

Townshend interview 10.12.22

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0:00:05.0 Becky Parker Geist: Hi everyone, I'm so glad you're with us today. I'm really excited to have in the studio here with me, Joshua Townshend. Joshua is someone who works with the creative process. He has a nature-based approach to the creative process and really is working with people in any kind of story context, so I think we're gonna have a lot of fun today as we talk about story and what that means in the creative process. So, Joshua, thanks for being with me.

0:00:38.4 Joshua Townshend: Oh, pure pleasure being here. Thanks for the invite. Yeah, yeah.

0:00:43.1 Becky Parker Geist: So first of all, I wanna give a big shout out to author and writing coach Laura Davis. Laura was the one who introduced us. And Laura and I co-narrated her memoir, *The Burning Light of Two Stars*, a mother-daughter story that is now available in your favorite audio book locations, and you can find her at LauraDavis.net, and Josh, I believe that you helped her with some vocal coaching on that as well, is that right?

0:01:13.1 Joshua Townshend: We did a little bit of vocal coaching, more about working on reading the script aloud as opposed to vocal production itself. Laura also has a background in radio, so she wasn't coming in novice, but I will say, I will say that I was a huge advocate of her from the first moment she mentioned the audio book, that I was like, absolutely, you have to be involved in, right. In the performance of it, I did work with Laura Lord Davis for about a year and a half on the narrative, getting the story down, getting the through line down, that's where we did the heavy lift together, and then when it came to her doing her own performance I just shared with her a couple of sessions of how to break down a script, how to break it down, so we're gonna... I know we're gonna talk about this, but this whole thing of like hearing someone with reading left to right just drives me crazy. In a good way. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well.

0:02:14.1 Becky Parker Geist: And we're gonna dive down that rabbit hole, so I know when we first talked, and that was actually really exciting, exciting to sort of riff on a lot of these ideas, but when we first met, we were talking about the telling of the story that breathing life into the narrative. So that's the rabbit hole I wouldn't like to dive down first with you and for our listeners, like how would you describe that difference, the difference between an artistic approach and a technical approach to narration.

0:02:53.4 Joshua Townshend: So the actual performance of the words... Is that right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So once the narrative is taken care by the writer, by the author, then it's incumbent upon the performer, the artist, the actor, the voice-over talent, to breathe life into it, like you just said, in the sense of it has to come across as if for the very first time, as if this has never been said before, and we meaning the talent and the audience get to go on this discovery Path, this discovery process together. Yeah, to me, that's the ideal. Yeah, and when I hear repetition, when I hear... Here we go again, when I hear this thing underneath it, or there's no discovery or it's flat, or there's no point if we can go through a lot of things of what's not there, but right, then it's like I might as well be reading it myself, and we're not in school anymore. You know what I mean? This is not oral interpretation, this is what we're here to make discoveries and to bring something else to it than other than just the literary word. Yeah. How do you feel about that?

0:04:16.0 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, well, I think that one of the places I most often hear that difference that you're talking about is especially at the beginning of sentences, because it is almost like, have I just had this idea? Has this... This thought, this way of expressing these words, there's a

kind of attack, if you will, from a technical standpoint of how that can come across, because if you compare somebody that you're in conversation with, it sounds often very different from listening to a typical narrative. Right. And of course, depending on the material and what's happening in the story at the moment, we're not always necessarily trying to make it sound like we're in the coffee shop across from the person that we're telling this story to, we might be instead under the covers at bedtime and conveying the story in a whole different way, but there's still this element, this feeling of... It's new, it's fresh. The idea that spontaneity, I love what you touched on there.

0:05:38.9 Joshua Townshend: Creating in the moment, for the moment, you see everything is being performed live, now I might consume it, hear it canned, but everything, there is not a time where something is not performed live at that moment... Yes, and so we need to really understand that and work with that, and when I have a conversation with you in real time, as does anybody... We find the words, right? In real time. And it's created in the moment, and I'm thinking in thoughts. I'm not thinking in sentences... And that's the biggest difference.

0:06:26.1 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, and when I was in going through actor training a long time ago now, but one of the things that I feel like is the core of the acting process for me is being in the thought process for the character, like we're given these words. And as an actor, I feel like as I'm learning those words that I'm gonna have to say that they're gonna sound spontaneous because I want them to be... I wanna be experiencing them in that moment, but I choose this word, I don't choose a slightly different word, and grasping, getting wrapping on the thought around why that word in any given it helps me sort of live the thought stream, which I think is kind of what you're talking about there, it's not about the speaking of the words or the sentence, it is about the expression of the thoughts...

0:07:41.0 Joshua Townshend: Yes. And so it's tracking the inner life of what I call tracking the inner life of the character, I have to be able to track the inner life of the character to know where they are, what thoughts... What feelings are they having? And when I do that, I can go... I can go into a state of being right now where I'm like, I'm feeling slightly tight, sadly, contracted, and I'm a little confused and I'm like... I don't know what to say. So I'm not thinking, I don't know what to say. I have thoughts and feelings that produce that... I don't know what to say. Yeah, so if I'm really doing... If I'm doing service to a narrative, I wanna go into that thought and feeling and then allow the words to travel on top... Yeah, yeah. As opposed to what was line of Valois said, I don't know what to say. I don't know what to say. Or how is that for a line reading? I don't know what to take. Nay my Lord what ho? You know, oration Is what they used to call it. Is a whole another world.

0:08:53.3 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah. What would you say for those who maybe haven't thought about the narrative in this way before, that what... Is there a way that you can express that recognition of what it's like, what that difference is, other than beyond what we've already said, and I don't know if there is... So that's fine if there's not, but that someone might recognize the difference between or feel the difference between the reading of a story and maybe a good reading of the story, but that difference between that and the light it coming to life through them.

0:09:52.0 Joshua Townshend:

0:10:39.2 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, and I often, as I talk about the audio book narrative process in many episodes, I often refer to the importance of engagement, and that is a piece of it for me, is that there are other ways that I also use that in terms of staying engaged with an author. But the

engagement within the telling of the story is very much what you just described, where you get... You're in it.

0:11:13.0 Joshua Townshend: Absolutely, yeah, and there's a lot of moving parts on that, so I'm giving a result... The result is engagement. Right. How do you get to engagement? Well, there's the rub. So it's like, when one does short form narrative, there are certain things that need to be in place in order for that to happen. When one does long-form narrative, other things need to come into play much more complex.

0:11:48.1 Becky Parker Geist: Do you wanna go a little deeper on that? Sure.

0:11:51.5 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, so I've noticed that somewhere between 11 and 17 minutes, poster mine is pending upon, depending upon the medium, feature films has a slightly different thing than a narration, which is different than a theater piece, etcetera, but somewhere in there, we as human beings, unconsciously expect demand wants something from a short piece, and we will leave that experience satisfied as soon as you cross over that, let's just say 15 minutes for right now, 15-minute threshold. Another part of US kicks in wanting another kind of experience, and that's more challenging 'cause there's more moving parts, and I'll share with you how everyone is experiences... It's when you go and watch a Saturday Night Live or something like that, and you see a three to five minute comedy sketch and it's hysterical. Yeah, then they take that same premise and turned into a feature film and it's... Flat, right? Yes. Yeah, that's the difference.

0:13:07.4 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah. Very interesting. Is that interesting? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So there's another piece I wanna talk to about, and that's sort of keeping genre in mind, how much reality do we wanna bring to our performance? There are some, even when we're talking with authors will, sometimes we'll ask them in the early, in the casting process, are you looking for something that's a little more leaning into the theatricality of it or... More subtle. Yeah, what do you think about this?

0:14:00.1 Joshua Townshend: I love that you said that just now, how much reality... Essentially, that's the question within the genre worlds, you already have a pre-set... Do you know what I mean? There's like, let's say the genre of romantic comedy, let's just say that in the world of romantic comedy, you're not allowed to do a 100% emotional realism.

0:14:24.4 Becky Parker Geist: Right, it goes too deep. That's not what we're looking for.

0:14:27.7 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, right. It's not a romance... if you do that it's no longer romantic comedy, right, right. But it can't be as thin as a cartoon... Right. Somewhere in there, we generally accept like, Okay, that's reality within the genre, romantic comedy, and in my opinion, my personal opinion, the ones that crest that 70-80% emotional reality, depth, and then have a couple of scenes where it does a nice churn where you kind of go outside of a mental command, you get really real. Those to me are the most fulfilling for me, and the other ones are just light all the way through, and they're probably traveling around 40-50% emotional reality, but to identify that as a creative, as an author, as a producer is or whoever is critical for... How your peace will turn out, and how happy you will be.

0:15:29.5 Becky Parker Geist: And how would you best connect the pieces of... We were talking about the emotional reality of being in the story, those thought processes, that aspect of it that we

were talking about earlier, and bringing that together into this piece of the conversation.

0:15:56.6 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, yeah, I love that follow-up, you're right on track, 'cause that is the tell... And that is the challenge, right? So you're 100% on track with that, ironically, ironically, it's exactly the same, in other words, the emotional commitment to the ... I don't wanna give fancy here, emotional commitment to the object... Let's say it's a guy, girl Romantic comedy, just to make it simpler, romantic comedy. He falls head over heels in love with him, with her, and his emotional commitment to that is the underbelly is... It has to be real to him to some degree, then the expression of it is where the comedy comes in. Right, but the under belly of it has to have that depth, if it doesn't have that depth, and he just does the funny things of running into walls and pretending to be the water to get close to her, or all that other fun stuff that happens. Then it'll become more like a cartoon...

0:17:18.9 Becky Parker Geist: Right, right. And that's where we have, if we were on stage, the mugging, the sort of like, Oh, I'm making this funny face to say This thing, that that's the kind of thing that we often will see in that, I think in the false expression, where it doesn't have that underbelly, we're just doing it on a technical level.

0:17:45.0 Joshua Townshend: Yes, yeah, yeah. And so again, that comes back to that thing about, is your intention to be a technician, is your intention to be an artist without having an emotional pull towards one or the other, just... How are you hard-wired? Because everyone's different, in my opinion, from my experience, is that people that are more technical, technically-driven, eventually will turn the corner and go more artistic, and then people who artistic eventually need to balance out by learning or having some technical ability under their belt. So it's a very interesting process.

0:18:29.3 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, yeah, and just going back again to the notion that if the expression is broad, let's say like if we're mugging on stage, that doesn't necessarily mean that it can't have that underbelly that you're talking about, it absolutely can. It's a different way, it's a different expression. But the substance is still there, and I think regardless of that level of... I'll call it theatricality, for simplicity, that that... That level of theatricality is not determining whether or not there is the truth, the undercurrent, the spontaneity, the now-ness of the moment, it's a different piece of that puzzle...

0:19:31.4 Joshua Townshend: Mm-hmm. Yes, yeah, and it's really important to define that and to know what land you're playing in, and right now I'm thinking about children's stories just because that's what's coming in, but this thing of like, there's people that read children's stories, and then there's people that read children stories, right, and that's also a good indicator of what we're talking about in terms of the difference... Am I just putting on like, Okay, I just love watching people, it's part of my joy in life, but I'll never forget, I saw this lady walk through an airport once, and I could tell she was a professional, like she worked there, but she didn't have her costume on yet, and she was not in a good mood. And then minutes later, she was in her costume and she was in her little airline outfit or whatever, the desk, and the lady was dealing with irate passengers, and I saw her persona, you know? Yeah, is there anything else I can help you with? Would you like fries with your order, you know... But she was really good at it. Yeah, and that's the difference.

0:20:57.3 Becky Parker Geist: One of the things that we are fairly often asked about by authors, and that's a concern that many authors have, especially before they come to us and start talking to us about this, but it's the question of... Especially for those who are writing in the realms of memoir

and spiritual content, there's often this feeling that they have when they come to us that they have to be the one to record it, even if they don't feel comfortable with that. Because the thinking is that no one else can express their content with the energy that they as the authors would, because it feels so very personal, and then we've also... In working with many of those authors, we've also frequently amazed them that again and again, how it's not only possible, but sometimes even better than they could have imagined it, because it is this ability to tap into the reality of the content, and it doesn't mean you have to have personally lived it up to that point. Right, I was thinking about... I think that there is a kind of there as a birthing of stories, and then there is the release of each story, just like with kids, that when we let our kids grow up and expand and instead of trying to control every step that they take every aspect of their lives, that they're much more likely to thrive, and I've come to consider the stories themselves and the characters that are created within them, they're sort of born within those stories as they're like, Well, those are thought beings, okay, they may not have this...

0:23:18.3 Becky Parker Geist: They may not have flesh attached to them, but they are as real in our thoughts as our next door neighbors that we're not seeing right now, but we know they exist. Right, they're very present in their lives, the very... They have a lot of impact frequently in our lives, best ones do... And that their life continues to expand with each reader with each... What do you think about the idea that only the author can best narrate their own work? What do you think about that?

0:23:58.0 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, you touched on so many topics in that...

0:24:01.3 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, we'll play with any of those that you...

0:24:05.7 Joshua Townshend: The first thing that came up for you as you were sharing that was create... Release. Relax, and that's so important. That's the natural process, that's the nature-based aspect part of the work I do, which is you create something, you release it to put it out into the world, or you share it with a friend or whatever it is, and then you relax, and in that relaxation is a reintegration process, and then you do it again, create, release, relax, and then there're short frames and long frames and everything else in between. In order to experience something, in order to... In order to express something, do I need to experience what it is on the page? Absolutely not, because if that were true, then anyone who plays a murderer in a film would have to go off and murder someone, and that's not needed... We've all murdered flies. Right, yeah. So we have that sense of rage or whatever, and then putting out someone putting out a life, or even if you've never personally killed a fly, you've driven in a car that had mass carnage to like little mosquitoes, however you wanna say it.

0:25:17.9 Joshua Townshend: So that's not where my interest lies. My interest lies is, am I excited to hear the author's words? Say them, yes. That's something that I personally think is fantastic. Is it incumbent upon them? No, it's not. Do they have a passion for it? Then let's see what they can do, right? Right, yeah. Then on the other side of that is this, how many academy awards session broadcast have you listened to and you hear the author saying, Oh my God, I didn't know that character until so and so played them... Yes. How many times have you heard that?

0:26:00.8 Becky Parker Geist: So many times. So many times.

0:26:02.6 Joshua Townshend: Many times have you heard the actor say, Oh my God, thanks to so and so for writing this 'cause... How many times have you heard that? Yeah, yeah. So it truly is a...

If you are gonna go and cast someone to do it for you, there's a lot of upsides, first of all, you have another palette to play with, you have collaboration to play with, and the part that pinning upon this is more character person-driven than anything else, but if I live with something and I hear it in my head and I only think of it being shared in that way, that can be one of the biggest disservices to your project. I agree, I agree.

0:26:53.5 Becky Parker Geist: It makes me think about the fact that there are the occasions where an author may listen to... They're listening, they're trying to cast a... We're trying to cast a project and they're so caught up with the way it sounds in their head that they're not able... They're not open to hearing the potential for where it could go with a different voice or with a voice. It's gonna bring it to life. I love the way you said that with another palette, just we expand the potential with that other palette.

0:27:37.3 Joshua Townshend: And ultimately you're hiring someone with a Sense and Sensibility that's in alignment with the project right now, because that's the artistic creative thing, and then you could also hire someone who's a technician? Who's replicated that before? Now you're gonna have them replicate it for her, again, but ultimately, it's such a personal individual sort of choice, and then because of technology, we have so many different areas where you could have someone else read it and then you can have the author do the preface or note or another way to get their voice in there... Right, but the ultimate question I would ask is, What choice is going to serve the project the most? Yes. Yeah. Beautiful.

0:28:33.8 Becky Parker Geist: Agree, 100%. Alright, let's talk about an ism. Let's talk about perfectionism. Partly because we've been talking about is a kind of... I'll call it fine tuning, although it's something much deeper than that, fine tuning sounds technical rather than artistic, but I wanna make sure that our listeners don't become obsessed with this idea of getting the recording to sound perfect through some kind of idea of perfectionism. **So how would you say that the ism of perfectionism is kind of getting in the way of our creative flow?**

0:29:25.1 Joshua Townshend: 100% all the time, every day. How's that?

0:29:28.0 Becky Parker Geist: I Love that...

0:29:31.0 Joshua Townshend: That was easy. Yeah, that's, I would say is one of the biggest ones. It really is, and it's something that's really challenging because as an artist, as a creative... One of the reasons why it's there is because most of us are exposed to the Creative Arts in school and in school, if you learned School and creative, you're gonna get graded and because you're gonna get graded, do you want it to be perfect? Because you want to get best way, which then sucks all the life energy out of the creative process, so that said... There's this famous offer, singer named Luciano Pavarotti, and maybe I'm not saying it exactly correctly, but... I did, right?

0:30:16.9 Becky Parker Geist: Yes.

0:30:17.5 Joshua Townshend: He's an amazing opera singer, I highly recommend everyone going and listening to him, at the height of his career, he stopped his career for two to three years and re-trained his instrument, meaning his voice, and then came back and re-launched his career to even greater heights. Hardly ever do you or even touch on that story... Right, right. So this idea that this tenor, Luciano Pavarotti could be perfect, but he stopped to retrain himself and go for new heights, I

feel like is one of the best ways of saying There is no such thing as perfect. And when you go into his work and other people's work of that caliber, they will all tell you the same thing, that in performance, they cannot wait for the accident to happen. And the reason why is because it's just like that thing with Leonard Cohen, the crack... That's how the light gets in. Yeah, because you've set out a pattern and in that pattern that looks perfect, which has the difference between a technician and an artist, is that when the pattern gets broken by the artist, they use it as an opportunity to go deeper. Right. As opposed to the human being that Contracts and goes, Oh, that wasn't...

0:31:41.8 Joshua Townshend: Right.

0:31:42.9 Becky Parker Geist: Right. Yeah, and this idea of perfect also suggests that there is no... It imposes a real limitation, an end point on something that doesn't need to have an end point, that doesn't have an end point unless you encapsulate it in that way. Right, so by leaving it open to continuous growth, you allow it to become ever better.

0:32:17.4 Joshua Townshend: And that's why I'm saying Luciano Pavarotti retrained his instrument, because he knew that there was more for him to explore, even though everyone... If you look at those articles, the opera world was on with him and he's the best, there's no one better. Blah, blah, blah. And the other side of what I'm talking about is on a broader aspect, is this thing of open system and closed systems, so nature is based on an open system, a manufacturing plant, like building a car is built on a closed system, and that's why we go back to the... Are you a technician or are you an artist? And not to say that it's good to have cars... We want cars.

0:33:00.7 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, maybe. Yeah, we wanna have maybe not quite as many as we have, we want transport devices, there you go.

0:33:09.4 Joshua Townshend: That gets from one place to another that have parts that need to be precision made, they need to be perfect in order to go... To make them interchangeable, so they can... But the problem with that is that those systems, those systems wear out because they're a closed system, you always have to change out the parts... When you live in an open system like nature, it's constantly going through create, release relax, it's constantly having new discovery, it's constantly coming... There is no perfection. No one goes and watches a sunset and goes... You know, last night, Sunset was so much better. No, no, seriously, it was just like... I don't know. It's kind of flat, I just wasn't feeling it. We don't say that because we're living in an open system with nature and we enjoy that beauty of that moment.

0:33:58.2 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, although I will say that, that I can also see ways in which humans try to impose a closed system on an open system, like let's say for example, a competitive Flower Show, right. I was like, My flower is somehow better than your flower, it's like this... It's trying to own and then also to encapsulate. Yeah.

0:34:31.3 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we want blue ribbons and red ribbons and first place trophies, and we'll create ways to create a structure where we can get that, and then that helps with marketing, that has to do with marketing and a bunch of other stuff. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're funny people. That's so funny, I love that you said that. Yeah.

0:34:58.6 Becky Parker Geist: Let's talk a little bit about solo work versus ensemble, we have many different contexts in which that comes about, whether it's from the writing process, the

performance of an audio book, on stage, many other places, of course, we're focused mostly here on the writing and audio book, in particular, what would you say are some of those different challenges that arise in those different context?

0:35:35.7 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, this is a really specific question... Well, before going to that one, I just wanna mention that audio has never been more important in the history of... In the history of the world as of right now, with the ability to consume audio on demand anywhere on the planet, it's seriously insane where we're going with this, and how important is to bring that consciousness to the work we do because sound affects more than anything, how you think, yes. And sound current to get fancy. Very potent. It is vibration, it is vibration and everything reduces to vibration, so I just wanted to call that out, and so I... Thank you. Important, the work you're doing is and forwarding people that may not have huge corporations behind them and still getting that word out, so the vital... Yeah, the difference between how... It's interesting that that came up. Right there. So it's the difference between ensemble and solo, certain skill sets are required for each one of those, and neither one of them is better or worse, it's just different. So when I'm doing a solo thing, I have no one to bounce from, so I have to self-generate and that engagement is very specific.

0:37:15.2 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, it doesn't take what I call- what people call give and take, you know. So you have that flow where as opposed to an ensemble, you really have to be able to give everything and then receive everything. Right. And to have responses and to be available for change and there's a lot more moving parts. Right, yeah. So what are you noticing? Because for instance, you can do a conversation in studio when you're recording and it's just one performer at a time, or you can do it in real time, what's your noticing is around...

0:37:54.4 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, 'cause we do a fair number of full cast projects, and we do them in a group... The scene work is in group sessions, we're not in the same space, but we do that because it makes such a difference when we're playing off each other. Yes, it's also a whole lot more fun. But yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But we get a much better result because, you know, we can guess how a different character is going to say a line, but maybe they don't say it that way, so if we're doing it all like, I'm just gonna imagine what the other person says and I'm gonna say my lines is if they're gonna say them the way they are happening in my head, we're gonna have so many disconnects, so doing it in groups together... Yeah, makes that huge difference. And also then what came up for me is thinking about how essential to performance, the listening process is... I mean, you see it, especially on stage, because you get to watch performers who are not speaking at the time, and they're either listening or obviously not listening... To not listen, I guess. And when they're obviously not listening, they're detracting from what's going on on the stage.

0:39:23.8 Joshua Townshend: So I work with this a lot, and I have a whole thing, the whole thing you can work with me on one day, which is called whole body listening, and you're like, Well, wait a minute, this is just audio. Why do I have to listen with my whole body... Well, believe me, voice talent doesn't work, just put their voice, the whole bodies engaged, listening is an integral part of talking, being present, being responsive, which is what you were just... We're talking about in terms of the different free solo and ensemble, although you don't have to have that skill set done, you don't have to... It's better, but you don't have to have the skill set of listening and ensemble you better. Yeah, you have to... And the thing of it is, is that... And this is where I go with the work is, why limit yourself to developing your skills and talents only when you're in rehearsal or in a creative shot session. Why not grow in real life. Yeah, so my question to you is, to people that are hearing this is how present is the other person that you're talking to over coffee, how much do they

go away and how much do you...

0:40:40.8 Joshua Townshend: Go away. Yeah, how present are you in your day-to-day life is only an extension of how present you can be when you're doing this kind of work, it's not like a switch where you can turn it on and off, like your ability... Your bandwidth to listen is what it is, in fact, if anything, it actually gets narrower when you have the stress of performance.

0:41:09.3 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, that's great, it just brings that whole mindfulness of our entire lives right into this conversation. I love that.

0:41:19.1 Joshua Townshend: Which goes back to the Sense and Sensibility of the artist, of the creative, which is ultimately what you're developing and people will pay you for... Yeah, yeah.

0:41:34.1 Becky Parker Geist: Yeah, also, and I was thinking about when you said with solo performance, that listening quality is helpful, less critical perhaps then it made me think about when we're doing a dialogue, even as a solo narrator, there is one character, and then that listening quality of the other character, the more... We can actually be present. So the interesting thing is we switch quickly from the thought process of one character and then we sort of jumped into the thought process of the other character, so there's a kind of dual thing going on work because we're playing more than one person. Right. But I'm thinking about moments where one character says something that maybe is surprising or shocking to the other character, if we jump in immediately with that next line, that tells me that the character who's jumping in hasn't really listened to what the other one just said. You know what I mean? I mean, there's... Yeah, because we have that moment, like we were talking about earlier, about how we're thinking of what we're going to say until the other person has said what they're going to say, we don't know what we're responding to and that unless we're tuned out, which is like when we're sitting over coffee and our mind is thinking about either what we're gonna say next while the other person's talking or about any number of other things where we're tuned out, and maybe that is appropriate for the character in the moment, but probably more often not.

0:43:30.8 Joshua Townshend: Wow. You're just so much one to have conversations with, 'cause you're talking is very nuanced and very particular, so when you have a single... A single performer playing both roles, I worked with Ann Randolph, a master at this by the way, I worked with many other single solar performers, is that in the writing process of that one has to do what I call drill downs, drilling down into the discovery of the scene or whatever is playing out within each character, you can't just play the lead role, you have to play the other role and then write it from the other role and make discoveries from the other role, otherwise you just become this little bouncing board for the lead character to have their moment. And that's not real, right? We all see this in feature films and sometimes, and a lot of times in TV actually too, where like the waiter or the waitress or whoever is sitting around waiting for the lead character, do what they need to do so that they can perform what they need to perform. Alright. Yeah, and that's not life. Life is, Hey, Hey, hold on him. I'm serving this other table.

0:44:42.6 Joshua Townshend: Give me a minute. Right, yeah. And it's put in by the writer as well, so it's not just the performers... Yeah.

0:44:49.5 Becky Parker Geist: Maybe what you just have reminded me of... So I just released my novel, *The Left Turn: Two Lives Worlds Apart*, and it is written from from two point of views, so

there's Hannah and there's James and wrote when I got many drafts along, many edits along, I should say. I turned it over to some beta readers and got their feedback, and one of the things I learned was that I had done what you just described in that I was really focused mostly on the Hannah point of view M. And so some of the comments I got were was, we don't know much about James, he's not very clear or, we don't know enough about him. I gave me the opportunity to go back in and do quite a lot of rewriting, considering it from more from his point of view, so that I could flesh out that character...

0:45:53.8 Joshua Townshend: Yes, so the word point of view in our context, in our parlance, just to be clear, is how the character thinks and feels, it's both thinking and feeling, hopes and dreams, fears and secrets. Insecurities, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So what you're talking about is, is when the other side is not developed, the other character is just a foil for the other person to go through the sequences that they need to do in order to have the scene go a certain way. And I'm here to share that there is no scene, and until you have a development for the other character, characters, that what's being executed as an outline, and then there's no chance for discoveries. Right. I love this. It's.

Isn't that interesting?

0:46:57.4 Becky Parker Geist: Great Yeah, it is.

0:47:01.4 Joshua Townshend: Yeah, it's all about discoveries and being available to listen for the discovery and... Oh, you brought up that thing that I just love that you've mentioned a second ago, is that thing, which is when someone says something and they have an emotional reaction to it immediately, did they even listen to it... Right, essentially. And my thing is, I don't know. Isn't that what people do in life?

0:47:32.9 Becky Parker Geist: Sometimes, but yeah, so it's what you need to figure out in a moment, I think, is that... Because it all depends on what else is going on in that person's mind, are they truly listening and then have to figure out what they're gonna say about that thing, or are they really caught up in their own stuff and they're only sort of half listening and they are ready to react? Just give me a little air space and I'm on it, you know, I don't know. Exactly.

0:48:14.5 Joshua Townshend: The moment. That moment. Yeah, exactly, and that's something that one has to care as the writer and directors and other people that are involved in that process, but that's the caring because in just like in life, people are reacting and they're not even like the other person has even really finished with their thought, Yeah, which can be just like life and then... But there's the other side, which is, well, know that, that's the Actor coming in, not the character, and to know that delineation, and this is the example that I like to give around this topic in American films... We play the contraction. In European films, art house films, they play the relationship, and in those two is the difference in general? Very cool. So the sensibility comes in is like, Okay, are you gonna be playing the contraction? So just, I wanna make it clear so people really know what we're talking about here, what Ethan, the contraction looks something like this. "Honey, I have something to tell you." "What is it?" "I had an affair." [exploding] "What? !"... Right, yeah. And I don't care. Male, Female doesn't make a difference. So that's playing the contraction on...

0:49:47.2 Joshua Townshend: "Honey I have something to tell you." "What is it?" "I had an affair." "How long this has been going on? Really that long, I had idea. Wow, that really hurts."

That's the relationship. Yeah, yeah. Right. So... Which story are you telling? And I'm not saying that both aren't possible as both a broad notes character-driven... Right, yeah. But that's who we are is... That's how culturally we're representatives, Americans, that's how their culture... Representative of your opinion. Yeah.

0:50:30.6 Becky Parker Geist: You touched on something that we hadn't yet, and so I just wanna... We're gonna have to... We're gonna have to stop at some point that...

Joshua: No! Can we do part two?

Becky: Yeah, we can definitely do part two, but we're gonna have to wrap up part one, so... But you mentioned the director. Yes, and hadn't actually talked about the director, but earlier when we were talking about expanding, having another palette, having another expansion of choices to work with and colors that we can work with with a full cast project that... That's certainly something that we always include is having a director as a part of that, now sometimes we also have directors in whether it's a solo narrator, some other context, but I just wanted to call that forward what your mention of the having the director because it does... There are times when, even in the ensemble work that actors are reacting off of each other, but may have missed something in the context in that moment where they really need that other ear to go, Oh, hang on. There's something different going on here. Let's try it with this understanding.

0:52:05.7 Joshua Townshend: Is hugely important, hugely important, very important to have a single vision, and then to have that single vision communicate extremely well, and at the same time, making sure that there's someone that's main job is to keep that single vision in alignment in both big picture and in. Small picture in the small choices, the big choices, because everything has a ripple effect. Yes, and you wanna be able to tie it back in, especially long form narrative. Short form narrative, you won't... You won't come across this as much long form Narrative. Critical. Yeah, and also that ripple effect is also happening from the author to the narrator or narrators to the listener, that we are that rippling effect out into the world and the impact that each story is creating. Yeah, it's so important in this aspect of what you just said, I'm gonna call layers, consciously building those layers, and you can't get one without the other, it's like you can't build a wall without having a foundation, as that might be, but starting with the foundation and everything, builds off of these other layers that are gonna happen, you can't hang drapes until you put in the windows...

0:53:33.9 Becky Parker Geist: Right, yeah. Great. Well, we'll have to schedule a second set... At least one more. At least one, I'm sure that there will be more than that 'cause this is absolutely delightful.

0:53:46.2 Joshua Townshend: I'm sure there's gonna be tons of questions that are gonna be coming in from your listeners, and maybe we can make sure to answer those 'cause I really wanna make a priority that the things that are coming up in production for people are being addressed because it's really easy to sit here and say, Well, I'm an artist, not a technician, but at a certain point, there are certain technical things that has to be hit... Right, you know, right. So, you know. Balance.

0:54:12.7 Becky Parker Geist: Great. Well, for our listeners, again, this is Joshua Townsend, you can learn more at his website, Joshua Townsend dot com, and I wanna spell that for you, that's Joshua. And then Townsend, T-O-W-N-S-H-E-N-D, Townsend dot com. Joshua, thank you so much for spending this time with me. This has been a blast.

0:54:38.5 Joshua Townshend: Pure delight. Thank you. A-

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