

Shmanners 179: Busking/Street Performance

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Travis: Any requests?

Teresa: Do you know any podcasts?

Travis: Oh, how about this one? It's Shmanners!

[theme music]

Travis: Hello, Internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy!

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: You know what? Um, when we go on the road, can I have a recliner onstage?

Travis: Yes. This is what people at home cannot see. My wife—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —is 180 degrees parallel to the ground.

Teresa: [laughing continues]

Travis: Um, very comfortable. And you know what? Y'all can't say nothin', 'cause she's pregnant! And, uh, a hard workin', don't put up with nothin' lady who deserves to lay down when she wants to.

Teresa: Ergo, I would like one of these on tour, please.

Travis: Well... Paul would have to move it around, so you'll have to talk to him.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. I'll work some magic on Paul.

Travis: Yeah. Hey, hi.

Teresa: Hi.

Travis: I love you.

Teresa: I love you too!

Travis: Hey, do you wanna do a podcast with me?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay. So, we're gonna talk about street performing, or as it's... *fun* called, if you wanna use the *fun* word, busking.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Now, have you ever had, like, a standout busking experience?

Teresa: Hmm... not anything that I can recall specifically, but I do know that I feel a lot more inspired to give money to people who are performing, instead of, um, instead of people who are just asking for money?

Travis: I have two standout memories that I always think about. One was on the subway in New York, hearing two gentlemen sing "When Doves Cry," a capella. And just destroying it. Like, the whole car was, like, clapping along, and they passed around a hat, and I imagine made bank.

And the other one, which is not quite that, uh, my family and I were walking around Philadelphia, and I wanna say I was about, like, 15, and this guy stopped us and said "Hey, d'you wanna see somethin'?"

And we were like, "Uhh..."

Teresa: [apprehensive humming]

Travis: And he was like, "I do something the whole family can enjoy."

Teresa: [apprehensive humming]

Travis: "Backflips!" And he did a standing backflip! And we were like, "[loudly] Cool!" And, like, gave him 10 bucks. It was awesome.

Teresa: [laughs] That could have ended very differently.

Travis: Listen, I know! But it was a standing backflip, and it was awesome.

Teresa: That's pretty cool!

Travis: Yes. So, what is, I guess, the history of street performing?

Teresa: Um, so, there's a book called *Passing the Hat: Street Performers in America*, written by Patricia J. Campbell, who has summed it up very perfectly. Says: "The history of busking is the history of urban civilization. There have been street performers at least as long as there have been streets."

Travis: Ohh, that makes sense.

Teresa: Certainly. Um, but the first, like, written records we have of busking is in medieval Europe. Um, because that's where you have a large concentration of people in a small area. So, like, think about castle courtyards and such.

People would perform in plazas, in the public square and things like that. In fact, some medieval jesters were probably just, like, street performers, and the nobles were like, "Hey! That's pretty cool. Come and do that for me, personally."

Travis: Okay! That would be, I think, if I lived in that time—sometimes, when I fantasize about time travel, I like to think, like, that I would become the medieval lord. Like, I'd go back in time and everybody would be so impressed with me, 'cause, like, you know, I bathe. But—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —in reality, I would probably be a jester, right?

Teresa: Probably.

Travis: Like, if you look at the career trajectory I'm on now, it does not end with me being a noble lord. Let's put it that way.

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Right.

Okay. Um, and so, it has developed from people just kind of performing on the street—I wouldn't say randomly, but as themselves, for themselves. There was also where local merchants would hire people to do those sort of things outside of their businesses to draw customers in.

Travis: That makes total sense. I could see that. You know, they still do that now!

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: This is gonna sound like I'm making a joke, but I'm not. What I'm specifically thinking of is radio DJs, you know, getting hired by, like... uh, you know, when a new place opens or, like, a car dealership or something, called "remotes," and you go and do a remote broadcast from in front of it, so people will come down to get free prizes or free tickets or whatever to draw business for the thing.

Teresa: Not only that, but I think that probably, what, every six months? Some video goes viral of someone standing on a street corner, like, doing that whole sign flipping business.

Travis: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Teresa: Right? That's definitely what we're talkin' about, here. You know, you gotta have talent to do that, and if a business hires you to do it, you do a great job, you could go viral!

Travis: And isn't that the dream?

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe? Mayb—it's not *my* dream. Is it—

Travis: It's somebody's dream.

Teresa: It's somebody's dream.

Travis: Okay, go on.

Teresa: Alright. Um, so it's pretty much remained unchanged as far as Europe goes, right? Um, people make their living singing, dancing, playing music on street corners, either hired by a shop or not. But one of the things that unique about the American experience is, uh, it—busking became a very nuanced business when circuses started to move from coast to coast.

Um, so the circus performers, when they weren't performing with the circus...

Travis: They were out drummin' up business for the circus.

Teresa: Not only that, but, you know, makin' money on the side.

Travis: Oh, for themselves. Yes, I know. I've seen *Greatest Showman*.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Which I'm *pretty* sure that happens in? I don't know. I saw it when I was plane drunk, you know what I mean? So I don't remember it. I—you know, I—I was in that pressurized air. You know. You get it. I don't remember.

Teresa: I—I don't know. I haven't seen it. I wasn't there. I don't think I watched *Greatest Showman*.

Travis: Not yet, no.

Teresa: Not... yet.

Travis: Well, I'll make you watch it. Don't you worry.

Teresa: Oh, okay. [laughs] Okay. But in America, in the US., like I said, one of the things that New York City is known for now is the busking community, and that was around the time of the turn of the century, right? When German and Italian immigrants brought an influx of street performers with them.

Um, and people like organ grinders became popular. Singers and things like that, um, flourished until about 1923?

Travis: Yeah, 'cause I also have to imagine, when I think about—when *I* think of, like, street performers, right? Another one I think about is, like, you know, mime or, like, physical performers? You know, human statues, that kind of thing. And that fits very much almost into, like, a commedia dell'arte kind of thing, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: So, like, that tracks with the influx of European immigrants and everything, bringing a lot more of that, like, physical comedy, physical performance with them. Yeah, that makes sense.

Teresa: Um, and at that height, like I said, about 1923, the New York City license department reported that there were 800 organ grinders and musicians performing on the streets of New York at any given time.

Travis: That's a lot of organ grinders.

Teresa: Yeah. Not saying that there were only 800. What I'm saying is—

Travis: At any given moment.

Teresa: At any given moment. [laughs]

Travis: There are 800 on the street. Wow.

Teresa: Wow... alright.

Travis: That's kind of like the original gig economy, if you think about it. It's not really. Anyways, go on. Don't mind me, folks!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Um, things were on the up and up. You could make a living, until a mayor that you will probably recognize. Um, in 19—

Travis: Rudy Giuliani.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] In 1936, Fiorello LaGuardia—

Travis: Oh yeahhh! He also built that airport. Or at least it's named after him.

Teresa: It's named after him.

Travis: And that's where he was buried!

Teresa: Uh, no.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: He banned street performance.

Travis: Huh!

Teresa: Saying it was for beggars, and the city would not tolerate it.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I'm gonna give that two thumbs down.

Travis: Yeah, me too.

Teresa: Boo. Um, so, it became illegal, right? And in the 40's it really took a hit. Not only were there people who were doing it—I mean, people continued to do it illegally, but the quality of performance went down, because—

Travis: Well, yeah! I have to imagine once you make it illegal and it becomes more difficult to make a living, those people who would've performed on the street, now they're going other places or trying to perform other places, so the only people who would still be performing on the street are people who can't get work other places, right?

Teresa: Right. Right. Um, that and, like, you know, general wartime stuff.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Made people desperate for coin, so they played broken instruments or sang on the run, and it's really sad.

Anyway, all of this turned around in the late 50's, early 60's, because of the hippie movement!

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: People were moving westward. What is—"Westward, my son?" I don't know.

Travis: "Carry on My Wayward Son?"

Teresa: No. That's not it. "Go West, young man."

Travis: Sure, that one.

Teresa: There it is. [laughs] A lot of these hippies had guitars. Not much else, um, but they sang a lot of folk tunes and it was part of the *scene* of the time, so, like, the beatniks.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: If you will. Um, and in fact, there was a beatnik riot.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: I know, right? So—okay. April 16th, 1961. Folk musicians crowded Washington Square Park and began to sing the National Anthem all together. And they sang this because they argued that the commissioner at the time, who had outlawed busking in Washington Square Park... they did this because they were protesting their First and Fourteenth Amendments, and this, like I said, was... it was labeled the "beatnik riot," although—

Travis: I was gonna say, I keep waiting for the "riot" part.

Teresa: There wasn't much... rioting.

Travis: No, they were singing the National Anthem.

Teresa: And then lots of people were arrested?

Travis: Huh. Okay!

Teresa: Um, but this is credited as the beginning of the anti-authority trend for the rest of the 1960's.

Travis: Oh, wow! Okay! And I love that part of the anti-authority trend began with them singing the National Anthem.

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: Listen. That, folks? That's poignant. That's making a point right there, and I appreciate it. Okay.

Teresa: So, there were different influxes of groups using it as combination business and protest until the 70's, when the ban was finally lifted. Um, but you still couldn't sing on the subway, subway platforms. Um... I mean but people did it anyway? [laughs]

Travis: It's almost like maybe the police might have bigger things to worry about.

Teresa: Yeahhh, in a little city like New York. For a while, there was kind of, like, "Sure, you can sing on the subway, but you can't use amplification—amplification."

Travis: Amplification.

Teresa: That's it.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, and... [laughs] there was an article I read that had a really funny visual of, uh, a police officer chasing a guitar player with a decibel reader.

Travis: [laughs] That is funny.

Teresa: Which doesn't make any sense, because as soon as a train goes by the decibels are off the scale anyway.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: Aanyway... um, so now New York City is pretty much still known as the American hub of street performing and busking. But, like, there are different municipalities and different boroughs who still use, like, licensing and permits and

public versus private property and things all like that to kind of keep a lid on things, I guess.

Travis: In LA, at least on the Santa Monica piers I'm thinking about, they have, like, the little stars, and they're numbered spots where, like, you get a spot to street perform on Santa Monica pier, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah. So, like, that's what I think about when I think about like, "Yes, you can perform, but this is where you do it," and that kind of thing.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: I think it's gr—listen. I love street performers. Even the weird ones. [holding back laughter] Even the human statues.

Teresa: [laughs] We saw one of those when we were in, uh...

Travis: Vegas.

Teresa: Vegas.

Travis: Yeah, in the Venetian—uh, in the mall they have people do human statues to look like Venetian statues. It's really cool, and yeah, a little off-putting, but it's still cool! I like it!

Teresa: Bebe was not impressed.

Travis: No! That's hard—that's a hard concept for a two year old to be like, "Oh, that—that statue's a human being, you say? Cool, cool. I'm gonna go stand with them."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, it's not—they don't quite—it doesn't work out that way? If anything, she was as off-put as I was, but with less context.

Teresa: Right. Uh, so some real quick dos and don'ts before we get into questions.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, hey! Give a dollar if you are inspired to stop and watch the performance.

Travis: I'm sure that that is a thing that we will come back to many times in the question section, too, but yes.

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, also... these buskers are people, too. If they're taking a break, feel free to ask them a question, suggest a song, something like that. Not while they're working, in the way of, like, in the middle of a tune or something, but like I said, they're people too.

Um, and do understand that this is their job, and if you can't give them anything, sometimes you can ask if they have a social media account that you can follow, or if you do take a picture or take a video, I also suggest that you donate something.

Travis: Or at the very least, like, be able to tag them in it if they do have a social media account.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly.

Travis: Credit. Credit them in some way.

Teresa: Yeah. Give credit where credit's due. Um, and for some don'ts: hey, don't heckle. That's not nice.

Travis: Well, yeah! That's true... in *all* things!

Teresa: Yeahhh!

Travis: Well... that said, unless someone's *really* asking—

Teresa: No.

Travis: Mm—listen. Here's where—here's the one time I think—

Teresa: It might be part of the game. If everybody's in on the game.

Travis: That's not what I'm saying. I—listen. This is me, Travis McElroy, speaking as an individual, not as a co-host of an etiquette show. If someone is doing, like,

something incredibly problematic, or, like, saying something deeply, deeply offensive, I think it's okay to say, "That is not okay. That is offensive." And then leave.

Teresa: I don't think that's heckling, though.

Travis: Well—I think it is. If you're at, like, a comedy show and someone's like—I think it's okay. But that's me, Travis McElroy, individual; not Travis McElroy, etiquette advocate. I have no idea what the etiquette is on it, but I think if someone's saying something horrible, you can say something, and then walk right out of that comedy club or wherever.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, also, don't make change in the busker's, like, tip jar.

Travis: No!

Teresa: There might be circumstances where, say, you have a 10 dollar bill and you are only intending on giving 5 dollars to a person. Perhaps, if you ask, "Can you make change?" They will allow that.

Travis: Yes. Don't just, like, reach into their money. That's shady business, right? Because *you* know what your intention is, but there are probably plenty of people who would do that as, like, a scam, and throw in a one, and "make change" by taking money out. Don't do that.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: It looks bad.

Teresa: And again, if you—if you don't have any money, but you are—you're enjoying the performance, do stay back, um, and, like, don't reach for your wallet. That gets people's hopes up! Uh, but stay back so that the people who *can* donate for the performance can get to the hat, the tip jar, or whatever it is.

Travis: Hey, let's talk more about etiquette when we answer some questions. But first! How about a thank you note for our sponsors?

Teresa: Great!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Shmanners is sponsored in part this week by Z—uh, Quip! Ah, Quip first. Then we'll do Zola, which was the word I was about to say—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: -'cause I like saying both of those words a lot. Quip and Zola—

Teresa: They're good words!

Travis: —are both very funny words. They're great and I love them. But first, Quip. Listen. You gotta brush your teeth. I—I hate to nag you about this, listener. But you gotta brush your teeth!

Teresa: Now that I'm over my morning sickness, I'm back to my twice a day habit.

Travis: And listen, I wear an Invisiline retainer now, so I brush my teeth *and* my fake teeth, and it's great. And here's the thing: Quip makes it easy. Because listen, most of us don't do it right or don't do it long enough or whatever, or we use those, like, electric toothbrushes that beat up our teeth and, you know, like, are all bulky and feel weird to use.

But not Quip! Quip is an electric toothbrush that's gentle on your teeth, and gets the job done, *and* is compact enough that you don't feel like a, I don't know, like a—I don't know, like some kind of monster using it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay, yeah! There we go.

Teresa: [laughs more]

Travis: It has a timer in it, a built-in two minute timer to let you know when to switch movements and when—what? Switch movements? What am I even talking about? Switch segments!

Teresa: Sure, switch the movements of your face! [laughs]

Travis: Sure. And it'll let you know when you've done it long enough, because listen, none of us brush our teeth long enough. And they will send you a new brush head every three months, so that you are replenishing your brush head! 'Cause also we don't do that enough.

Listen: Quip is great. They'll send those replacement brush heads for just 5 dollars. Uh, listen. If you're doin' Quip, what are you even doing at this point? I don't know what else to tell you. It's perfect for getting back into a routine, and it starts at just 25 dollars, and if you go to [Getquip.com/shmanners](https://www.getquip.com/shmanners) right now, you'll get your first refill pack for free.

Oh, I should also mention before I finish, my favorite toothpaste I've ever had in my entire life.

Teresa: I do love that toothpaste.

Travis: And they have—

Teresa: It's refreshing, but not, like, overpowering?

Travis: Right! And now they have kids' toothpaste and kids' toothbrushes, too.

Teresa: [sing-song] Heyy!

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Gonna check those out.

Travis: Uh, so, that's your first refill pack free at [Getquip.com/shmanners](https://www.getquip.com/shmanners).

Teresa: Shmanners is also sponsored in part, as Travis mentioned, by Zola this week. Um, Zola takes the stress out of wedding planning with free wedding websites and easy wedding registry, affordable invite suites, and more!

Um, you can take care of everything [audibly smiling] from A to Z at Zola!

Travis: Oh, I get it!

Teresa: You guys can have that. I made that up for you.

Travis: Ohhh! Man, you're so great.

Teresa: You can also register for honeymoon funds and gift cards, along with physical gifts. Here's the thing that I love the most about the Zola site: I really like—and we've mentioned this before. I like how if you put a large gift or a large, like, honeymoon goal or whatever, your—the people you invite and wanna give you gifts can take off a chunk at a time. No one feels like they have to pay for the whole thing—I don't know, whatever you're doing, swimming with dolphins or whatever. Right?

You don't have to do that, because Zola makes it easy to parcel it out in affordable chunks. Also, if you've registered for physical gifts other than, uh, maybe they're—maybe they're big, maybe they're small. You can choose the way that you ship them. You can ship them directly to the couple, you can ship them to yourself and then give it to them yourself. Like, all this kind of stuff.

Travis: Especially great if you're doing, like, a destination wedding, right? Yeah!

Teresa: Especially great!

Travis: Ship is straight to their house instead of, like, having to get it there and they lug it back or whatever.

Teresa: That's right. Um, so you can start your free wedding website, and also get 50 dollars off your registry on Zola when you go to [Zola.com/shmanners](https://www.zola.com/shmanners).

[music plays]

Renee: Well, Alexis, we got big news.

Alexis: Uh-oh.

Renee: Season 1, done.

Alexis: It's over.

Renee: Season 2, comin' at you hot!

Alexis: Three years after [laughs] our season 1.

Renee: Three and a half. Three and a half. Technically almost four years.

Alexis: Alright. Alright.

Renee: And now, listen. Here at Can I Pet Your Dog?, the smash hit podcast, our seasons run for three and a half years, and then at season 2, we come at you with new, hot co-hosts named you.

Alexis: Hi, I'm Alexis. [laughs]

Renee: [laughs] And we also have, uh, future of dog tech.

Alexis: Yeah.

Renee: Dog news.

Alexis: Dog news.

Renee: Celebrity guests.

Alexis: Oh, big shots.

Renee: Will not let them talk about their resume.

Alexis: Nope, only the dogs.

Renee: Only the dogs! I mean, if ever you were gonna get into Can I Pet Your Dog...

Alexis: Now's the time.

Renee: Get in here!

Alexis: Every Tuesday.

Renee: At MaximumFun.org.

[music plays]

Janet: Hey! I'm Janet Varney. And like many of you, some more recent than others, I used to be a teenager. In fact, just about all of my friends were too, including wonderful women like Alison Brie.

Alison: I'm dead center on the balance beam. And this is like, a big gym. All the kids' parents are there watching. I have to stop, like when you have to pee so bad and you can't even move, and then I just go.

Janet: Oh, no! [laughs]

Alison: I just pee right in the middle of the high balance beam.

Janet: So join me every week on the JV Club podcast, where I speak with complicated, funny, messy humans as we reminisce about our adolescences and how they led us to becoming who we are. Find it every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[music plays]

Travis: Okay. Got some questions here. Are you ready for some questions?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. This is from Levi.

"Am I allowed to join in if I know the song and can harmonize pretty well? I don't want a cut, I just wanna be involved."

Teresa: Hmm... you know, the thing is, not all performers are able to, um, go with the flow like that, and you'll probably really put them off if you just jump in without asking. Here's something that you can do. In between songs, if you wanna suggest a song and say, "Hey, I like your style. I'd love to sing with you. Can you sing this song with me?"

Travis: Right.

Teresa: They will have the opportunity to say yes or no, instead of the kind of awkward, uh, [through laughter] let's say body language and eye contact that might come with, "Hey, man, this is my deal, and I'm—I'm not quite sure what to do with you."

Travis: Right. And I will also say this. Okay, one: I think that singing along to yourself is one thing. Singing, projecting, to turn it into a duet is another. Like, I think it's fine to sing along to a song.

Teresa: Yeah! That's showing your enthusiasm, you're enjoying it.

Travis: Right. But I think, to Teresa's point, if you, like, request a song to sing along with, you should tip *pretty* well.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Right? Because now you're saying, "Provide an experience for me."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And this question ties into that, from Michelle.

"Can you make requests, so long as you're prepared to tip?"

Ab-so-lutely. Right?

Teresa: Yes. Don't make it while they are doing a song, or whatever it is that they're doing. Do it in between, um, because it's distracting for the audience, it's distracting for the performer. [through laughter] If you do it while they are trying to concentrate on what they're doing.

Travis: I would also say, when you're thinking of making a request, you know, stick to standards, well-known things, right? You know, pretty—

Teresa: Yeah. Not everybody knows Wonderwall.

Travis: Right. Well—no, everyone knows Wonderwall.

Teresa: Ehh, I don't know if everybody knows Wonderwall.

Travis: I was thinking more like, you know, obscure... a little bit more obscure than Wonderwall.

Teresa: Free Bird.

Travis: No, everyone knows Free Bird! What are you *talking* about?!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I'm saying, like, this band that only you and your friends have ever heard of that, you know, maybe your other friends started.

Teresa: The Beatles?

Travis: Not—No—Teresa!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Everyone knows The Bea—what are you talking about?!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: No. The Beatles is fine. Only certain Beatles, though.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay. Uh, this question is from Del.

"When seeing somebody street performing and I like what they're doing and I wanna give them some money, how much do I give them?"

Teresa: Um... I would say it depends on how long you stay, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, if you are goin' somewhere and you can only stop for a second, whatever you have in your pocket's fine. If it's a couple—if it's some coins, that's okay. If it's a dollar, that's fine, but the longer you stay, the longer you are taking up space in front of the performer that someone else who could drop a few coins could be in.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So I think that although it sounds like a lot, 20 dollars is probably the max that I would give somebody. If it were, like the first question asker said, if it was a highly personal experience and someone really went out of their way to make your day, totally. I'd give 'em a 20.

Travis: Well, along those same lines, like, I would say the impact it has on you is also, like—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Uh, I—we were in Scotland and we heard a performer do Country Roads, right?

Teresa: Ohh, yeah!

Travis: And that, like—that hit me, right? That was—it was very emotionally cathartic to me to be so far away from home, and to hear basically a love ballad to my home state was, like, really impactful for me, so I tipped very well because, like, I had a huge catharsis, emotional moment, you know what I mean? So I would say, like, especially if you're like, "Wow, they're doing an amazing job." Or like, "This person is really giving it their all," you know what I mean? Like, that—reward that kind of, uh, behavior, I would say.

Teresa: Yeah. And it really does scale up the longer you spend and the more you feel.

Travis: Yes. But, I mean, I think a dollar is fine. I think it's one of those things, if everyone gave a dollar, you know?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It would be a good day. This is from Elise.

"How do I deal with a very loud street performer who is always playing outside my apartment late at night?"

Teresa: Ooh... this is tough.

Travis: I would say—my advice just to start off with is to ask them nicely, you know, if they would possibly consider moving to the corner, or—

Teresa: Or to stop playing after 10?

Travis: Right. I mean, you know, I think—

Teresa: But you also have to consider where you live, right? Do you live on a busy street in Hell's Kitchen in downtown New York? Then there are people out all hours of the night anyway, right? And so this one performer, who happens to be directly outside your apartment, is just going where the people are, right?

But, say that you live... well, if you live in Huntington, right? Um—

Travis: Then what is that person doing outside? There's no one outside!

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe there's a few bars down by Marshall that are frequented.

Travis: *Maybe. Maybe on a Friday.*

Teresa: Right. So in that circumstance, perhaps you can speak to them and say, "Listen. This is not doing you any favors, it's doing me any favors. Would you pick a different spot, or at least stop playing after 10?"

Travis: I think that in general my first move would be to talk to them, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Without being upset, because here's the thing: the chances that they're doing it, Elise, because they're mad at *you*—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —is very slight, right?

Teresa: Very slim.

Travis: So I think that if you go to them and say like, "Hey, um, I just wanted to ask if there was any possibility, you know, that—like, this is about the time that I'm asleep, and is there any way you could play across the street, or, like, down a couple yards that way," or whatever.

And you know what? Chances are they'd be like, "Oh, yeah, of course," or whatever. Right? If it ends up becoming a *thing*, maybe talk to, like, a building manager or something and see if there's, like, a route to go that way where the building could talk to them. Um, but yeah. I think it's worth talking to them, you know?

Teresa: Absolutely. There are lots of avenues to go down before you need to, uh, call in a noise complaint to the police.

Travis: Yes. That is definitely not something to jump to. Uh, this is from AJ:

"How do I politely leave a performance if I am the only one there, or one of just a few watching? I always feel bad, like I should stay and watch."

Teresa: Um... no street performer wants you to feel bad while you're standing there. [laughs]

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So, stay as long as you can. Please do tip, especially if you've stayed for a while, but a nice wave, a nod of the head, you can catch their eye, say thank you—like, mouth "thank you," and just go!

Travis: Yeah. The fact of the matter is, I'm sure that they want people to enjoy their music, but, like, once you've tipped, you know, like, feel free to carry on your way, right? That's—that's what they're doing it for.

Teresa: Yeah! And also, like service in a restaurant, they're always trying to turn tables, right? So you standing there longer than you actually want to be there may be prohibiting someone else from coming up and standing and listening and donating.

Travis: Now let me ask this, okay? One step further than this. That, uh—this question is from Faun:

"What's the best way to deal with a busker playing music to you specifically? Do you have to stay for the whole song?"

Teresa: After you tip, I don't think so.

Travis: And also, here's the thing: this is—

Teresa: That's the acknowledgment of, "I see what you're doing. Thank you very much. Here's some money." And then you can leave.

Travis: They are also trying to, you know, catch your eye and engage you to get you to stop, right? Like, that is a method of getting you to stop and listen and tip, right?

Teresa: Where were we? We were in Nashville?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Ohh, you wouldn't've—okay, so after Shmanners is over at a live show, and Sawbones, Sydnee and I usually take all the kids back to the hotel, 'cause it gets kinda late at the live shows. And in Nashville, there was this busker who played guitar and sang, you know, just little country ditties, and started making them up about the little girls, 'cause they were all dressed so cute.

Um, but these children needed to be put to bed, so all we could really do is just kind of wave and say "Thank you, oh, that's so nice," but we never stopped. We kept walking. And there was no ill will. Like, people understand, if you can stop, you can stop, and if you can't, you can't, and that's fine.

Travis: Uh, one last question, here. This is from Mara Lee:

"What's the etiquette on dancing to buskers' music? I'm, like, a semi-professional dancer and I usually wanna dance along, but I'm worried that they might feel I'm trying to steal their thunder."

Teresa: Um, I think that this has to do with the circumstance? Like, say—I've seen those really cute videos of, like, in a plaza in Italy or whatever, like, someone's playing an accordion and old people are dancing, right? He's playing their song. I think that's perfectly fine! Um, because it's a wide enough space, there's still space for the performer to feel like people can see them, and they're dancing because they enjoy it, not because they're looking for tips as well.

Travis: Yes. I think that that's maybe the tricky thing, there, Mara Lee, which is like, if you're dancing in the crowd, you know, you're dancing! That's great. As soon as you make yourself a part of the show—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: —right? Like, the chances that you are stepping on their toes is higher than the chances of they're, like, "This is it! The missing energy I've been looking

for!" Right? It always makes me think of that one Bob's Burgers where Bob has the banjo and, like—

Teresa: Oh. [laughs]

Travis: —and Jimmy Junior is doing his, like, musoems—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Museoms.

Travis: —the musical poems, and Bob's like, "This is it! My banjo moment!" And, like, that's the thing is, like, I don't think that the busker's like, "Ooh, I really hope someone starts doing, like, a choreographed dance to this," right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But if you're enjoying it and you're dancing for your own enjoyment, like, in the crowd, I think that's fine!

Teresa: Totes.

Travis: Look at it this way, right? If you went to a concert, you would dance in the audience, but you wouldn't hop up on the stage and start dancing with the performer, right?

Teresa: Unless you're Courtney Cox, right?

Travis: Is that what happened? No, she was still dancing in the crowd, and he called her up.

Teresa: Oh, he did?

Travis: He did. She didn't just, like—

Teresa: That's part of the video, right?

Travis: I don't know!

Teresa: That famous video! The Bruce—anyway.

Travis: Okay. But yes, don't hop up onstage.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Alright! So that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for listening. Um, real quick, before we get anything else, we are going to be in Washington DC. and Pittsburgh this week doin' a tour, so if you have any ideas for topics, for maybe a show we could do, let us know, and if you have any ideas for topics in general, even if they are not Pittsburgh or D.C. related, feel free to email those to us at shmatterscast@gmail.com.

Also, I am going to be at New York Comic Con the first weekend in October, so keep an eye on Travismcelroy.com and I'll be showing my schedule there. Uh, make sure to check out all the other amazing shows on Maximumfun.org. You can also go to Mcelroy.family to see all the other McElroy shows there, and also find links to our merch and to tour dates!

Teresa: We also like to thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. Twitter is where we reach out and get a lot of the listener submitted questions for our shows, and you can watch [@shmatterscast](https://twitter.com/shmatterscast) and heed the call when we ask for those questions!

Um, also thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our cover photo for the fan-run Facebook group Shmatters Fanners. Go ahead and join that group if you're lookin' to give and get excellent advice from other Shmatters fans.

Also, thank you this week to our brilliant research assistant Alex. I love reading all of her cute little notes, and she does a great job organizing my thoughts for this show!

Travis: Oh, and I almost forgot! This episode was a topic suggestion from Simone! Simone recommended busking and music performing, and thank you so much! We love when we get suggestions, so thank you, Simone.

Teresa: Yeah! You send us a suggestion to shmatterscast@gmail.com, [through laughter] and we will do our best to say your name on our episode. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah! Thanks, Simone! Alright folks, that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next time.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners...

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

[theme music plays]

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