Productions.

COLIN. Oh, okay. I wondered.

EMILY. Yeah, and because we were both alma maters of Franciscan University of Steubenville, even though we were never in the same year – she came in after I'd graduated - that's where we were like, well, let's see if the alumni magazine will give us a shout-out, since there's two of us.

COLIN. Okay.

EMILY. And they did. They came to our first ever gala. We're actually coming up. October 4 is our birthday.

COLIN. Okay, awesome.

EMILY. Very fortuitous because that is St. Francis' feast day.

COLIN. Wow.

EMILY. Yeah. And it was a really warm night in October, bizarrely. We were all sweating in this random- it's a way too small studio in New York City, but it was all we could afford. We didn't know what we were doing, but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. And here we are.

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. Here we are.

COLIN. Yeah, well, and then the other half-

EMILY. So your part of it, then, yeah, sorry.

COLIN. Yeah, the other part of my story- no, no. That's all relevant information.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. I kept following Turn to Flesh, and we got connected initially through a mutual friend named Cole Matson, who does all-

EMILY. Who I'm going to talk to tonight, actually, yeah.

COLIN. Oh, yay! Good. Please tell him I say hi.

EMILY. Yeah, because he held my hand through during *The Other Other Woman* the other day. We had a private reading of one of my plays, and I was feeling feelings. We're going to post mortem tonight. Cole Matson, by the way, if any of you out there are Catholic or Christian artists or identify as artists of any sort of faith, Cole Matson is a guy who just connects people. He's really good at that.

COLIN. Yeah, very good at it.

EMILY. Yeah, in fact he runs Catholic Artist Connection, but again, he's very open to people of all faith and no faith. I will ask him if I can link his info, but he's good people. He's a good networker.

COLIN. Yeah, he's open to anybody that's interested in getting at big things, big questions. That's the way I'd put it.

EMILY. Yeah. He's the one that kept encouraging me to write the King Arthur play, so...

COLIN. Ah, that's cool.

EMILY. Yeah, you can thank him for that.

COLIN. Actually, I found him... There's a lot of serendipity or synchronicity, whatever you want to call it, about me being friends with him first, because I found him... I used to be a super John Paul II fanboy. Now I have certain theological quibbles. That's a longer story.

EMILY. Sure.

COLIN. But I was literally, I remember this very clearly. I was-

EMILY. Regardless, it's super nice to have a pope who was an actor.

COLIN. Yes, and that was why, one of the primary reasons I was very interested in him, his pre-pope life and what little theory of theatre he actually wrote and his approach to it.

EMILY. Right, which is called Rhapsodic Theatre, for anyone who feels like doing some homework.

COLIN. A little Googling, yeah.

EMILY. Because I have a feeling all the people who want to do homework gonna come to our yard. (laughs)

COLIN. Yeah, I think so.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. But I was doing research for a project that I was going to do in undergrad. I forget exactly- I think it was for my Principles of Design class. I did a costume and scenic design for *The Jeweler's Shop*.

EMILY. Which I was in with Cole Matson.

COLIN. What?

EMILY. We played husband and wife in act II.

COLIN. Oh my gosh, that's cool.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. We're learning live on the air.

EMILY. Small world.

COLIN. But I was just Googling, and I also remember the environment. I was in a hotel room in Paris by myself in the middle of what turned out to be a very traumatic trip to France to visit an ex-girlfriend. It was smack-dab in the middle of that.

EMILY. Oh, do you have traumatic Paris with romance involved?

COLIN. I do.

EMILY. Me too. (laughs)

COLIN. Oh my God. Okay.

EMILY. We will talk about that at another time.

COLIN. Dear, audience, welcome to us learning a lot of things at the same time. (laughs) So anyway...

EMILY. Did you too have a bad experience in Paris that had to do with sex and romance? Drop a comment and let us know.

COLIN. Well, thankfully Paris was awesome for me.

EMILY. Oh good.

COLIN. Because I had been... My ex-girlfriend basically told me to get out of her house in the north of France, and I had a few days left on my trip.

EMILY. God.

COLIN. So I just bought a train ticket to Paris from the north of France and spent two days alone in Montmartre, basically backpacking around. Yeah, I didn't know that was the historical arts district. I took myself...

EMILY. Okay. That's also epic. That's awesome.

COLIN. It was incredible. Hell, the first play I did in college was *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* by Steve Martin.

EMILY. Nice.

COLIN. I went to Lapin Agile and for 28 euros got their signature cherry brandy and five hours of cabaret.

EMILY. You did way better than I did, man. Good for you.

COLIN. Yeah, no, Paris was wonderful. I also went to Mass in the chapel where the apparition that gave us the miraculous medal happened...

EMILY. Oh, that's cool.

COLIN. ... and where they have the heart of St. Vincent de Paul and the incorrupt bodies of the founders of the Order of St. Catherine Labouré.

EMILY. Okay, that is the weirdest thing about Europe, is you start stumbling over incorrupted bodies.

COLIN. Yeah, you don't see that in America, ever.

EMILY. Let's hope that doesn't become a thing, actually. (laughs) It's a little weird.

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. I remember being in The Vatican and being like, oh, there's a random incorrupted body. I don't know what to do. I'm going to look at the ceiling again now.

COLIN. I've gotten on one hell of a rabbit trail.

EMILY. Anyway, sorry, yeah, yeah.

COLIN. But we can go over a little bit.

EMILY. Cole Matson. Cole Matson.

COLIN. Yes, so I found Cole's name while sitting in a hotel room in Paris Googling stuff about John Paul II, because he'd written an article for his grad school's magazine all about it.

EMILY. I think he did his doctorate.

COLIN. Yes, but this was while he was working on it.

EMILY. Oh, I see, okay.

COLIN. And so all I could find was his name, and I was like, "Wow, this is really fascinating." I used his article as a research resource for my project, and then the following year – this was also in that same pivotal summer when I was at the regional theatre discovering sound – Cole's name occurred to me again, and I was like, "Huh, I wonder where he is now." I looked him up, and he's since graduated, and I'm able to get an email address. Then I find him on Facebook, and I had sent-

EMILY. Was this when he was working at the Sheen, or had he moved to Minnesota by then?

COLIN. No, I think it was before that. No, this was 2016, so this might have been pre-Sheen Center.

EMILY. This was before he moved to New York City, okay.

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. He has a version of the story about how I used *The Hobbit* to get him to come to New York City.

COLIN. (laughs) Okay. Maybe that's a story for another time.

EMILY. Well, we'll get him on mic someday.

COLIN. That would be great. I was able to get ahold of him, and I essentially sent him a friend request and a message explaining why we should be friends, and he agreed with me.

EMILY. I got to tell you, that is a special gift that man has. It's true, when he finally moved to New York City, he and I were in a pub. He doesn't drink, but we were in a pub because that's what you do.

COLIN. That's what you do, yeah.

EMILY. I'm sure it was after a show. I'm positive it was. Then we talked for three hours, and I remember thinking, and I don't think I've ever said this to him, so Cole, if you're listening, here you go. I remember thinking at that meeting, I'm like, "Oh, well, I've made a new best friend."

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. Yeah. He's good peeps. He's good peeps. So you connected with him.

COLIN. That was how I knew him, and then I remember we scheduled a FaceTime interview to actually know who each other were.

EMILY. That sounds about right. He was doing that with everyone, yeah.

COLIN. We had a lot of shared interests. He and I stayed in touch. We never met until fall of 2019 in person, when he had moved to Minnesota, and I went on retreat at The Center for the Prophetic Imagination. Shout out to them. They're wonderful. I love everything they do.

EMILY. Great.

COLIN. But Cole and I met for lunch right after my retreat concluded, and so that was the first time I met him in person, and then literally weeks later he's brought you to Minnesota.

EMILY. When he puts up the thing, saying about the classes?

COLIN. The workshops, yeah. And I saw this and I commented, "Oh, man I wish I could make it to one of those workshops."

EMILY. Let me jump in here.

COLIN. Sure.

EMILY. Basically what had happened is Cole was working here at the... I guess this little podcast is all about... The answer is go to the pub. Go to the pub. Maybe that's what we'll call this. Go to the Pub.

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. Be brave and to go the pub. Cole had worked at The Sheen Center here in New York City, and then had taken a job at a different theatre company in the Twin Cities. When he was there, that's where they were looking for a Christmas show, and so he knows I'm a playwright. Again, he's asked for different shows from me and we've collaborated together before, including several verse plays,

which I'm sure we'll talk about on other days. But I sent him my *Christmas Carol* that I actually had originally written for the same group of 425 kids, thinking that I was going to teach there the next year, and going okay, well, I'm at least going to take command. And then I didn't teach there the following year. But I did do my *Christmas Carol* several years later. Doesn't matter. Anyways, but I was like, okay, he wants a Christmas something. Well, I've got *A Christmas Carol*. Let me dust this off, send it off. They liked it, and they took it, and that's where they invited me to come out in order to see it. But unfortunately – this is pre-pandemic – unfortunately, something happened that was completely beyond their control, and they weren't able to do it in 2019. So it was supposed to be done in 2020. But the thing is, they'd already paid for the airplane ticket for me to come out for that week of the first performances, and there were supposed to be talkbacks and me giving classes and things like that. Now it just didn't pan out, and I was really happy to spend a week with Cole, don't get me wrong, and to meet the people at the theatre. We had a private reading of the script, and that was nice. And it was nice to be out of the city. But I really was very bummed that I didn't get to do a workshop, frankly. I was really kind of looking forward to it. When you then saw the listing and said, "Well, if you were in Wisconsin, I could probably get ten people to come."

COLIN. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. And Cole messaged me. This was all over Facebook Messenger. Cole, the ultimate connector, messaged me. He was like, "Well, would you want to go to Wisconsin?" Now, I've never been to either Minnesota or Wisconsin. I knew I had nothing else to do for a week right after Thanksgiving and before my company would move into its... Actually, right after that, I went into rehearsals for *Juliet and her Romeo* as Juliet.

COLIN. Yes, which I, then, after this workshop, came and saw in February.

EMILY. Yeah, you did come and see in February, and that closed right before the world ended. That seems right. Anyway Colin says, "Do you want to go?" I have no idea how far it is, actually, from one state to the other.

COLIN. Yeah, well, I should jump in here and be like, I had absolutely no expectation that they were going to come do one. I was just, this was a...

EMILY. But Cole is a great outdoorsman and also is a great traveler, so that's where he was like, "This is no distance at all," and I'm like, "Well, I trust you, Cole." Then I find out it's a four-hour drive, and I'm like, "Well I guess I'll be driving half of this with you, won't I? Let's see how much this New Yorker of eight years remembers how to drive." (laughs)

COLIN. Yeah, and for the record, this was kind of a flippant comment in the first place.

EMILY. You didn't mean it.

COLIN. No, I absolutely meant it. I was like, wow, I really wish I could make it to one of these. By the way, if you happen, at some point, to do one of these in Milwaukee, I could probably guarantee, like, ten people.

EMILY. Right.

COLIN. And then all of a sudden, after they've conferred, I'm in a group-

EMILY. He's moving and shaking, yeah.

COLIN. Yeah, I'm in a group chat with the three of them, and "Hey, if you can guarantee a space and people, we'll just come and do one." I'm like, "Yes. Yes. Okay, yep. That's what's happening." And I just leap into organizer mode, and I emailed everybody.

EMILY. You kind of dragged a few humans to show up.

COLIN. I emailed everybody I could think of, and I had, like, 13, maybe 15 wish-I-coulds. It was just too short notice for them to go. But I knew it was something they would like. We wound up with three and a half people, because one person had to leave an hour in.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. But it was still a really effective workshop, and that was how Emily and I actually met.

EMILY. Connected. Yeah, and like I said, I was so grateful, because this is just my favoritest topic ever, and actually, to be quite frank... This is the other piece of the puzzle. I came to New York City, and I was like, (song) "Gotta dance! Hey, world, I'm a director. I've done a million Shakespeare plays. Hire me now," and all the actors would literally go (hiss) like I was a vampire, like, "Oh, no, a director!" And then they would ask me, "Well, are you an actor?" And unfortunately I had a lot of trauma about being an actor, so I was like, "No?" And then they're like, "But your face is very mobile and very expressive." I'm like, "No, it's not! I'm not an actor!"

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. (laughs) I know. I'm so dumb. And then I would say, "Well, but I'm a playwright." And they would all be like, "Are you now? You're a playwright? Do you have a role for me?" (laughs) Come to New York, all you playwrights. It's a sexy time.

COLIN. People will be very interested in you.

EMILY. They will be so... Well, they will be so interested in what you can do for-

COLIN. Well, actors will be very, yes.

EMILY. Actors will be all up in your grill for a job.

COLIN. Yes.

EMILY. A little bit less the other way. It's a little unfortunate, you know. I mean, unless you go down a skeezy path, which I don't want to do. Anyway. Anyway, (sings) "I want to be a producer." (laughs) No. But because I had this educational background, and because I'd been working on verse since 2008, which is a different story that I'm sure we will do another time, but I rented space and tried to get students to do this workshop, but no one knew me, and also there was no... There have been various small companies, in my research, that would, there would be a verse playwright, and then he would form a production company and they'd do his three verse plays, and then it would disintegrate, right?

COLIN. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. There wasn't a verse company that actually fostered other verse playwrights, essentially, which I do think is one of the major staying powers of Turn to Flesh. Which is to say no one wanted to take my class. Who was I? They're not going to pay girl from Massachusetts money. Which, unfortunately New York can also be very provincial that way. You can show them your entire CV, and they're like, "Yeah, but none of this was in New York." It's like, yeah, but do you know the armies I raised to do *The Tempest*?

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. And then it wasn't until I did a staged reading where they just, they had the script in front of them. They stood up. They sat down. It was in a random studio, again, down in Soho. It wasn't anything, and then finally people were like, "Oh, so you do things in New York?" I'm like, once again, I have done *Hamlet*.

COLIN. I know.

EMILY. I have done *The Tempest*. I have created worlds and things, but yes, I had three people read aloud from a script without moving in front of you. (laughs)

COLIN. No, that's been such a weird thing to try and get my head around, the preoccupation with having done work in New York City.

EMILY. It's stupid. It is, it's very provincial. It is very provincial. I said it. I mean it. But because I had already paid for this space and no one was going to show up, so I grabbed two people that I had met at St. Malachy's, The Actors' Chapel. It's the Catholic actors' church, kind of, in town. It's in Times Square, which is pretty cool. I had met two actors, and I was like, "I have this play. It's in verse. I've only had readings." I'm like, "I have this space. Will you come, kind of strangers that I've vaguely met by saying peace be with you?" And because actors will say yes to anything – guilty, right? (laughs)

COLIN. Mm-hmm, yep. (laughs)

EMILY. They were like, "Yes, absolutely." And they came down and they actually did my play, *Turn to Flesh*, which is a short play about Medusa and Perseus.

COLIN. Oh, okay, the pieces come together now.

EMILY. Yeah, and then they did that thing, which was so overwhelming, where they were like, "So this was some really good shit. Do you... I would love another hit of this, whatever this is. Do you want to, like, hook up again over your verse or something?" And I was like, "Yes, I do." (laughs) So the following week, we had a read-through of acts I through III of my *Cupid and Psyche*, because I knew my acts IV and V were wrong, like they were just wrong, which, again, is a story for another day. We read acts I through III. I got amazing feedback. I had some really stellar actors. Then we were going to come back the following week, and then Hurricane Sandy hit.

COLIN. Oh my God.

EMILY. Yeah. But once again, from that, I was starting to meet actors, and it really was... Actors, you don't know what power you have. Because actors just kept saying, "Yes, we like this. We want this. Will you please do this again?" That's when I was like, "Okay, you know, what? Why don't I..." Basically, again, I was too scared to go into the pub to ask people to be like, "Would you please do my show?" I also didn't want the control taken away, because I didn't think people would understand how to do it. I thought they would get very doublet and hose about it, if they did anything.

COLIN. Sure, mm-hmm.

EMILY. Whereas the stuff that I do tends to be very visceral.

COLIN. Yes, I fully agree with that. (laughs)

EMILY. Yeah, having done my show the other day, maybe?

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. And even reading it.

EMILY. That's true.

COLIN. Or workshopping the stuff from *Cupid and Psyche*. Reading that monologue was a really powerful experience. On a cold read, too.

EMILY. "Go, fool, gloat" is the one that you're talking about, but yeah.

COLIN. Yes.

EMILY. Aw, thanks.

COLIN. You're welcome.

EMILY. Turn to Flesh began because I failed to be able to teach this class, and I guess I've been trying to teach it ever since. I did teach it last year, and I've given short versions at Shakespeare conferences and things, and that's, as we were saying off mic before, when you invited us over, I had three hours to sort of try to get a whole semester's worth in, and that was really helpful. And then this pandemic hit, and suddenly our entire... I mean, dear listeners, Turn to Flesh had an entire season with plays lined up and developmental readings lined up, and we were going to do two full shows. We managed to do one, and when we get to be in person again, we'll get to do Chris Rivera's *Our Own Odyssey*.

COLIN. (gasps)

EMILY. Which is fantastic.

COLIN. Oh, I've got to come see that.

EMILY. It's so good, but it's also so theatrical. It is not for Zoom. It is not for Zoom.

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. It is for the theatre. So we'll be coming back with a vengeance for that. You can donate now to make sure that happens, because we got no money because the pandemic hit right before our gala. And so honestly, I don't know about you, but I was spending all this time going, do I want to pivot to anything digital? Do I want to wait this out? How stupid will the nation be? I under-

estimated its stupidity, but I did think it was going to be at least a year, and now I'm thinking two or three before we're back in person.

COLIN. Yeah, me too.

EMILY. In major hubs.

COLIN. I also underestimated.

EMILY. Yeah. And so then it became a necessity, and that's where I was like, okay, well, I noticed that... I have an audiobook that's available, *Nachtsturm Castle*, for all of you who love Jane Austen and love gothic literature and love Buffy the Vampire Slayer and parodies. It is my campy version, a sequel to *Northanger Abbey*, where she actually does go and gets caught up in a gothic novel but refuses to believe it because she thinks her husband has essentially just planned a really interactive vacation honeymoon for her.

COLIN. Oh my. (laughs)

EMILY. Yes, and it's an audiobook read by, actually, someone from Franciscan University, from our little drama conclave. Yeah, so small is good. Suzanne Fortin, and she's a fantastic voiceover artist. But I noticed that that was selling on Amazon, and I'm like, okay, yeah. I've been consuming more audio drama and podcasts and things because I'm just stuck inside and Netflix is not releasing things fast enough. That's where I was like, well, I tried to do one about a year and a half ago, and it was too much for me. And again, I failed. I failed doing the podcast. I failed. But that's where I reached out to you. I was like, "Colin, are you as unemployed as I am?"

COLIN. (laughs) Yeah.

EMILY. "Could I maybe talk to you about maybe doing some of my Jane Austen stuff?" And that's where you were like, "Why aren't you doing the verse drama stuff?" And I'm like, "Because who would want it, Colin? Who would want it?"

COLIN. Well, I remember my first reply when you messaged me was like, "God, please, yes." Because I was thinking... Yes, I was equally unemployed and being strung along by Unemployment. I've gotten nothing still, by the way, fun fact.

EMILY. Oh no. Boo. Boo, government.

COLIN. And no corporate entity near me gives a shit what I've done in the arts.

EMILY. Man.

COLIN. So I was like, I would, yes.

EMILY. Socialism, that's where I'm kind of at, man.

COLIN. Oh, I'm already there.

EMILY. I know you're there. I am inching there, because I was taught it was scary by Catholicism.

COLIN. Oh, so was I. (laughs)

EMILY. But the more I'm looking at it, the more I'm like, but Jesus.

COLIN. Hell, even Catholic social teachings.

EMILY. Give things away. Take care. Be nice.

COLIN. They held all things in common.

EMILY. I know.

COLIN. Yeah, anyway.

EMILY. Anyway, so yeah. Anyway, let's leave the politics-

COLIN. That would be a great side conversation.

EMILY. That'll be a side conversation for another day.

COLIN. But yeah, I was equally unemployed, and my entire audio career... My degree is in acting. I discovered sound design. I learned just enough about sound design to be able to do it well.

EMILY. You're doing great.

COLIN. Thank you. I don't know shit about audio engineering.

EMILY. Lies.

COLIN. I've been learning that by necessity. My entire... I'm 28 and already tired of reinventing myself. However...

EMILY. Okay, no, but this is the thing. The pandemic hit, and it was like the airplane we were all in exploded, and there were no parachutes. There were never going to be parachutes, because it was an artistic airplane. (laughs) So you're in an airplane, it's exploded, and you are trying to cobble together a schlarpenspflumph. Now, you don't know what a schlarpenspflumph is or what it

does or whether it needs wheels or, like, a rudder, because you're not sure what you're going to hit when you get down to the bottom. And you're trying to make this schlarpentplumph that you are just defining as you go from bits of things that are falling around you, and you're holding it together with, like, duct tape and hope, and going, "And now it's art?"

COLIN. It's a mid-air MacGyver, yeah.

EMILY. It is.

COLIN. In free-fall.

EMILY. You're creating this Zoom stuff, and even the world of audio, you're kind of creating what it is without knowing what it is.

COLIN. Right, exactly.

EMILY. Which I put to you is what Elizabethan drama was also doing. But anyway, go ahead.

COLIN. Well, yeah. And I've found that as I learn engineering, and shout out to TSDCA, The Theatrical Sound Designers and Composers Association.

EMILY. Woot, woot!

COLIN. They had a bunch of free panels on pivoting to this stuff, so I learned about loudness guidelines and how they're trying to establish a standard, a lot of really important stuff about remote recording and all of that. So I'm less freaked out about it now, but my entire sound career has operated on a need-to-do basis. I don't know this, but I will. (laughs) I was really interested in pivoting to podcasts, and having this be a first opportunity, something that I, as an actor, thought was of such value in the first place, was a wonderful first-foray project. One of the values that I already knew I had was really well-trained ears, because I was a jazz musician first. And as I've sound designed, in discussions with my mentor and kind of playing tracks that I made up just to see if I could do it in Garage Band, thinking I'm not allowed to feel like I know what I'm doing. He would be like, "You don't need help. You know what you want to hear. That's the most important thing, and you got what you wanted to hear. You don't need to know shit about music theory. Just do it." I was like, "I'm sorry, what?" Actually, there's been so many moments of just having somebody that I respected give me permission. It was talking to Josh while giving him a ride to his hotel after working on some show in Chicago when he said that to me, and then your workshop, Emily. Just having these moments of permission that have been really pivotal, and to be able to put that permission in a podcast?

EMILY. But that's also what I received from you when you were saying that you'd been giving out the pamphlet that I made for your class.

COLIN. Yeah, I have it right here. (laughs)

EMILY. Which I'm sure we'll turn into a book on Amazon, or hire me, Harper-what is it, Harper Collins? Yeah.

COLIN. Harper Collins, Routledge.

EMILY. Yeah. Yeah.

COLIN. If you want it to be a textbook.

EMILY. I mean it'd be a good textbook.

COLIN. It would.

EMILY. Because the thing is, and we'll talk about this more in other... What I've discovered in having the leisure to have so much time to work on this, rather than doing a little 90-minute class, three-hour class type thing, these very fast master classes where I'm just trying to get the fundamental ideas into your head, with a little bit of trying it out. To have the leisure to work on it really in a concentrated form, and to, again, not be able to do any other job than this...

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. And just going around the same neighborhood every day on my daily walks, so I'm bored of it, so I may as well think of something else. I've realized in a profound way that verse drama is entirely its own discipline, that it is as separate a discipline as straight theatre is from musical theatre, as musical theatre is from opera, as opera is from ballet, that it is distinct, different, unique with its own rules and bugs and features. Yeah, and that, as I've said to you on one of our very late night talks, the sad thing is that we've been continuing to reinvent one author's wheel.

COLIN. Exactly.

EMILY. Rather than looking at what is the thing itself?

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. What does it do itself? That's what this whole podcast is going to be, and there's things that I hadn't even realized, although I've been a Shakespearean since I was eight, really, and I've been writing verse for about a dozen years, in a focused way. And then had this company for, I can never count

if it's seven or eight years. In 2013, and it's 2020, and how do you want to count that? (laughs) Yeah, so this podcast has been a revelation for me as well. And I would not have done it without the permission from you, so thank you.

COLIN. Well, thank you. I had a thought and I lost it. Maybe it can be saved for another time.

EMILY. It'll be saved for another time. I think this is a good place. Friends, thank you for listening. Thank you for coming into the pub, and that's the takeaway.

COLIN. Yeah, I like that idea, going into the pub.

EMILY. Yeah. Go into the pub. Come into the pub. Help us out with the title. We'll figure it out. We said we were going to do a half hour, but you have nothing else to do in your life. And besides, it's always true, right? When you go to the pub, you're like, "I'll just come for one."

COLIN. Yeah.

EMILY. Never.

COLIN. That's never the case. (laughs)

EMILY. Even if it is just one, it's, like, two hours of one.

COLIN. Uh-huh.

EMILY. Very well nursed drink. All right, friends. Next time. Bye.

COLIN. All right, talk to you soon. Bye.

[music]

EMILY. Hamlet to Hamilton is a special project of [Turn to Flesh Productions](#) audio division. Turn to Flesh is a theatre company in New York City that develops new plays in heightened text with vibrant roles for women and those underrepresented in classical art. In other words, we create new Shakespeare shows for everybody Shakespeare didn't write for. Hamlet to Hamilton is hosted by [Emily C. A. Snyder](#) with audio engineering and sound design by [Colin Kovarik](#) and original music by Taylor Benson. Special thanks to [Esther Williamson](#) for transcripts.

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Thank you for joining us, dear friends, for all things true, good, beautiful, and frequently in verse.