Graeae Podcast: Disability and Comedy

**Welcome to the Graeae and Disability Arts Online Podcast, bringing together thoughtful discussion and debate. This month’s topic is comedy and Disability, with Graeae Associate Director Nickie Miles-Wildin talking to play write, comedian and performance poet Jackie Hagan.**

**This podcast contains strong language through out.**

Intro music starts.

Nickie: Good morning from a very muggy London, Monday morning it is, and I'm here at our Graeae Studios joined by the two-time winner of the Saboteur Best Spoken Word Show Award, the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellow, Creative Futures Literary Award, and nominated for a winning of the World Award for Creating Lasting Social Change. It is none other than Jackie Hagan.

Intro music ends.

Jackie: Hey.

Nickie and Jackie: Wooooooo

Nickie: I feel like it should be Dame Jackie Hagan at the end of that-

Jackie: Dame.

Nickie: Dame.

Jackie: Imagine me being a Dame.

Nickie: What would you do if you were a Dame?

Jackie: I would walk around in a big, nice hat with a brolly.

Nickie: Describe the hat. What would the hat look like?

Jackie: Let's stay on the hat for the whole half hour.

Nickie: Yeah. (laughing)

Jackie: The hat would be purple, and fluffy, and the brolly will be frilly.

Nickie: Nice. That's all you'd wear?

Jackie: That's all ... Yeah. That's all I'd wear, yeah. (both laugh)

Nickei: Because I'm a Dame, don't you know? She's also been called a wicked backstreet wit by the Herald.

Jackie: Do they mean wicked like nasty or wicked as in, I can't imagine the Herald being like, phat, sick, wicked.

Nickie: Wicked.

Jackie: Wicked.

Nickie: Well, probably with the hat and the brolly.

Jackie: Yeah. Yeah.

Nickie: So yeah, Jackie Hagan, who, has a kind of a long career with Graeae, like a long relationship. You were on our-

Jackie: Well, it started a while ago, didn't it?

Nickie: Yeah. You know, like everyone associated with Graeae, you're still here.

Jackie: Yeah. Yeah.

Nickie: You're our ... You're on our year two Write to Play.

Jackie: Aye.

Nickie: Which you said you were the first lot that we worked with outside London.

Jackie: We were fucking chaos, yeah. Were you going to reword that then?

Nickie: I was thinking about it.

Jackie: Yeah, I could see it in your face.

Nickie: But I just thought it was best to let you do it. So Jackie, what was it like being on Write to Play?

Jackie: Well, I didn't know where it was. I had just stabbed my leg off. So I was full of morphine and trauma, and everyone in the world was like ... As soon as you have your your leg off, everyone is like, "Go for this thing, because it's disabled, and you're disabled." So then I went for it. Then I was like, "What's going on?"

Nickie: Did you ever see yourself as a playwright? Had you written plays before?

Jackie: No.

Nickie: What was your focus before that?

Jackie: I had written a play in school where it was like a little competition. It had to be about bullying. At the end, the bully hung himself. That's sort of like a little kid's play. But that was all ... I had written. I've been a poet for ages. But like playwright feels a little bit lah-de-dah, you know, a bit ... It wasn't very council estate for me. So I wasn't that sure about it. Then it was doing it, so you crack on, don't you?

Nickie: Yeah, on and do it. Was it through that kind of Write to Play that Cosmic Scallies came about? Or was that a separate sort of idea?

Jackie: Well, they made me do it.

Nickie: Yeah, we got the whip out, like ... Write, Hagan, write. That's what we do here.

Jackie: Yeah. It was homework, and you said write a play. I didn't really know what that meant. So I sort of wrote a thing, and they were like, "That's not really a play." So I kept going, and kept doing it, and then eventually it was Cosmic Scallies.

Nickie: Brilliant. That was her Graeae enrol exchange theatre, sort of co pro, directed by Amit Sharma. That was taken up to the Edinburgh Fringe as part of like the Northern Stage Collaboration season, wasn't it? It had great ... It got great reviews, and great audiences.

Jackie: Thingy likes it, didn't she? What was her name? Emma Thompson, she's a fan.

Nickie: You need to get her quote on your website now.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nickie: That's it.

Jackie: Is that? That's there?

Nickie: Is it there?

Jackie: Yeah. What was it she say? She said, "That's your Hagan, she's boss like that."

Nickie: Yeah, that's what you need.

Jackie: That was it, yeah.

Nickie: Emma Thompson.

Jackie: Jackie Hagan, defo boss. That was it. Yeah, that was it, yeah.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nickie: Yeah. So that's kind of ... Kind of Write to Play kind of helped you become ...

Jackie: A bit more sort of proper, I guess. A bit more London-y, and stuff. I was like, because I've been knocking about for a while, before, writing comedy, and poetry and stuff. It sort of gave me a bit of a leg up, oh my god, that's not meant to be a joke. Like, I don't like ... I'm not ... I've got one leg, everyone, by the way, because they can't see me, can they? But, yeah, like I'm not anti-leg puns because this leg thing. It's because I'm not seeing shit. Puns, that's not Nancy. But yeah, anyway, go on.

Nickie: So it helped you, as you say, get into the kind of London scene. Did it help open other doors to more opportunities?

Jackie: Yeah. I think so. You don't know what's causing what, do you, sometimes?

Nickie: No.

Jackie: Because a lot was happening because the people just loved the whole me having me leg off thing, because I've done the whole ... I don't know what the word is for when you live Tweet something, but on Facebook.

Nickie: Did you live Tweet your leg?

Jackie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was ... Not coming off. That's ...

Nickie: Yeah, like drawing it like that.

Jackie: But like the whole thing, because it was ... We thought ... We didn't know what was wrong with us in that. So that got a lot of attention. Then I did, told the Some People have Too Many Legs show. So that was getting a lot of attention, and Cosmic Scallies was sort of straight after. So it was all going on. So yeah. It just, it threw me up into the world of doing solo shows, and just doing hour long things instead of like 10 minute things.

Nickie: Kind of pushing you that way, to writer, to fill those-

Jackie: Just more money. So it's like then you sort of do stuff full time, and take it more seriously. Yeah.

Nickie: Yeah, become more focused on it, and understand the kind of ... Yeah. The stories there are-

Jackie: And it's just the egos. You sort of get validated, don't you, by people doing, well, that was good. Then you do more of it. That's the way the world works.

Nickie: That is the way the world works. I think what I loved about Cosmic Scallies is the two characters, the voices that they brought, that was something that I don't think is there much, in kind of the British theatre scene.

Jackie: Yeah, just like normal council estate voices, not being like, "Oh, I'm on a council estate, I've got to go to the factory now." Like, just like normal, like, what you normally talk like. I'm being funny and being dark at the same time, because people think that if you're being funny, then you're not saying something seriously. But it's actually, it's harder to be funny about something serious than it is to be serious about something serious. So like, yeah. And council estate people are good at that.

Nickie: Yeah.

Jackie: Oppressed people are good at that, I reckon.

Nickie: I think that it's about them being perfectly rounded characters. We were laughing with them, not at them.

Jackie: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Nickie: Which I think can be quite apparent in some ways that we feel we go and see ... People are seen as inspiration for what they're going through. Sometimes that's how disabled characters are portrayed as well.

Jackie: Oh, so much-

Nickie: Whereas you, in Cosmic Scallies, it was we were really with those people when they were doing it.

Jackie: It's not like you're trying to ... Like, oh, I'm trying to normalise the disabled council estate experience. I'm not trying to normalise it. It just is normal to me. So I'm writing about it in a normal way. So yeah.

Nickie: I think that's what you do brilliantly in your work, as well as in ... Whether that is Cosmic Scallies or whether that's you as a person.

Jackie: Yeah. You're not making a big song and dance about it.

Nickie: No.

Jackie: Or it's because in storytelling, isn't it, if someone is like not the default person, which is like white, able bodied, straight, fella, then it becomes a part of the story. Doesn't it?

Nickie: Yeah.

Jackie: That's like, then we all know that that means, oh, this is happening in that.

Nickie: How did you get into comedy then? Was it after having your leg off or before that?

Jackie: No, no, no, it was before that. Scousers is just the ... It's the way we talk, isn't it? But it was from ... Because I did poetry, because I went mad, because I went to university and university is shit, if you like little council estate kids, and you don't want to go to a posh place, and you don't realise. So I went mad and started in poetry, because that's the natural next thing, isn't it? Then realised that I preferred the gabbing in between poems. That's when I started in comedy.

Nickie: Is that comedy with spoken word, or how did it work? Or was it just complete stand-up?

Jackie: That's just fucking anything. Someone wants to give me a microphone, let's have a crack. So yeah, I do stand-up sometimes, and poetry.

Nickie: Have you had any gigs where it's just gone like-

Jackie: Fucking shit?

Nickie: Fucking shit, yeah.

Jackie: Yeah. Of course. Yeah, because I'm weird. It's not like I'm ... Because you've got to do it right. So I've got quite a lot of the aw factor. Like, even before I had my leg off ... Are you doing a face, are you thinking you don’t know what I’m on about?

Nickie: Yeah, like why did you-

Jackie: Aw.

Nickie: Aw.

Jackie: Aw.

Nickie: Why did you have the aw factor?

Jackie: Because, right, so even before I was like physically disabled, because I was hanging around with quite a lot of posh people that like the arts, and people are like, aw, council estates, oh, you went to a shit school, aw. You went to Blackpool as a kid. Or whatever. So that little singing the song-

Nickie: Tip the head to the side.

Jackie: Yeah. So there was a lot of aw factor going on. So comedy is good at getting rid of that, isn't it? It's good at sort of going, yeah, look, you don't have to look after me. It's good, like, getting in a way the vulnerability. Comedy is like the opposite of embarrassment, isn't it? Like everyone is embarrassed about everything in the world. People are embarrassed of owning an asshole, aren't they? Like you can't walk down the street with like your arm in the air or something like that. You can't walk through Liverpool with a cardboard box without like three people going like "Cardboard box," at you.

Nickie: Stating the obvious.

Jackie: Like you can't do anything, can you? Yeah. You can't do nothing in the world, because otherwise, oh my god, it might be weird. So everyone is living these weird tight rules. It always feels like Jane Austen, everyone is knocking about with a hat on, when they don't need to wear a hat. It just feels like we're living these mad, tight rules. So comedy is the opposite of that, because it's like going, okay, I see what your boundaries are and I can joke about them. Also, don't worry about it, I come from a council estate and I've got one leg. You know, I'll sort it out for you. But without being too fluffy.

Jackie: So that's why I have shit gigs, because I'm not really fluffy or cliché. People sometimes crave a little bit of cliché, don't they? Because it's safe. I'm not happy to give them any of that. Like you've got to make the audience half way, haven't you, because otherwise you're just fucking doing it into a vacuum. But like, yeah, it's all odds, too, and taking my leg off, and doing stump puppetry and weird shit like that. But you know, it's just the horror of being a cliché, isn't it? So yeah, in answer to that, I have had shit gigs.

Nickie: I want to go back to stump puppetry.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nickie: So you do that during your gigs? Is that one of the gigs-

Jackie: Just felt-

Nickie: That you do when the gigs are going bad or you just do it anyway?

Jackie: It just felt like the natural thing to do, as soon as I got a stump. When the gig is going bad, you pull your stump puppetry out.

Nickie: Here is my little puppet.

Jackie: Yeah, you really do. Yes, fucking shut up, here is a stump puppet. Yeah. Sometimes I do it quite poetically, and it's like everyone is all inspired. Then sometimes I do it in a rough sort of like working men's club in a very different time. But it still works, doesn't it, because you're fucking making a stump talk, so it's funny. So it's sort of normalising something, but in a weird way, in a way that's authentic to me. You can give prizes, celebrity stumps, you can play a game. Yeah. Give away Fray Bentos pies.

Nickie: So how do you play celebrity stump? Do people have to guess which celebrity the stump is?

Jackie: No, no.

Nickie: Do you have pictures of it?

Jackie: My stump dressed up ... My stump has got like ... It didn't heal properly. So it's got what looks like a miserable gob on it. So I dress it up as different celebrities. You guess the celebrity, if you get it right, you get a free Bentos pie. If you're a fucking vegan, then I've got a vegan option, because I've given into peer pressure from doing stuff in London-

Nickie: You are prepared.

Nickie: So what are your hour long shows?

Jackie: What are they?

Nickie: Yeah.

Jackie: Well, I do that, I pull the old stump puppetry in that as well. One trick pony. So the first one was that Some People Have Too Many Legs. So that was about ... I wrote that when ... A lot of the stuff that I've done, I haven't known what's going on, and I've just cracked on and gone, all right, yeah. Like won this commission, didn't really know much about what solo shows were. I was going to do this show about not being a proper person, because I'm not, you know what I mean? So I was going to get each audience to say like something I could do, or going to have your teeth fixed, or stop smoking, Learn to swim swim, or whatever the fuck. Then all of a sudden I was in the hospital having my leg off.

Jackie: So I wrote the leg show instead, Some People Have Too Legs. That was like a bit fluffy, though. I had only just ... I didn't even know about disability art scenes. I didn't have a clue. I was just like right, well, this is a spectacle. Let's write about this. So it was just ... I mean, it wasn't that fluffy. I've read it back and I'm like, actually, it's a bit hard, you know, it was like 13 and up, I was giving them quite a lot to deal with. But it was like, oh, where is the amputation scene? So let's have some bubbles, and a fucking unicorn, and all of that. Afterwards it was a bit like, oh yeah, let's stop being such a ... Stop trying to make disability so lovely for the nice people. So the next show was less nice, and was like more ... Not like kicking off or nothing, but like this voice instead of this voice. You know?

Nickie: What was that show called?

Jackie: So that's the one ... I'm still touring right now, This is not a Safe Space. That's about disability and class. It's like, benefit street and fucking Undateables. That's all shit. You know, like I started looking out. Like once I'd gone, holy fucking hell, I'm disabled, actually, this is really happening, I was like, right, let's have a look on the telly to see what disabled people are like. It's like, you're allowed to be a villain. Like, did you know Darth Vader has got no legs?

Nickie: Really?

Jackie: Yes. Okay. I haven't seen it. Ewan McGregor cut them off.

Nickie: Okay.

Jackie: But yeah. So you can be a villain, can't you? Or you can be a Paralympian, or you can be crying into your own grey scaled face. So it was like, I can't be any of that. I'm too nice to be a villain. I'm too fucking ... I'm not ...

Nickie: You're not Darth Vader.

Jackie: I'm not a Paralympian, or to do any PE or even walk, I'm all about the Ubers. So yeah, so I thought, well, that's all pissed me off. So let's do a show where I show disabled council estate people as real people who are, you know. It was just sort of the same aim, isn't it, as Cosmic Scallies. Like, I guess. But more pointed, because I started looking at the world and going, "Well, this is all fucked."

Nicki: What's been the reaction to that?

Jackie: But it's still comedy, actually. But it's just angry comedy. But it works best now, because ... Well, everyone is like worried, aren't they? So frustration comedy, at the moment, it just chimes a bit better, because everyone is frustrated. You know? So it's not so much like Jack D getting a cob on about a fucking mars bar wrapper, it's like look at the state of the world. Everyone is like, "Yeah, we're worried as well." It's like ... Because comedy is like you build up the tension, and then you break the tension, don't you? But the tension is already there, like in the world. So you know.

Nicki: So go back on that. You talk about you had not really any experience of disability arts. How did you get into disability art scene?

Nicki: Just making that leap, because I think it's always an interesting one when you do become disabled, to kind of finding other people, finding your tribe, in a weird way. Do you know what I mean? To them realising there is a scene, and that scene has gone on for years. How do I find my place in that?

Jackie: It's nice trying to know the history, isn't it?

Nicki: Yeah, to stand on the shoulders of giants.

Jackie: Exactly. It's the same as when you find out your queer history and stuff, isn't it, as a kid and all of that. So I wanted to find out. Everyone just started bombarding me as soon as I got my leg off. ‘’You like art, you're disabled. Here is some information."

Nicki: When you say everyone, is that like mates, or people that you'd worked with-

Jackie: No. Because I live Facebooked it, the world was talking to me. Then I was suddenly carrying on these conversations with like thousands of people. Yeah, so everyone was sort of bombarding me with that. I was like, "I just want to do my own thing, you know." Always wanting to usurp expectations.

Nicki: But I think it's interesting. It's that coming to terms with being disabled.

Jackie: It's being scared of being a token, isn't it? Because there is a lot of that about. Especially when you haven't seen what your art stuff, so you see telly, and it's like a fucking-

Nicki: I don't belong there.

Jackie: Like an amputee ... Yeah. You don't want to be amputee, getting an offer for perfume sort of thing. So yeah, so I didn't want to be any of the them things. So yeah, you've got to go through that, and figure out a way of making things funny without being the fucking ... You know, without people laughing at you. Which is hard, you know. Only very incredibly clever people, like us, can do it.

Nicki: I think so. Indeed. I think the whole thing, sometimes, making disability funny as well.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Like it's never two things where you think two things will go together ... Well, you do if you're disabled. But you kind of wonder how the kind of non-disabled world will ever view that.

Jackie: Yeah. It's always like what audience are you talking to? Like because with the Safe Space show, it's like, sometimes ... Because you do it all over, don't you? So sometimes you've got loads of able bodied middle class people there, so when you're talking to them, it's like you're saying the same fucking words, but you're just saying it in a very different way, and things get different laughs. Then it's easy when you know ... When you're there, like you wait and everyone is coming in, and you hear some wheelchairs. You just go, ah, this is going to be good. This is going to be fine. Everyone will get what I'm on about. It'll be bolstering. People are like, "Well, you're preaching to the converted." Yeah, good. Like, that's, you know, you need that. I've done poetry quite a lot, because you need to bolster people, because life is hard enough, isn't it? So I think all of that, yeah, that's good.

Nicki: But that's interesting, isn't it? Where people go, "Oh, you're preaching to the converted." You could say that about any comedian that gets up on stage, or you know, Sarah Millican or whatever. You know, talking to a room full of women about being a bit overweight or whatever.

Jackie: Eating trifle with your Amazon card?

Nicki: Yeah, you know what I mean? But it's amazing, because it's a release for everyone to go, you know, "Oh, I thought that was just me that did that."

Jackie: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: I think, where our big disabled comedians, they're on stage going, "This is how life is, and we all recognise that. In a way, we have a permission to laugh about it as well."

Jackie: Yeah. But as soon as you're disabled, or as soon as you're whatever, like the thing of it is when you get on stage, and people are like, "Oh, it's a woman," or whatever you are, you just suddenly are in charge of the whole world. You've suddenly got to change the world, haven't you, rather than just be funny. So that kind of ... Where in the early days, when I was like, "I'm not going to talk about having one leg." Like that sort of, it was too much pressure. I was like, I don't know what I'm on about. Whereas now I feel like I do know what I'm on about.

Nicki: Too much pressure to not talk about-

Jackie: Too much pressure to save the world.

Nicki: We've worked together.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Let's talk about how that came about. Contact commission you?

Jackie: How did it come about? Yeah.

Nicki: Because you're Manchester based now, aren't you?

Jackie: I now live in Pubble on the Mould I'm creating the council estate scene there.

Nicki: How did we contact you.

Jackie: I was working for Contact for ages.

Nicki: Contact Theatre Manchester, if people didn't know about it.

Jackie: Yeah. They're just calling themselves Contact now, not Contact Theatre. But they are a theatre.

Nicki: Theatres been renovated. They work primarily with kind of young people-

Jackie: Young people. Yeah. They put young people at the centre, don't they? They give young people the choices. Because I wear pigtails, I get away with them thinking that I'm still a young person.

Nicki: So they commissioned you to write-

Jackie: A kid's show. Yeah. Christmas show. I was like, "Yeah. I'll do a Christmas show." Because they wanted it to be not too paisley arsy, they wanted it to be quite ... I don't know. I've got a goggle box vibe, haven't I? I've got a Coronation Street vibe. So they wanted it to be sort of unabashedly ... I'm happy to go sort of cheesy without being horrendous.

Nicki: Without being horrendously cheesy.

Jackie: Yeah. So they wanted that. Then I was like, "Yeah, I can definitely do that." Then I was like, "Can we not mention Christmas at all? Because that's like a little excluding people." They were like, "Hmm."

Nicki: You have to get it in once or twice.

Jackie: Yeah. Everyone needs to be able to do BSL. But they did let us have pretty much everything we wanted, didn't they? We were rarely demanding, but that's what you've got to be.

Nicki: I think it was great. We got together, and we kind of chatted about it. We had many days in your flat with pieces of flip chart paper, pens.

Jackie: Making up bad puns.

Nicki: Making up bad puns, because the show, the Forest of Forgotten Discos, which was at Hope Mill Theatre last Christmas, yeah. It was, we spent many days drinking large, copious amounts of coffee.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Highlighter pens, coming up with ideas.

Jackie: Oh yeah. I wanted it to be about like immigration and taxes at one point, didn't I?

Nicki: Yeah.

Jackie: For five year olds. Yeah.

Nicki: Yeah. We kind of moved away from that. We did some kind of research and development with a couple of actors. This idea of a kind of disco ball evolved, didn't it?

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Being like a beacon of power.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Then we spent three weeks in a room, all of us, with the actors. You'd written a kind of-

Jackie: Mad script.

Nicki: Second, third draught of it. I think as we got through those few rehearsals, we got to like draft 11, didn't we?

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: It was a kind of new draft every day. But it was brilliant. I think what you did was you brought-

Jackie: That's how Cosmic ... That's how everything I've written has been.

Nicki: But that's new writing, though, isn't it?

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: And having the writer in the room. What you do brilliantly, you respond to the actors in the room, and those people that we brought together.

Jackie: Yeah. We were good, like, we had funny actors as well.

Nicki: Brilliant actors.

Jackie: Coming up with funny stuff, like in the room. Ideas that even then-

Nicki: I mean, they have to be brilliant actors and up for being creative when they know they're going to play a character called Bare Minimum, Bear Hugs, Bear Grills, Alexa, Red.

Jackie: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: So it was-

Jackie: And powering everything through farts and stuff. Yeah. A lot of farts, action. Kids like farts.

Nicki: They love farts. Then of course, because we wanted to make it accessible, it was like, how do we ... Our best production meeting ever was how do we make farts accessible to deaf, young people and audiences? I think we got there. I'd love to add smell in next.

Jackie: Yeah. Well, that's the obvious one, isn't it? In the real world.

Nicki: When we do it again. But you know, budget and everything.

Nicki: How was that for you? Writing for that younger audience? And being able to keep comedy in it.

Jackie: Well, it was good. I've carried on doing kid's stuff now. Because I never really intended to. It was just a commission wasn't it? I've not got kids myself and stuff. But I'm idiotic in my own brain. So it's just happening to that bit, isn't it? It's just been ... Humour is humour, isn't it? If anything, kids are better at humour, because they don't over complicate it. We over complicate things as we get older, don't we? Kids, you can just be ... It's sort of getting to the core of humour, isn't it? Which is being daft, because the world is absurd. So you're just daft, really.

Nicki: Yeah. I think what was beautiful with Forest of Forgotten Discos was you introduced me to the word bum dot.

Jackie: Bum dot. Wonderful word.

Nicki: Where did that come from?

Jackie: When I was a kid, I was really anti-swearing as a kid.

Nicki: Really?

Jackie: Yeah. I had little signs around my room and everything. So if I was really, really angry, if I was fucking fuming, then you'd get bum dot would out. You bum dot.

Nickie: Also, never would I think in a kid's show we would have bears with baskets on their bums playing a game called Out the Sprout, and having kids with buckets trying to pick up the sprouts.

Jackie: Me shouting Out the Sprouts, in pretend German.

Nicki: in German. And both of us- Out the Sprout

Jackie: Oh, there's crackers, wasn't it? You forget once you're in it. It just goes and more and more crackers, didn't it?

Nicki: I remember me and you, you had been away once we got it in, because I think you were in the hospital. We got into previews, and then you turned up for press night, and we both watched it. At one point you leaned over to me and you went, "This is absolutely bonkers. What have we done?"

Jackie: Yeah. It was, off its head

Nicki: Because you hadn't seen it-

Jackie: But loads of ... Yeah, exactly, I had been away from everything for a second. Yeah. But people who went, like, were ... Because Cosmic Scallies people went to see it, who knew me and everything. They were like, "Oh, it seems like a little bit watered down." I think that was because it was trying to be theatre, rather than just doing what you do.

Nicki: Yeah.

Jackie: Being authentic. Then they went to see the kid show, and they were like, "Yeah, that was just like coming around to your house."

Nicki: I think most of the set was from your house.

Jackie: Yeah. Yeah. The living room. So that was good. It takes a while, doesn't it, to sort of calm down and start being yourself, and shout Out the Sprout in German. Yeah.

Nicki: Tell us what else you're doing now. Like work for young people, Fantabuloza?

Jackie: So I've joined a drag troupe. Well, I got really sick at the start of this year, I was in hospital fucking ages. Because I am really sick-

Nicki: Do you mean sick as in the Herald sick-

Jackie: Yeah, wicked sick, backstreet wit. So I was like, oh right, am I going to-

Nicki: Poorly sick.

Jackie: So I was poorly sick at the start. Oh yeah, so it was like how i write, because I do fancy pants writing. I could just sit at home and do that. But it's all ... It was like, right, let's go big or go home. So I joined a drag troupe instead of lying on the couch, or lying in a sanatorium for the rest of my days.

Nicki: You fancy pants, doing your writing.

Jackie: Yeah. With me hat on.

Nicki: With your umbrella.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Yeah.

Jackie: Yeah, so I joined a drag troupe. So my drag name is Freya Bentos. It's called Fantabuloza!, and it's a drag show for three to eight year olds. Well, it's aimed at like three to eight year olds, but everyone ... You know, it's genuinely, adults love it and stuff. It's like we go and do it in ... It's Tickertape who do it. Adam Carver is the director. We go and do it in like public places. So a lot of it is festivals and stuff.

Nicki: I saw it briefly at Greenwich and Docklands this weekend.

Jackie: Oh yeah?

Nicki: I love the kind of spectacle of it. The enjoyment of those young people that are watching it. They love it. There was one little girl following one of the performers after, just shouting, like, "I love you." As they were leaving the performance area. It's just beautiful to see.

Jackie: Yeah. Yeah. If I were to see that when I was a little kid, I would have made up. It would have meant ... Because it is about gender and sexuality. People are like, "Oh, you shouldn't be teaching that to three year olds." Like, piss off, because we teach that to them anyway by going-

Nicki: Yeah, pink and blue.

Jackie: "Oh, is this your boyfriend?" You know, this is, "Oh, Mummy and Daddy are together." Well, then ... So that's my argument against that is just piss off. But yeah, so if I would have seen that, and it was-

Nicki: Blew your mind.

Jackie: Blew me mind, but also maybe my teenage years wouldn't have been so shit, because I would have been like, oh yeah, there is a-

Nicki: There are people like me in the world.

Jackie: Yeah.

Nicki: Isn't it? I can do what I want.

Jackie: I probably would have run away from London to find it. Or a sequin shop. But yeah, it's good. It's from like Drag Queen Story time, it's from that, which is happening all over the place. But this is like an extravaganza version of that. There is games and stuff, and there is all sorts. It's really ... It's quite emotional too.

Nicki: Is it?

Jackie: Yeah. It is, sort of. It's lovely.

Nicki: I just want to say, have you got any advice-

Jackie: Have I got any advice?

Nicki: Yeah, have you got any advice for getting into comedy? We've kind of focused all of this podcast around comedy, or theatre writing, poetry.

Jackie: I have got advice. What was it ... I got a big cob on about comedy the other day. It's people making lazy jokes. So when you first get into it, of course you're insecure, and of course you're scared. That's the point of doing a new thing, isn't it? So I think that's when people make sort of offensive jokes that they don't mean. That it's just lazy, because you think that's what the audience wants. So don't do that. I think hide it a bit at the start as well.

Nicki: Do you think that's finding your way? Finding your audience?

Jackie: Yeah. It's like-

Nicki: Reading the room?

Jackie: Figuring out it's the version of what meeting the audience halfway means. It doesn't mean be horrible to them. Or don't ... You know, just think about the fact that you have got ... Even if there is only 10 people in the room, you have got a platform. You are like ... You know, just sit down and think about it a bit. Get your stump out, because everyone loves that.

Outro music starts.

Nicki: Everyone loves a stump.

Jackie: Everyone loves a stump. Yeah.

Nicki: So yeah, there you go. Think about it, get your stump out. That's the best advice ever. I want that on a Tshirt. Well, thank you very much, Jackie, for coming in this morning.

Jackie: Thank you very much, Nicki.

Outro music ends.

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