

Pitch, Please! Transcript

as part of Citadel Theatre's [esc] Series

ACT I

(Phone rings.)

John: Hello?

Lillian: Hey John. It's Lillian.

John: *(Yawns)* Hi, how's it going?

Lillian: Did I wake you? It's 11 am.

John: Oh God, I'm late fooor absolutely nothing because we're still stuck at home.

Lillian: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Listen, John, our proposal was accepted.

John: Our proposal.

Lillian: Yeah, for the digital theatre project.

John: Oh shit. Right! Yeah. I... I forgot about that.

Lillian: Well it's great!

John: Cool, great. Congrats to us.

Lillian: Congrats to us! We get to make a thing!

John: Remind me, remind me what we, what we pitched. I remember we talked about it but I don't remember what we said.

Lillian: Uh... we pitched, "a multi-disciplinary synthesis of harmony and discord that dramatizes comedy and finds dark humour in grave stoicism, bringing together parodic reimaginings of

both precise order and careful chaos as it separates its permanence from the concept of impermanence itself."

John: So... no set idea yet, huh?

Lillian: Exactly--I pitched a horoscope. It can mean whatever we need it to mean.

John: Mmm.

Lillian: But we have a month, we have lots of time. I'm certainly not doing anything better now that my whole tour is cancelled. So... how long do you think you need to come up with some ideas?

John: Um... uh, let's say a week. Call me on, Monday and we'll go over everything we've got and decide what the best thing is. 'Cause that's what it's about.

Lillian: Okay. That sounds fantastic! John, I'm so excited to do this project with you.

John: Lillian. Congratulations.

(Laughter.)

Lillian: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Talk to you in a week.

John: Yeah, bye.

Lillian: Bye!

(Phone disconnects.)

ACT II

(Phone rings.)

John: Hello?

Lillian: Hi, are you ready?

John: Alright... uh, pitch me—whatchu got?

Lillian: Okay. John, I have, I... (*Laughter*) I'm pretty excited about some of these ideas. Okay...

John: Great.

Lillian: First of all, um, famous musical theater productions staged with sock puppets.

John: Okay. All right. So like *Les Mis*, but with whatever socks you've got.

Lillian: Yes. Um, I do have a few specific ones in mind.

John: Ok...

Lillian: Ok. I have *Phantom of the Sock-ra*.

John: Oh wow. So they're going to be puns too. Okay. Alright.

Lillian: Oh yeah. You know, so buckle up! Ok, Oklahosema.

John: Wow.

Lillian: Oh. It gets worse. *Darn Yankees*.

John: I don't even know what musical that's referencing.

Lillian: Oh, sorry. Yes. There's a musical called *Damn Yankees*.

John: Ahhhh.

Lillian: Yeah. Yeah. It's not so modern. *Argyles and Dolls*.

John: Umm-hmm, wow. Yep.

Lillian: Yeah. *Sock of Ages, Spun From Away...*

John: Mmm-hmm.

Lillian: *Jesus Christ Sandalfoot*, and either *Hamiltoe* or *Hadestoe*.

John: Wow. You've really found the puns. Um... I'm gonna, I'm gonna need some time with all of those.

Lillian: Alright well, I, I kind of got on the musical theater train a little bit here, so I thought—as you know, I have two cats.

John: Right.

Lillian: So I was thinking, how about *Cats*, but with real cats.

John: Great? I, I love that. I just wish it could be staged live. *(Laughter)* Um, uh, cool. Um, my list is not nowhere near as pun based for which I, I now feel I need to apologize.

Lillian: No, no you really don't.

John: Okay great. Um, uh, this is just a classic of prank calls to friends and loved ones. I don't know what good pranks exist at a time when people can't go outside, but, um, just, just tryin', just trying to fool your friends...from a distance.

Lillian: Uh, okay. A little, a shock jock radio going on there. That's uh, uh I just wonder, where does the audience fit in here?

John: Umm... You'd have to be streaming live I guess.

Lillian: Yeah, cool. Okay. Well, also in the world of Zoom theater, I was thinking Shakespeare, but with Snapchat filters. So for instance, Hamlet is played by a potato and, um, maybe there'd be a pickle Ophelia, that kind of thing?

John: Right. So like strong, strong monologues and scenes, but, yeah... okay yeah love it. Great. Uh, okay. Uh... this one is really a title more than anything and it's, *Clemens Snickerley: Baby Auditor*. And I feel like I need to stress, I'm not sure if that's an auditor of babies or a baby who audits, um, to be determined.

Lillian: *(Laughter)* Baby auditor. Uh, y-- can you tell any... Do you have anything more about that?

John: Um, uh, I guess, uh, either branch of that forking path seems to have some merit in my, in my heart. So um, whether that's someone, whatever their list of qualifications for auditing a baby, um, or whether that's a baby who's a very stoic and serious auditor... But uh, who never gets taken seriously because of their young age. I feel I can see both pathways and each one beckons with uh, with strength.

Lillian: Yeah, that... that's, I'm going to star that one.

John: Great.

Lillian: Okay. Next I have... I've referred to it as a "Reverse Mockumentary."

John: Okay. Um... I don't know what that is, but I'm intrigued.

Lillian: Just what it sounds like, a mockumentary, but reversed. *(Pause.)*

John: Um...

Lillian: Or, in a similar vein to that, uh, but a little bit opposite - a mockumentary biography of a fictional character, but done as if they were a real human.

John: Okay. Okay. Hmm... So really like diving into the behind the camera, behind the performance sort of thing, but for someone who does not, in fact, exist. Like, *The Rise and Fall of Captain Crunch*.

Lillian: *(Laughter)* Yeah. Yeah. Pretty much.

John: Okay, great, great. Um... I had a sad one... uh, that was just calls you'd make to people you can't talk to anymore. Whatever the context of, "can't talk to" is uh, in that case.

Lillian: Ohhh... that's, that's really nice.

John: That's just like a, uh... whether that's like people in your life or again, historical folks, or, or wherever those conversations would go.

Lillian: Yeah... So you could just call Hitler and swear at him a lot.

John: Uh, yeah. You could prank call Adolf Hitler if you so chose. Or you can have a heartfelt conversation with someone, but you know, *(laughter)* that's, uh, I guess that would be your choice. *(Pause.)* Great. I had one more, a tin can telephone a very esoteric art film where we just film ourselves having like a tin can, telephone conversation from a, from a safe distance. Uh, no one hears what we say and maybe we don't either.

Lillian: Hmm. *(Pause.)* Yeah...?

John: Okay well, that's my list. Um... out of those, maybe let's, let's do that reverse mockumentary one?

Lillian: Great! We just need a subject.

John: Yeah, sure. Uh great. I'll get a-thinkin'. Um, probably talk to you next week?

Lillian: Uh... time's a-tickin'.

John: Okay, later *this* week?

Lillian: That's the John I know and love.

John: Great. Uh.... bye! *(Laughter.)*

Act III

(Phone rings.)

Lillian: Hello.

John: All right, Lillian, hear this. My reverse-mockumentary pitch is *Dressage*, but seen from the perspective of the horses.

Lillian: *(Laughter)* Okay. W-what's *Dressage*?

John: Uh, *Dressage*... *Dressage* is, um, it's the British sport where horses wear costumes and trot and canter and choreographed moves to a song. It's like figure skating, but with horses, and not ice, but pretty much everything else is the same.

Lillian: From the horse's perspective?

John: Yeah. So it'd be like, you know, like the talking head interview shots of like, but the horses just chewing the hay, like... like that sort of thing.

Lillian: *(Laughter)* Oh, that's fun. I like that. That's, that's good.

John: Great. Yeah, if we just um, if we can just get a horse, um, and we could just put it in costumes and it could be all of the horses we need.

Lillian: Okay... I am not sure a real horse is feasible right now.

John: Uh, well there are several ranches around the city, like on Fox Drive/ and uh-

Lillian: Yeah I don't think it's really proximity so much as uh, access.

John: Ok fair.

Lillian: Also, I hate to point this out but that's not really a "Reverse Mockumentary." It's just kind of a regular mockumentary.

John: Hmm... I, hmm. I guess I thought if a *mockumentary* is like using the stoic tools of a documentary on something silly ... Then yeah, I guess that is just a regular mockumentary. But then I guess I don't understand what a "Reverse Mockumentary" is.

Lillian: Okay okay. So, for example, I was thinking we could look at a real life historical event and pretend it was a made up thing. So like the moon landing: we could have Kubrick—well an actor playing Kubrick—as the director doing a commentary with input from Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin as actors in the whole thing.

John: Sure. So, okay. So, so we need to gather some buds to be this crew of voices.

Lillian: Ahhhh I mean, we could maybe use some of that voice disguising software? Like that's a thing, right?

John: Isn't it easier to just use pals who are good at voices?

Lillian: Well... we're only getting so much money for this and I don't know how many shares we want to split this up into...

John: Oh, as few as possible. Um, okay, great. Uh, cool. So, so then the footage...

Lillian: I think that's the whole bit. To use the historical footage. It is a real news event.

John: Yeah okay, cool. Umm... we just need to pull that and use it. Is that legally something we can do?

Lillian: Um, I think so... I'm pretty sure. I mean it's pretty old footage—but I will go and look into that.

John: I will look into voice altering software.

Lillian: And you do video editing, right?

John: Nnnn—um, I will learn.

Lillian: *(Laughter)* Okay, great. Do some research and we'll talk again in a few days.

John: Great. I'll get a-googlin'.

Lillian: Perfect. Okay. Bye!

John: Bye!

Act IV

(Phone rings.)

Lillian: Hey!

John: Hi. Sorry I'm late. I went down a real internet spiral on voice altering software. I don't know how to use it, but I do know lots about the deep state now.

Lillian: I also took a quick look into voice altering software... and it just sounds—It's really creepy and not a road we want to go down at all. Uh, and unfortunately, I uh don't really have any better news about the moon footage. It's there. It's been remastered, is three hours long, but there's only about 30 seconds of it that's actually interesting, and I just have to say, I don't think it holds up.

John: Wow. The moon landing doesn't hold up.

Lillian: I, look I'm sorry, but it's true. And it... it looks fake. I can see why some people think it it's actually fake.

John: Yeah. the moon just isn't that impressive.

Lillian: I don't think this project can work. We've gotta come up with something else.

John: Uh okay. Well, um, what do we have that we can actually use? We're both trying to figure out things that we don't already know. Which maybe in hindsight is the wrong approach.

Lillian: Well so I guess we have our real voices and we can write things. I have some basic sound editing knowledge—like sound effects- that kind of thing.

John: Right.

Lillian: What else? Do *you* have anything else?

John: Um, uh. I mean if we could get in a room, it'd be different. But that's not an option right now. So yeah, those, those are the things we have.

Lillian: I just don't know how any of this technology works. It's hate this. I work in a room with people...

John: Yeah. I work live too. Performing over Zoom is not the same thing. It's like trying to type a sentence with one hand tied behind your back and the other hand frantically trying to keep up your usual pace.

Lillian: I'm so frustrated.

John: Ok so if we both hate this why did we want to do this? Why did we decide to try a digital art project?

Lillian: Well... I mean what are the options right now? It's the only way to get stuff out there. We're not going to get back in a room with an audience anytime soon, so if we don't do this, we can't do our work until... God knows when.

John: I mean, do we, uh, aside from we have committed to a project, is there a reason why we need to be working right now?

Lillian: I don't know. I mean, why did you agree to this project?

John: It was, it was something to try. I mean, I've, I've never really done much online stuff, but, um, you know, as an adult sometimes it's hard to force yourself to learn a new skill. And this seemed like a situation where I could do that.

Lillian: Well I... *(sighs.)* That's great for you. It's really admirable but that's not how I feel frankly. I just feel pressure to prove to myself that I can adapt—and now I'm being forced to learn yet another new whole suite of skills on top of the 50 million other things I've had to learn to be an independent artist? Uh, I'm a booking agent, accountant, graphic designer... I'm so bad at it, nobody should let me do that. Social media? I hate it. I hate it so much. But at the end of the day it's worth it because I get to create magic with a room full of strangers, and it's so beautiful..But now... but now I don't even get that payoff. I just get more things to learn. And if I don't learn them then I feel like I'm falling behind. And I'm just so... tired. You know how geese fly in a V formation?

John: Yeah.

Lillian: Other birds too—apparently the Ibis. Anyway, you know that the front goose works way harder than the geese at the back and they create a, there's a lift effect, kind of like a slipstream? Anyway, my point is that the geese at the back don't have to work so hard—and then they take turns, right? So a goose at the back will take the lead so the front goose can rest. And right now, I'm tired of being the goose at the front.

John: Hmm. You want to be in the slipstream. I love that as advice for life—we have lots to learn from the wisdom of the slipstream goose. When I, when I pitched this, I felt like “Oh, we have a bunch of time. Um... uh. we should be making something. Our hands should not be idle.” But, it's not like this is a paid vacation. Everyone I know is grasping for “normal” when the situation is definitely not normal. Uh, it's like that moment in any *Twilight Zone* episode where like, everything seems fine, but just one thing off. And that, that's kind of where we're at. And

that one thing off is that fact that we can't meet, um, and, do something, like, live for a room full of people, or even spend time together without an anxiety spike and so, well, that sucks.

Lillian: I mean, that's just it. And of course, so many people are suffering so, so much more-- on one hand, I know I'm one of the lucky ones—but on the other hand, I've worked for years to have a successful touring show, and now everything's cancelled, and I'm scared it will never come back at all. So I'm at the drawing board again, only it's not a drawing board, it's some computer app-based-integrational—I don't even know what it is.

John: Yeah. But uh, that being said, we did commit and we are getting paid some dollars so I think we still have to do a thing. I would love it to involve the sport of *Dressage*, (*laughter*) but I will acknowledge that that is also out of the reach of this moment.

Lillian: Can we just promise to do that when things open up? I really, really want to see that happen.

John: Oh, absolutely. But for now let's take stock of what we have, and what we can do and do something. It doesn't have to be perfect or game-changing. And I think if it lets us work that creative muscle a bit then that's good. "That's good enough" is my pitch. I also suggest we avoid video entirely.

Lillian: Oh, please yes. And whatever it is, can it be live? I just want to feel like I'm connecting with someone. I mean no offence, but you're the only person I've talked to in ages.

John: Wow. Uh, some taken. But yes, yes we can do something live. Our statement was WIDE open.

Lillian: Okay. Oh thanks John. That sounds like a plan. Just out of curiosity... you don't have access to a baby we could audit?

John: I...do not.

Lillian: Too bad.

Act V—Life Advice from the Slipstream Goose

(Saxophone Music Plays.)

MC Lillian: Good evening and welcome to *Life Advice From the Slipstream Goose*.

MC John: The show where we're all learning to ride easy on the updrafts.

MC Lillian: Let's go to our first caller. Chelsea from Edmonton, You're on the air. What's your question?

Chelsea: Hi! Um, with everything that's going on these days I'm feeling pretty stuck. So I guess I'm wondering, how do I get myself to actually do the things that I should do?

MC John: Isn't that THE question. But it isn't for us to answer...

MC Lillian: Let's go to the goose.

(Honking sound effect.)

MC Lillian: Thanks for calling in Chelsea. Next up, we've got Martin from Ardrossan...

(End credits music plays.)

Credits

Paul: *Pitch, Please* was created by Paul Blinov, Christine Lesiak, and Suzie Martin as part of the "Escape Series" funded by the Citadel Theatre, the Edmonton Arts Council, and the Edmonton Community Foundation.

Christine: Audio production and mixing was done by Andrew Paul.

Paul: This project was created and recorded on Treaty 6 territory.

Christine: We acknowledge this is the traditional homeland of many Indigenous Peoples, including Cree, Nakota, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene, and Métis, and as treaty people, we share the responsibility for stewardship of this land.

Paul: Music featured includes Soprano Sax solo by Vedas, and this music playing right now is the stereomod remix of foolboymedia's New York Jazz Loop, both from freesound.org.

Christine: Some additional titles for sock puppet musicals are as follows:

A Chorus Laundry Line.

Paul: *The Sound of Musock.*

Christine: *Into the Wools.*

Paul: *Les MiseRuffles.*

Christine: *The King & Kneehigh.*

Paul: *Dear Evan Handstitch.*

Christine: and *Mary Sockins.*