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2023-09-27 Pit Stop with Jorjeana Marie.mp3

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DURATION

1h 3m 22s

5 SPEAKERS

Karen Commins

Anne Flosnik

Jorjeana Marie

Speaker4

Speaker5

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:03] Karen Commins

So it is now the top of the hour. And I want to welcome everyone to Pit Stop. It's your fortnightly mid-week rest area to refuel your drive. I'm Karen Commins. I'm an audiobook narrator, and I'm the chief cartographer for NarratorsRoadmap.com. And I'm your host for Pit Stop. With me in the copilot seat is my lovely friend and award winning audiobook narrator Anne Flosnik, who hosts the Narrator Uplift show here on Clubhouse. How are you this afternoon, Anne?

[00:00:32] Anne Flosnik

Great. Happy to be here.

[00:00:34] Karen Commins

Well, I'm glad you're here. Every other Wednesday audiobook narrators who have vocations beyond narration pull into Pit Stop. They're sure to inspire you to follow all of your interests and use your talents and gifts. I want to let you know the conversation is being recorded so you'll be able to relisten or catch parts you missed. Feel free to comment in the chat and please raise your hand in the app if you want to be part of the conversation because we would love to talk with you. So thanks so much for everybody to join us this afternoon. I'm very excited to welcome Jorjeana Marie to Pit Stop. Jorjeana has narrated over 400 audiobooks. She's won an Audie and a SOVAS Award, and she's earned over a dozen Earphones Awards for her audiobook performances. Jorjeana is also the Los Angeles Times bestselling author of Improv for Writers, and she's a staff writer on the Emmy nominated tab Time with Tabitha Brown. She's voiced TV shows on Nickelodeon and PBS, and she is the magical rabbit Trikini on Disney's Mickey Mouse Funhouse and Mickey Mouse and the Roadster Racers. And of course, she also wrote for both shows. So welcome to Pit Stop, Jorjeana! I'm so thrilled you're here!

[00:01:52] Jorjeana Marie

Thank you so much. I am, too. This is a total pleasure. Thank you. I love talking about all the things that we're going to talk about. I'm excited.

[00:02:02] Karen Commins

Well, and you. You seem like such a renaissance woman because you have your fingers in so many pies and are spinning so many plates. And so we're going to dive in and figure out how you make all of this magic happen. You know, I saw on your LinkedIn profile that you had gone to school in dramatic writing. So what were you thinking of doing and how did you make your way into audiobooks?

[00:02:30] Jorjeana Marie

I had tried to break into audiobooks when I moved to New York City and I moved there when I was a teenager, really just had just turned 19. But I was not just I was not a savvy 19. I was a grew up, very rural and isolated and and just was like had had had my bags packed for New York City since I'd had a role in Annie when I was in high school. And and that that performance really changed the trajectory of my life because I got a lot of laughs. And it was a really big like high for a kid. Um, and before that I had just planned to be a writer. I was, I had planned to, you know, write novels and, and then that happened and I was like, Uh oh. And so from that moment, I think, like, I split into the, you know, that person who wants to do a lot of different things and have managed to, you know, find a way to, to, to get to do that. I went to NYU and studied playwriting, dramatic writing, um, because when I was in New York and trying to break into audiobooks and it didn't work like it couldn't I didn't try very hard but didn't happen easily.

[00:03:50] Jorjeana Marie

You know when you think about like all of us now we're so a lot of us are really savvy and you know do marketing and hire marketers. But like when I started, it was just sort of like, you knock on this door and they're kind of like, nobody's in by what are you doing here? Go away. Um, and it's called pounding the pavement. And that's what you did when you moved to New York because you went and introduced yourself to casting directors and, and different places. And I just couldn't get cast. I was very unusual, I think, and just and I think I still am kind of an oddball. And so I started writing my own material and I still do that. I still. So that part of it came from wanting to create the roles that I wasn't getting cast in. And part of it came from this was always who I was meant to be, since I could hold a pen when I was like three, a pencil, you know, and scribble. Um, so, yeah.

[00:04:45] Karen Commins

Well. And when were you in the Upright Citizens Brigade?

[00:04:49] Jorjeana Marie

So I studied in New York in the at UCB at the Upright Citizens Brigade, and then I also studied in Los Angeles. I studied improv in New York, and then I studied sketch in LA. And then I started getting on teams and performing at IO West, which is there's IO in Chicago and then there was IO West in, in Los Angeles. And I was about to actually teach there after my book came out. And the I was set to teach a program based on my book. And, and unfortunately the school closed and that started happening with a lot of the programs. The last few years have been really hard for theater companies. And and it's a shame because I think now more than ever, ever in such a long time, we really need to laugh. So it I loved being a part of the and still being a part of the improv and theater community no matter where I am. I was just in Paris and I went to, you know, English speaking improv troupe and, you know, got to know the people there. And the same when I lived in Rome, it was like, where are my English speaking improv people and theater people, because they're kind of all the same. Like we're we're theater artists and a lot of great audiobook narrators are also. I found you probably have found too. There's a lot of crossover with theater people. And and finally, improv is getting some recognition as being actually, you know, theatrical. There was a nice article that came out about a great company in Los Angeles. Um, and they, they do improvised long form like an entire Tennessee Williams play improvised and I've done some of that stuff too. And that is really flying by the seat of your pants because you might like it too, because you're directing and you're writing and you're acting and it's all in the moment based on an audience suggestion.

[00:06:49] Karen Commins

Uh, if you ever saw me on a Sunday trying to say the intro for one of my harp videos, you'd know that improv is not my strong suit. So I probably wouldn't like it. It would probably be very stressful. But Rebecca Lee wrote in the chat. Yay! When did you start there?

[00:07:10] Jorjeana Marie

Um, I was there. I started there. Gosh. Um, they let me kind of come in to the program. I studied there and perform there and they let me kind of come in there. One of the few schools that wasn't like you. You have all this improv training. You have to start over with our level one, which I did a ton of tons of school. I studied at lots of these different places and learned lots of different styles, always to benefit me as a creative person, but also as a teacher taking this game, that game. But let me come in and think, jump in, jump into their fourth level. Um, and that was, I think that was 2012, I think. And then they just started, you know, I started doing shows there, a lot of sketch stuff which, you know, it's improv theater, but they, they go hand in hand. So I started doing sketch stuff and then I wrote myself a solo sketch show, a one woman show with all, with sketch characters that I'd been waiting my whole I'd been trying to figure out for years and years how to do my own one person show with ridiculous characters. You know, I'd done several one woman shows. Even while I was studying at NYU. I'd written some solo shows, but they were more dramatic and wanted to do something really silly, and I figured out how to do it, which was now there was the invention of, you know, media that you could play these clips. And that's which sounds absurd to anybody who's young. Now, I'd be like, Of course you could play a clip while you were performing.

[00:08:44] Jorjeana Marie

But when I started, it was like mixed media. They called. It wasn't really a thing, and it only sort of cutting edge theaters were doing mixed media. And so it was a mixed media show. I did had animation puppets, and then I had sketch characters that I had shot and filmed, and I played those while I ran quickly back in the dressing room and put on my wig and did all my quick changes myself because I worked in theater doing quick changes on Broadway. So I knew how to set the whole thing up. I mean, I dressed Harry Hamlet, I did all this stuff at the roundabout and dressed all these great performers, and I'd just meet with them and be like, We're going to This is like a dance, okay? This is how we're going to choreograph it. We'll have, you know, 22 seconds to do this move. We'll have 10s to do this move. We'll have two minutes for this. And so I was able to do it myself and had all of my wigs and costumes lined up and, you know, we sold out. And it was probably one of it was one of my favorite performances I've ever done as far as like other people, you know, audiobooks aside, it was maybe of everything I've ever done because that's, that's the important thing here is for all of us to find that thing that lights us up and find a way to bring it into the world. And if we can share it with people because there's just nothing like it, it's so joyful.

[00:10:03] Karen Commins

It seems like, though, a lot of the people we've talked with and certainly the way I've gone is things have been more sequential where with you it seems like these things are all happening, happening concurrently. So, I mean, so when was the first audiobook? And then in relation to that, when did you write your book?

[00:10:25] Jorjeana Marie

So my first audio book was one that I found on at the time. I remember I was trying to transition from teaching improv full time and thought if I just throw everything into voice, I really believed that I could do it with voiceover, that I could sustain myself and make a living as an actor. Because, you know, a lot of us, when we start out, that's all we want is just like just to make a living, you know? And, and I thought maybe I can transition from teaching to, to, to voice. And so I tried all kinds of different things. And one of those was to sign up at the time on voice one, two, three, which is very different now. It's very different. The whole thing is very different. But I got my first audiobook on there and that I was so suited for it. I played, I voiced like, um, I voiced like 8 or 10 kids. It was a kind of a thriller. And the, the kids, um, the kids like sort of it's like, did they, did they kill their teacher kind of thing? Um, but the thing was, I had to separate all these kids and I had no problem doing that, partly because I've been teaching kids so long, but also like I'm a character, you know, character. Character is king for me.

[00:11:35] Jorjeana Marie

It's like and queen like, it's everything. Um, so I did that, and then I took that book that, um, it did on, you know, this sort of specs, this not a spec, but I got hired to do, and then I started, I created, you know, an email and started sending it to publishers. And, um, a friend of mine, Clay Griffith, helped me out. He was, he had been very successful and we were talking about it and I said, I want to try again to break into audiobooks, but I want to be really methodical about it. I want to really, really attempt not just like knock on a door. And if they don't welcome me, walk away Like persistence is so important in these things that we want to do because so often there'll be somebody will be like, Well, the is not available, or they'll be like, Well, you're not the right this or your nose is too big. And you're like, I'm narrating a book. What does my nose have to do with anything? Um, and yet you'll get these ridiculous things and, and people will say different things. They'll, I've heard had that with my own stuff like her boy voices are I don't like them and her boy voices, they're spot on. And it's just like, well you can't please everybody.

[00:12:43] Jorjeana Marie

So, um, yeah, so the point of that was I had that one clip that I did that I thought showcased me pretty well. And I was able to say, you know, I've done a professional audio book, and then Brilliance gave me my my first book, another thriller. And then I just kind of kept taking those opportunities that had been given to me and and started sharing them more and more. And then I went really big turning Point was going to AIPAC at Kaleo's suggestion. And so when I went to AIPAC, I got to it was much smaller than than it was last this past year. And it was so many people. And I was thinking about that first year that I went. But that kind of face to face time in any industry with anything that you want to do, I think is a key is a thing that I've sort of figured out. So yes, in in a year I'll go to AIPAC, but then I'll also go to the market for children's television, where I'll meet people who might want to hire me as a screenwriter for that. And so it's that face to face time. They sort of see that I'm like friendly and then also know that I'm following up and I'm professional and then I have a resume.

[00:13:53] Jorjeana Marie

And so those things kind of combined help me to keep those multiple plates spinning. But it has been handy, like we just ended the historic writer's strike and hopefully the Sag-aftra strike will be we'll get a contract that we're happy with as well. Um, but it has just been like, I'm so grateful to that just right now that I've been able to work in audiobooks because, um, and writing for animation. So those were areas that weren't affected, but like writing for TV, like I couldn't do any of that. And it's like we try so hard to get these opportunities and then sometimes something happens beyond our control and they just go away or or worse, we get recast. It happened to me on a big audiobook. I couldn't believe it. Um, but I was like, You know what? It wasn't mine. It would have been nice to do because there was an all star cast involved, but it was the first time I'd been replaced. And, you know, it stings. But then you go, Huh? I still have done so many wonderful things that I've found joy in, and those were my things. So when I do a book like The Assistants by Camille Perry or The Happy Life of Isidora Bentley, it's like these kinds of books and, you know, the books I've done with Nina LaCour.

[00:15:09] Jorjeana Marie

I mean, there's so many wonderful books that have changed my life that those those I was, they were meant for me. I was meant to have them. So there's no there's no amount of plate spinning that can bring. Everything to us at all times. I think it is about finding in the moment, like what's bringing us happiness. And if it's not shifting. And that's kind of what happens for me is like, okay, nobody's responding to my emails about like wanting to continue work or, you know, I haven't heard from anybody or I got, you know, got fired off of a show. And it's like, that happens and it happens at every level. It happens to Julianne Moore, it happens to us. So I think it is good to have different things, but only because they keep us happy and lively. Not just to stay busy because it's really not worth it. If you're like a one track mind person, you're like, Nope, I just love narration. That's what I want to do. But if you are like me where somebody sets a plate in front of you and you're like, I want to try everything on there, I'm not just going to have the curry, like I've got to have the four, I've got to have the spring rolls, I've got to have everything.

[00:16:19] Karen Commins

Some people would say that's greedy, but I don't see it that way when it comes to your career, because why shouldn't you sample and have all the things that you want and that you're good at and that bring you joy?

[00:16:33] Jorjeana Marie

Well, thank you. Also, like, I'm not taking full portions of the FA. I'm not taking full portions to make up my taste. You know, I'm not piling my plate with a bucket of one type of food, which actually isn't great for us because we should be trying lots of different things. I'm I'm out there, like, checking this out and seeing seeing if I like this. Um, I did want to tell you, Karen, that I, um, because we were talking about what we were going to talk about today, and I had done a coaching with a woman I'd met this, this woman to, to, you know, see if I wanted to coach with her. And she knew that I do all these different things. And I had really big goals for all of them, like publishing, um, big roles in film, like lots of big stuff that I wanted to accomplish, you know, comedy, standup, special, all these things. And she said, you got to pick one. So even as we started today, I still like it is important to like, choose that one thing in the moment that you're focusing on because you can't do all the things at one time. They still do end up being sequential. It just doesn't look like it to the outside, especially when you work in animation. So I wrote on I wrote on a show called The Dewdrop Diaries two years ago, and it just dropped the whole series on Netflix in July. And, um.

[00:18:01] Karen Commins

Congratulations!

[00:18:03] Jorjeana Marie

Oh, thank you. And so I'm still behind. And even sharing like, this is out there. And this is why I need support because I don't I don't get to all of those things without someone helping me toot the horn because it doesn't come natural to spend a lot of time being like, Hey, look at this awesome thing. I'd rather share a photo of like the Leaning Tower of Pisa with a puppet sticking out from behind it and be like, Look what I made today. Um, then, you know, but it's part of the job to help promote these projects because I know the show creator. I want to. I love what he's done. I want to support that and the execs. And we all made this incredible thing with Dreamworks and Netflix and same thing with these audiobooks. You know, as a writer, you realize it takes years to do these projects. And when it comes out, any little bit of support that we can give, even if we don't have a huge, massive following on social media and sharing and just telling people like I loved working on this and something authentic about it is really, really helpful. But again, back to the point about like doing all these all these different things, um, I really have to like schedule and try to just do like the one thing in a day, you know, it gets overwhelming. The plates?

[00:19:21] Karen Commins

Yeah. There's a coach named Kristine Oller Who. Oh, yeah. And, well, she's. She's kind of shifted her focus now from or at least it seems to me, from creative types to caregivers. And but when she was doing all her teaching for creative types, she had something called Feed Your Focus. And it goes along with what you're just saying. It's like if you think of each thing that you like narration, writing, acting, being a puppeteer, being a stand up comic, as each of these things, being a flower pot that you have to, you know, we always talk about planting seeds and nurturing the garden. You know, the garden analogy is such a well used one for a good reason. And she was talking about like, you have to kind of focus on the one flower pot right now that you're going to try to make bloom you know, because if you keep scattering across all of them, none of them will get the attention they need or allow you to build momentum. And I think that's really the thing is the momentum to go forward to the next thing.

[00:20:40] Jorjeana Marie

You're right. You're right. Because you do want to take when you get a little like it's like when the audiobook publisher started to respond and giving me casting me, then all the attention goes on that everything is directed towards that to do a superb job, to do the best I can with everything that I have to, you know, to to work with somebody, to study the material, to do all of those different things. Same thing when it's writing on a script, I'm suddenly writing on a show with fairies. I'm buying every fairy book I can find from all kinds of different cultures, reading as much as I can, filling myself up with the history of fairies so that I can sit down and it's all as much as I can stuff inside is there to just sort of ruminate and then let the creativity kind of come out of that. I studied with I worked with Christine, I did some therapy group therapy things with her. And and I was part of her masterminds with lots of other creatives. So I'm so glad. I'm so glad that you mentioned her because she was she was an instrumental for me. I mean, there were so many there's so many people that I worked with, but I definitely did the most, I think the most things with with her and yeah, just just love her. Just such a supportive person. I did work with somebody who I think did like a few things with her and she had it. Christine's got the flower pots analogy that you were mentioning, which I love, and this other woman had. I'm looking at a stove right now as I tell you this. She said, You only get four burners. Your career, your your life is the stove and you only get four. All the stuff like. Yeah. Mean some people in a mansion can get a stove with like eight burners on them and.

[00:22:22] Karen Commins

Get multiple kitchens with multiple strokes.

[00:22:25] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah, exactly. But we're talking about like, you know, an existence here. And she was real strict about it. She said, pick four. And I was like, But I want to do this. And she's like, Well, does that fit in a burner? No. And then she said, Your voice over career is always going to be a burner. So just realize that and leave it on there, like as long as you want it to be. But it is its own burner. So that's, that's been a burner since I don't, you know, over ten years.

[00:22:49] Karen Commins

It's like do you get an oven in this analogy, I mean.

[00:22:52] Jorjeana Marie

You know that's a good one.

[00:22:54] Karen Commins

Something could be baking away while the burners are going.

[00:22:57] Jorjeana Marie

Yes yes probably mental health is the oven. Um and .

[00:23:04] Karen Commins

Maybe that's a bad analogy!

[00:23:08] Jorjeana Marie

Just keeping it warm it's on warm as all.

[00:23:11] Karen Commins

I mean because I don't want you know sticking your head in the oven to come.

[00:23:15] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah thought that's you.

[00:23:16] Jorjeana Marie

Know not that not that at all. No but I like that because it reined in all the the many different things and it still continues to rein me in about. Okay you know, screenwriting and book writing go together. That's one live performance that's another like standup theater. And so I've broken those down in that way. Voiceover is one. And then, you know, it shifts over the years, but just sort of realized they're all kind of the same thing. To me, it's all like creating and performing really fun, a certain tone of, of character. For me, that's, that's the, that's what I focus on is kind of uplifting, fun, upbeat, silly. In any of those areas. So if I'm going to be going after because we get work that's just offered to us and we can take that and we are happy to do that and yes, please. But then when we're like trying to seek something out and we can tell somebody like, hey, this is something like recently I've been getting to do a lot of romantic comedies like books, you know, the they call them Sweet Romance. And I just have loved it because I love rom com movies. And so my day is like filled with this joyful experience. And that started to come about because I started to say, like, I've loved doing ya for so many years.

[00:24:36] Jorjeana Marie

It's been the main most of those books that are mentioned. Were ya or you know, the amount of books were ya? And you can kind of shift into a different area. But I wanted to say I talked with this one coach before when we were deciding to work together and she knew I had all these things that I wanted to do. Like the listeners out there have lots of things that they want to do and goals and because that's that's the way we're built, many of us. She said, okay, take take all these projects, put them in a house. You know, your your books for children, your, you know, imagining some of the listeners they might have a theater solo show they want to do or a screenplay that they want to write or a festival they want to start or who knows, you know, writes that they want to get for something. Um, so you put all of that in this like, house and then there's a fire and you can only grab one. One. What are you going to grab? And it was so like split seconds. Everybody just think of that thing. It's the only one you can grab.

[00:25:44] Karen Commins

And it may be the one closest to the door.

[00:25:47] Jorjeana Marie

It may be. It may be. It may not be your favorite thing.

[00:25:51] Jorjeana Marie

And as a metaphor, too, like it could be the thing that's ready. I was shocked at the the my split answer. And I think it was years ago. And think about it still now and I know it's still the thing that I would I would still grab. Um and so I've been able to like really focus on. That aspect and know that that's kind of even though I do these other things that was put on the front burner.

[00:26:20] Karen Commins

So I really like that analogy. It's such a great new perspective of ways to think about it because I think we all have more things we want to do and. I mean, that's why I'm doing Pit Stop is because I want to find out how do people manage to do so many things and, you know, inspire everybody to be all they can be and want to be. You know, you mentioned you need help, like marketing stuff. Do you have help? Do you have anybody working with you?

[00:26:57] Jorjeana Marie

Yes, I, I had I did.

[00:27:00] Jorjeana Marie

I.

[00:27:01] Jorjeana Marie

Had the Hannah Roberts my she was my like everything for social media. And she moved on to take a full time job. And I loved working with her. I still am friends with her. I we just, you know, it's like I think it's really important to. You don't just find anybody, you know, you have to find somebody who understands the industry that you're in and also gets. Because she was right. She was helping me write stuff. I would approve things, but she was helping find some of the tags for people because at a certain point there was so much there was like the plates were there were several plates in the air spinning that I wasn't, you know, it was just happening and I needed help, like what we were talking about. We have a responsibility. I think we have a responsibility to as much as we can share projects. And I definitely have been a person that's fallen behind on that. And there are many people out there in our audio book community that are way better at that. But I do I do what I can in the moment and try not to be hard on myself about it. And and I did realize that without our Hannah, without our person, um, for some of us, some of, some people revel in it and like really can get in there and they're, they're, they know the time they want to post during the day. And I'm like, I need to protect my writing time and I need time to record. Like the writing time is really sacred. It's not time that I can squirrel away.

[00:28:30] Jorjeana Marie

I've done things where I write ten minutes a day and that's been life changing. It's like anything you want to do, do it for 90 days, ten minutes a day and you'll see how it's your life will change because I've done that. But now I'm at a point where, no, I need I want to do 1500 words a day. I want to do I need a couple of hours in the morning to meet writing deadlines that that kind of work. I feel like I could narrate at any time during the day because I can just turn that on. But the writing, the writing stuff, I can do that. But the most joyful stuff is that protected sacred time where there's no interruptions, everything's turned off. And so when you have blocks of time like that, I really think you need support and help. So I have I was working with Hannah and I'm looking for somebody new to help me with those things because as I realized, I haven't posted since I posted about the strike and that felt like really important, but I hadn't posted since I was in the UK earlier this summer. And I also work with a publicist and she's super savvy, um, and helps me get all kinds of things done. Melanie Vesey She does Promotional rescue is her company and if and if she's sort of like a secret weapon. So I hope a million people don't hear this and take all her time. But I also want to shout her out because she's a tremendous person and she's really helped me.

[00:29:56] Jorjeana Marie

She's not just done publicity stuff, she's done help me with my website. She redid my website and, um, you know, talking about algorithms and when to post. And she stays on the edge of what's happening and how the apps are changing. And so having a specialist like that in your corner is good. And then having somebody that, um, that you know, can help with. Some of the like. Hannah helped me with all kinds of things. Um, yeah. Help is really, really important. And I realized that I needed help when I saw how other audiobook narrators were sharing and supporting the authors and the books that they were doing, and I was like, Huh, I really need to be more generous with supporting the projects and the people that I've been so proud to be a part of, but I don't know exactly how to do it. And so I just started. It's very funny because you get asked in in voiceover and audiobooks, a lot of people, just strangers, will be like, How do you get into that? And then people will come to you and people will refer you, get referred to you, and all these people are like, How do I get into audiobooks? How do I get into voiceover? And so I got I got that a ton. And one time, you know, I got that and I always tell people the same thing and then they don't do it. And so then I'm like, Well, I'm off the hook because I gave you one thing to do and you didn't do it.

[00:31:22] Karen Commins

I hope the one thing for audiobook narration, being self serving promotion here, is to tell them to go to NarratorsRoadmap.com.

[00:31:27] Jorjeana Marie

Yes, yes, that's true. Because everything is there. It's like you provide so much information. Yes, that is true. Um, I agree.

[00:31:42] Karen Commins

Well, I mean I do link to so many other narrators who've written great things. I mean, it's mean, it's not just my stuff. It's a conglomeration of things that are worth reading from the whole community.

[00:31:56] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah. And that's like, that's the time put in is to learn about how it works and all of that and. And that. And that's what, that's what Hannah did actually, is she started she was the first person that I'd worked with who actually went and did what I suggested, you know, trying scripts and recording things. And she was like, what about this? And I was like, You did it. And then, yeah, I mean, that's the shock is that they actually do what you know. Yeah. Because before I started the site, I, you know, I got those inquiries too and.

[00:32:27] Karen Commins

They would either want me to hold their hand all the way through it or, you know, they they just would spend my time answering this question and they couldn't even be bothered to say thanks. So. I think we've all been in that position. Anne's been in audiobook narration over 20 years. I'm sure you've had hundreds of those kinds of things, haven't you, Anne?

[00:32:48] Anne Flosnik

Yes, and it was a lot. It took a lot more time to deal with until you came along with your Roadmap because now we all have an easy out.

[00:33:01] Karen Commins

Well, and you know, the virtual assistant thing is something we've we on Anne and I separately but also on this show we've talked with various people and I don't want to speak for you, Anne, but I think I'm interested to know how you find a good virtual assistant. And I mean, it's hard to trust somebody is what I would think because I would think they would want to use all my contacts and promote themselves somehow.

[00:33:35] Jorjeana Marie

I'll jump in and say that I, I found a graphics person on on Upwork and you can see the, the work that they've done in the past and their reviews and things like that. And so you can build trust over time by small projects, by small projects like taking my book cover. I still have so much I want to do with my book. Um, you know, I want to do journals and I want to do bookmarks to hand out it when I go to book conferences and, and teach and things like that. And so, um, just having somebody make those when, because it's like, oh, sure, I have the, I have the designs from Penguin Random House like, but how do I turn that into this other format or you know, and so, um, for certain projects like that now I've also done my own business cards on Mu, but I have, you know, my partner is a professional illustrator, so the artworks is stands on its own is like gorgeous.

[00:34:40] Karen Commins

They're handy.

[00:34:40] Jorjeana Marie

Yes, gorgeous animation illustration work. And those are my business cards. I'm just picking a font. So it's also like taking take what you already have. If it's like hiring a virtual assistant feels a little far away. It's like there might be somebody right near you that has a skill. Like during the during this the Writers Guild strike, there was a list that was created for, you know, all these people. We were not just writers that have been out of work. As we know, it's like everybody for 150, 48 days, it's like no work for a props person, for a makeup person. And so they started just sharing those. So there's makeup people out there and it's like, if you need something for your new one woman show, like, you know, there are people out there that can that can do that that are down the street. Um, so you can go on places like Upwork and you can also put the feelers out. That's like having a community like what Karen's creating and has created and what we have in the audio book community mean. As much as I love narrating audiobooks, one of the reasons I continued to want to be a part of this community is it's just gorgeous.

[00:35:53] Jorjeana Marie

People like there's a lot of really, really kind people. And um, and the very first audio book party I went to, I was just floored by how I'd been in Hollywood in the standup and film world. And, you know, you'd be talking to somebody and they're, they're looking over their shoulder to see, you know, who walked in the room behind you. But in the audio book world, you can be talking about like the flaps on your truck and people will be like, yeah, yeah, here you you know what? You could do a different design and you're like, You're having this actual conversation because. You know, it's easygoing even if it's you know, it doesn't have to be like, what can you do for me? Even though we know there's a fair amount of that, especially when you have 20 years narrating experience like Anne and Karen, you know everything that you've done. Um, people can want to kind of come in, but think about like writing, you know, screenplays. You have to send them out in the world. Yeah, somebody could take your idea, but. It just doesn't it doesn't actually happen that often. I'm not going to say it never happens, but.

[00:37:05] Karen Commins

Well, it's comforting to realize that even such a cutthroat or what is perceived as a cutthroat industry. Doesn't have the kind of rampant thievery I would think would be occurring all the time.

[00:37:22] Jorjeana Marie

No, because, you know, and.

[00:37:24] Karen Commins

I'm not very trustful person. It's just guess you know what you see on TV and social media, you would think that's what's happening.

[00:37:32] Jorjeana Marie

Plus, you can do you can work with a virtual assistant and build up that trust. And they don't have to have access to all of your your contacts. Like it's like you choose what you want them to be doing. Um, and because that's kind of how it's like I provide the files, this is what I'm looking for. This is the rate that we're talking about, and then we kind of go from there. I've tried to do virtual assistants a couple of times and I've even found good people, but it always just feels so far away. There was nothing like working with Hannah, who I, you know, could get together with and, you know, take her out to lunch and then, you know, do some planning, do a strategy session afterwards, and then have a list of tasks to accomplish. And she kept the hours and then just paid, you know, Um, and so to me, that was kind of the ideal scenario. It's like there's a person that you love, that you trust, that you've built a relationship over the years and, um, and they're supporting you and asking the questions and they're, if they don't know the industry inside and out, they're, they're learning it too. Because that's the other thing is like. I've been in acting programs for a long time and, you know, with these directors and teachers and things like that.

[00:38:52] Jorjeana Marie

And they'd always just they'd always like, okay, Gary Austin, he was going to write the foreword for my book. He created The Groundlings and just an extraordinary teacher, my first improv teacher. Um, when you, when you teach, you have all these students around you all the time, so you just end up like the one who wants a break on their classes or the one who seems like they'd be a good assistant. You just kind of grab them. It's like, Hey you, do you want to learn a little extra? We'll pay you such and such. And usually they're like all about it because they just want to learn. And that's that's the other aspect. It's like when an has 20 years of narration experience, there are people who would want to learn, who are not rabid for to take over but are like, Oh, you're showing me the ropes and I'm helping support you. And that that feels like such a great give and take because it's not just a transactional. I'm paying you such and such amount an hour. It's a we're, we're in this together and and you can bet when an opportunity comes up that you can help each other. You're you're doing that to.

[00:39:56] Anne Flosnik

It's interesting.

[00:39:57] Jorjeana Marie

Paid interns.

[00:39:59] Anne Flosnik

Right? Right.

[00:40:00] Jorjeana Marie

Because you're a publishing company. You know, it's like you actually have and I mean, we're all like recording things on the side and working for other publishers, but no matter what, I mean, we're a studio. We're an actual studio. Um, the schools get credit, so you can do unpaid interns and you can do paid interns. The unpaid interns, they get paid because they get credit from their school. So you can go to the local school and be like, Who here wants to intern at a, you know, solo operated recording studio? And the hands go in the air like, Oh.

[00:40:38] Karen Commins

Yeah, that's an interesting idea. I do know of one voice talent who seemed to regularly have student interns working with her, but I don't. I never talked with her. I don't know what it would take to actually set up that program with the college, because I'm sure you'd have to be having them do some significant things in order for the college to give them credit.

[00:41:03] Jorjeana Marie

Would they have certain tasks to do? My my one of my screenwriting partners, they ran a music music supervisor.com whole company. And they were constantly bringing in interns, people who wanted to break in because, like, if you're a musician, one of the few ways you can really make money is getting your songs placed and, you know, music publishing and and so people just really wanted to, to to intern. So there were constantly so I think once you have it set up, you know, students are rolling through college and it's not going to be forever. But you have them for a certain time and you kind of have a system and then the next intern comes in. I mean, that's at least what I saw them do. I haven't done that yet, but that is something that because we have, um, you know, a boutique film production studio, it's like we hire, you know, artists, make up artists and hire. We hire sound people and we hire you know, just like for film production, we hire these people. But we've talked about 1 or 2 positions just being an intern who wants to be on set, then they can put it on their resume. We can teach them along the way like great ways to be on set. They maybe have never been on set before and it's their first opportunity. And so there is a real there's a real value in both directions.

[00:42:29] Karen Commins

That's definitely something to consider, and I want to remind everybody, you can raise your hand. You can put something in the chat if you want to speak with Jorjeana. I have what I call the Pit Stop Hot Seat. It's the totally unexpected question. And you're a person of so many talents and gifts. I'm going to ask you my favorite question, and that is, what is your most trivial, useless or flat out counterproductive superpower?

[00:43:00] Jorjeana Marie

Oh.

[00:43:02] Jorjeana Marie

A my first my first thought. It's like improv, first thought, improv poetry, first thought. Best thought. Um, my first thought was like, just swinging. Just swinging in a hammock or on a swing.

[00:43:19] Karen Commins

And what makes you great at that?

[00:43:21] Jorjeana Marie

I, I'm. I'm really good because I can go really high if I want to, and I can just sort of laze if I need to.

[00:43:29] Karen Commins

Very good.

[00:43:33] Anne Flosnik

Love it.

[00:43:34] Karen Commins

Of course. Now you've got us all looking around like, Hey, where's the hammock? I could get in.

[00:43:38] Jorjeana Marie

You know, part of what that answer is, too, is I've done a lot of, like, just work on. Like myself in terms of the past few years. And I think the reason like I've got this career that has a lot of pieces to it that make me really happy is I've spent a lot of time examining what I loved as a child, and I loved swinging. I could never get to the swing set at recess. It was always the other kids who ran faster and I had asthma. So by the time I got out there, there was no swing left and recess was over and I was just miserable about it. But there was a swing at the park and so I could swing there to my heart's content. And so I think it comes from that. And I think a lot of the things that I work on, it's like I was doing puppet shows when I was a kid. I was doing Silly Voices when I was a kid and I was writing when I was a kid. And I continue, not continue because I got really far away from those things. But I do those things now and I feel like if each of us can find that thing when we were a kid that lit us up, that made us giggle and it's so different for everyone. Like some babies like to scratch at different touch, different textures, and it makes them really happy to feel like corduroy versus denim versus cotton versus stone. Um, and so that can end up becoming like a thing that is their life's work. Like I knew somebody who said she knew her son was going to be an archeologist because even when he was a baby, he just loved digging in the dirt with a spoon. And it's like, wow.

[00:45:19] Karen Commins

I have a friend who, when her child was a baby, she loved lights and I said, Oh, she's going to be a lighting designer. Well, now the kid is nine and she wants to be a YouTube influencer. And so maybe, maybe it wasn't the light, you know, in terms of the design of the light, but she wanted the light shining on her.

[00:45:41] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah, Yeah.

[00:45:42] Karen Commins

And of course, I'm also, you know, nine and you want to be a YouTube influencer.

[00:45:47] Jorjeana Marie

I mean, my nephews,

[00:45:48] Karen Commins

Things have really changed.

[00:45:50] Jorjeana Marie

Oh, yeah. My nephew is when he was five, wanted to start, they started their own channel. It's like that is the that is the thing now. Like all the all the media is on there and that's where kids go. Um tab time you know is a YouTube premium show that we did and there are all these other great shows on there but there are some parents who are just the kids are in front of YouTube and that is and that's all they want to watch. They want to explore stuff on there. You just have to be really careful with parental controls on that, obviously.

[00:46:27] Anne Flosnik

Back to what you said, though, about find the one thing that lights you up as a kid and kind of pursue that find, make that happen. This is kind of one of the first conversations that you and I had, Karen, is it sparking any memory? Tingles? Barbara Sher's book, isn't it?

[00:46:46] Karen Commins

Yes, yes, yes.

[00:46:48] Anne Flosnik

So yeah it's just the it did it gives me chills to think about that.

[00:46:53] Karen Commins

That because that was one of her questions.

[00:46:55] Anne Flosnik

Yes, yes. Uh huh. Yeah. And that's something that you're highlighting. Jorjeana And so it's just it's a unifying thing, even though you don't know it, but it actually does unify us all three together.

[00:47:09] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah, I'd love to hear, you know, each of you. Any. Anybody what? What they love to do. And they were a kid.

[00:47:18] Karen Commins

I don't remember the rest of that discussion. So was that true for you that something you did as a child?

[00:47:25] Anne Flosnik

Oh, lots of things. Lots of things. I mean.

[00:47:26] Anne Flosnik

There's so many things I could mention, but.

[00:47:28] Karen Commins

Yeah. Tell me. Tell me more.

[00:47:29] Anne Flosnik

Well, I was a swinger, too, on this.

[00:47:32] Karen Commins

Be careful where you say that.

[00:47:36] Anne Flosnik

I. You know, did my swinging and I would dream my dreams. And, you know, I was always wanted to be a singer or some kind of a performer, you know, and married the handsome prince and all the, you know, all those things. But that's the basis of it. It's performance was there on the swing for me.

[00:47:55] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah, that's great. And you remember it really clearly right?

[00:48:00] Anne Flosnik

Oh, yes. Yes. All my childhood dreams. Well, not all of them, I don't suppose. But many of them, because I don't know that I've ever grown up and. Well, that's good. I mean, that's a gift that I haven't. Well, yes, of course I've grown up. But that I hope that that childlike part of me is still very much alive. I do everything I can to nurture that and keep it going. Keep it alive? Yeah.

[00:48:28] Jorjeana Marie

That's why I dress like a five year old most days.

[00:48:31] Anne Flosnik

Oh.

[00:48:33] Anne Flosnik

And what is your five year old look like?

[00:48:35] Karen Commins

Yeah.

[00:48:36] Jorjeana Marie

Lots of patterns. Lots of color, lots of glitter.

[00:48:41] Anne Flosnik

Love it.

[00:48:42] Karen Commins

Do your shoes match?

[00:48:43] Jorjeana Marie

What's that?

[00:48:44] Karen Commins

Do your shoes match?

[00:48:46] Jorjeana Marie

Oh, they're like the same style of shoe, but one of each different color.

[00:48:50] Karen Commins

Oh, okay, good.

[00:48:56] Jorjeana Marie

What about you, Karen.

[00:48:57] Karen Commins

Oh, no, no. Well, not intentionally. I should say it that way. I just, you know, I. Wanted so long to be able to work as a creative person and not as an employee. And one of the benefits of working as a creative person on my own is that I can wear what I want, where as an employee, you have a dress code. I mean, not that I, you know, violated the dress code or anything, but I remember one time I was walking into the building with -- I worked in the office of the attorneys, although I was in IT -- And I was walking in one with one of the attorneys and I said, my husband, who was a software engineer, could wear shorts to work. And the attorney was just horrified. And he said, Karen, where would you draw the line? And I said about mid-thigh! Needless to say, I did not get to wear shorts to work. So yes, every day now I wear shorts to work unless it's winter. And then I wear jeans. But it's. That's part of having a creative life is that's part of doing what I want, is being able to wear what I want.

[00:50:20] Jorjeana Marie

Yes. And that is the point about that's for me, like all the plates spinning is because, you know, we're creative. We're actors. We we, we some of many of us write. So we build worlds, you know? That's why it's like this has been a historic strike. Like there's without the writers and the actors. What do you think we're going to be watching all day long? Like, we're the ones who come up with all this stuff and even some of the most incredible lines and performances in history. So many of them were improvised in the moment by our favorite actors. And so it's the actors who are coming up with these wild things. And if there's there has to be a certain amount of freedom. You you tell an actor like you can't do this, you can't do that. They just shut down. I mean, I've done it. I'm a very experienced performer. But if I'm on a set with a director who's like says something the wrong way, I have to like, really do the work to, like, take a break and come back with everything that I have because I need a need, a lot of creative freedom and collaboration and opportunity to try things and understand that when you're on a set and it's hundreds of thousand dollars a second and a minute, like all this money, I get that you like.

[00:51:47] Jorjeana Marie

You just got to get the line out and you got to get the shot. But. I don't know. Like. Showing up to work and somebody telling you like, I get what you're saying, Karen. And I think that's part of why all of us are here, You know, today, learning about all of this and in this profession is because we want some creative control. That's that's the neat thing about audiobooks. We we get to play all these characters. It's like a play and we know that and we and that's part of what we love about it. And even when it's a nonfiction, we decide the minute things, the pause, really saying something with authority and and as genuinely as possible and like what you're doing Karen with getting the IP and creating our own projects so that we have the royalties from that we own that. That's also part of not I mean, I love working for these wonderful publishers and, and authors I wouldn't necessarily have access to, um, if I was only doing work that I created. But.

[00:52:57] Jorjeana Marie

I don't know.

[00:52:58] Jorjeana Marie

I was afraid of doing my own thing. I wanted someone to just hand me a job I wanted. I still do. I still like knowing like you'd have this much money for this amount of weeks. This is the contract you're going to, you know? And it's like, Oh, I can relax because I've been a freelance person or running my own company since I was 19 when I moved to New York City. I've never had a job. And so there is a constant hustle and plate spinning. And it is it does become exhausting, which is why it's important to pick that one thing that you would grab if everything was coming down and be like this. One thing if it's in the world, is my legacy, it completes me and I would be fulfilled and satiated, at least for a little while if it came into the world. And that's the thing that we put our energy behind, and that's the thing that we focus on and we own it. It is ours. And somehow it connects to the kid in us. So not only do we own it, it is ours. We can make money from it, but it brings us unparalleled joy.

[00:54:07] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, it honors who you are, but yes.

[00:54:10] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah. Well said.

[00:54:12] Anne Flosnik

Oh, feel it. Feeling you on this one. Yeah. Oh yeah. On all of it. Yes.

[00:54:17] Karen Commins

And that was so deep and so profound. And I hate to even ask this next question because I think you just answered it, but what advice would you share with other people who want to expand their horizon beyond narration?

[00:54:38] Jorjeana Marie

I think. I think it.

[00:54:42] Jorjeana Marie

It is, yes. Those connecting, it's like, why? Like what? What do you want beyond it? Is it in narration? Like what? What in narration did you enjoy the most? And can that be turned into something? So just as an example, if in narrating audiobooks you found that you really like to play, um. Very mysterious characters and create a sense of mystery just as an example. Then what could you also do with that? Well. Does that lead you to wanting to write something around a character that you'd like to film or play on stage, or does that take you to actually taking a course to become an actual detective? I mean, don't that's the thing is like there's no limits with it. We can talk about just in the parameters of entertainment, but also sometimes doing these things well outside of it. A really good Julia Cameron talks about our artist dates and I would say start exploring dates. Yes. So start exploring going on an artist date and something that supports that thing that you're interested in exploring outside of narration. So let's say it's like outdoor air painting. Well then maybe you go to the botanical garden and see if they offer any classes to paint outside for beginners or if you're experienced, you know, your level or whatever. We forget about these things because I feel like I picked up these habits from other actors along the way of like. If you're not like eating, breathing, sleeping, getting your next gig, somebody else is going to get the gig.

[00:56:28] Jorjeana Marie

And that's worthless information. It's it's worthless attitude because it it only lasts for so long. It just becomes not worth it, especially if the gig isn't fulfilling. And I've had that too. I remember being on set for like a big commercial with like one of the biggest directors and it was such I remember just going outside, laying down on the grass and thinking, This is what I worked so hard for. This experience today. He was really abusive and I just couldn't believe like, what was the point? And so that's why. Reverse engineering what we want and already finding those things in life. They're already within us and some of us either know them and can rattle them off or. We have yet to explore and find those things and that finding is so much fun. It's such an adventure and the artist's date can be the entryway into it. And for anybody who hasn't read Julia Cameron's The Artist's Way, she talks about going taking yourself on an artist date. You go by yourself, you can check out her book to to see how she she explains it exactly. But. It's so great because you could your artist date could be depending on your interests. It could be going to the junkyard and picking out something for a weird art sculpture. Or it could be going to a museum.

[00:57:57] Karen Commins

Or it could be going to Staples.

[00:58:00] Jorjeana Marie

Yeah. Paper.

[00:58:00] Karen Commins

Every time I go in Staples, I have creative ideas about things. And, you know, we go in there for one thing, but then I'm looking in other rows like, Oh, I like that, or, or just even, you know, a Post-it little flag. I mean, it's crazy. But yeah, I love Staples. And it does seem to bring out creative notions in me that maybe I wouldn't have had otherwise. Well, we're we're coming up on an hour, and I definitely want to be respectful of your time. Do you have anything you want to plug? What's coming up for you and how should people contact you?

[00:58:36] Jorjeana Marie

Oh, well, thank you.

[00:58:38] Jorjeana Marie

Um, that's a great.

[00:58:40] Jorjeana Marie

That's a great.

[00:58:40] Jorjeana Marie

Question. I do have things coming up and books coming out. I'm excited to be doing Nina LaCour's. Think I can share that? I'm doing one of her next books. I've done a few of them, so I'm excited about that. That'll be coming out through Penguin Random House And um, also loved the Happy Lives of Isadora Duncan. And um. Or did I say that title wrong? Sorry. Sleep. Uh, I'm just trying to think of I should have this like I have a show coming up at such and such day. Um, well, I'll just say this. Dewdrop Diaries, Netflix if you have little kids. Um, I wrote a one of I wrote one of the episodes and it's a fall episode and I think it, it's, I love how it turned out. Just the, the artists that were involved in bringing it into the world. So it's a Dewdrop Diaries on Netflix, a Dreamworks show, and that you can just log in to Netflix and take a look at and.

[00:59:41] Karen Commins

What's the episode or does it have a name?.

[00:59:44] Jorjeana Marie

It does have a name.

[00:59:46] Karen Commins

I mean the particular one you're speaking about?

[00:59:49] Jorjeana Marie

Yes. Um. Yarn Fairy.

[00:59:55] Karen Commins

So it makes me want to get my Netflix account back just to watch your show.

[00:59:59] Jorjeana Marie

Oh, well, this is a fun episode because I did the writers room for this three years ago and I was in the writers room and they were asking for ideas and I was like, Well, I usually bring some weird ideas. And do you know about yarn bombing?

[01:00:17] Karen Commins

No, the.

[01:00:18] Jorjeana Marie

Yarn bombing is when you go around a city and you see things that have crochet like yarn blankets and some people like wool yarn bomb an entire bridge and we don't call it yarn bombing in the episode because it's for very little children. But um, uh, I got the idea. I have a character, a sketch character that loves to do things like that and knits, and she does all these crafty things. And so I borrowed from her the idea of the fairies creating yarn all around different things. And so that's what the episode is about. And the creators of the show and the execs at Dreamworks, the Dreamworks, they really like that idea. And so we did. We did an episode with the The Yarn Fairy, and so it's pretty cute. I'm very proud of it because it does celebrate what we're talking about today about like your own oddities and just the things that light you up and bringing those out and sharing them with the world because the right people and projects that they're meant to be a part of, they will be and they will be in the world and people will get to enjoy them because, you know, we are the only ones that can shine our light and our particular way. And when we dim it for anybody or for any reason, everybody loses out, not just ourselves.

[01:01:35] Anne Flosnik

Love that.

[01:01:36] Karen Commins

That is a powerful statement and a perfect closing note for today's Pit Stop. Think it's time for everybody to get back on the road, but the recording will be available on clubhouse later today and I'll post it in the near future. On NarratorsRoadmap.com, and Pit Stop is also available on your favorite podcast platform, including Apple and Audible. Anne, who is coming up tomorrow on Narrator Uplift.

[01:02:04] Anne Flosnik

Tomorrow it's Jennifer Aquino. So that'll be exciting.

[01:02:08] Karen Commins

And and that's at a special time, right?

[01:02:11] Anne Flosnik

It is, yes. 4:00 Eastern time. And that's what I never remember what the three hours ahead or behind on the the Pacific Coast. Behind behind.

[01:02:22] Karen Commins

So that's yeah, 4 p.m. Eastern, 1:00 pm Pacific.

[01:02:27] Anne Flosnik

Gotcha. That's it.

[01:02:30] Karen Commins

Yeah. Well, I hope you all will take another road trip with us on October 11th when we'll talk with audiobook narrator and host of the popular Narrator's Cup of Joe show, Daniela Acitelli. In the meantime, I hope you find joy in every journey and live the life of your dreams. Thank you again to Jorjeana Marie for this wonderful and joyful conversation. It's been terrific.

[01:02:58] Speaker4

Yay!

[01:02:58] Speaker5

Thank you.

[01:03:01] Anne Flosnik

Lovely to meet you.

[01:03:02] Speaker4

You too. And.

[01:03:04] Karen Commins

And thanks to Anne Flosnik for your great discussion and support, as always. And thanks to all of you for spending time with us this afternoon. I hope you have a wonderful week and we will see you soon.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



