

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. It’s a unique challenge for an actor to play a villain in a movie or TV show that’s not just compelling to watch, but also a person you can sympathize with—maybe even relate to. On <i>Ted Lasso</i> , there is a character named Rebecca. <i>Ted Lasso</i> is, if you don’t know, a sitcom about an American football coach who finds himself in London coaching a soccer team. If you haven’t seen the show’s first season, we’re about to drop some spoilers. Apologies. Anyway. Rebecca. Rebecca is the owner of Richmond FC, the soccer team. And when the show starts, she’s just inherited the team in a divorce settlement. She’s the one who came up with the idea of hiring Ted, who’s played by Jason Sudeikis.
			If it seems like a bad idea to hire an American football coach to coach a soccer team, well—Rebecca would agree. At least at first. Her goal in hiring Ted is to ruin the team and make it a joke, because it was the only thing her ex really loved. But as the show goes on, you learn more about Rebecca. You find out about the humiliation and heartbreak she endured during her marriage, and you see her change. She gives up on revenge. She stops working to sabotage the team and she finds inspiration and joy through Ted and the rest of the squad.
			In the hands of some actors, that transformation could be unearned, hard to believe. But Hannah Waddingham, who plays Rebecca, isn’t most actors. Playing Rebecca, she commands authority but almost always with vulnerability breaking through. She balances pain, anger, and compassion so ably that it’s impossible to imagine anyone else playing the role. Hannah has been performing for decades now. But you probably haven’t seen her onscreen all that much. Hannah Waddingham was originally a stage performer. She’s had award-winning parts in shows on Broadway and London’s West End. She’s performed in <i>Into the Woods</i> , <i>Spamalot</i> , and <i>Kiss Me, Kate</i> . As you’re about to hear, she’s been enjoying the new work and the challenges that come with it.
			Before we get into her interview, which is conducted by our friend Linda Holmes, let’s hear a little bit of <i>Ted Lasso</i> ’s brand-new second season. After a tumultuous year that saw Richmond FC relegated to a lower league, the club’s members and employees find themselves at a personal crossroads. What do they want from work? From family? From love? Hannah Waddingham, our guest, plays Rebecca Welton. And in the first episode of the new season, she’s dating. She’s getting coffee with her new boyfriend. But—like we said—she’s still kind of figuring out what she wants.
00:02:58	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.

00:03:00	Clip	Clip	<p><i>[Music plays softly over the loudspeakers.]</i></p> <p><b>Rebecca (Ted Lasso):</b> You know, my friend Flo once told me that intimacy was all about leaving yourself open to being attacked. Isn't that horrible?!</p> <p><b>John:</b> I've not heard that one. <i>[Chuckles.]</i></p> <p><b>Rebecca:</b> I mean, it does make you realize how scary it is, allowing yourself to be intimate again. I mean, you really do have to be brave. And that's it right there, isn't it? I need to be brave enough to let someone wonderful love me without fear of being hurt and without fear of being... safe.</p> <p><b>John:</b> Sorry, are—are you breaking up with me?</p> <p><b>Rebecca:</b> I'm so sorry. I—I actually didn't know I was going to do that.</p> <p><b>John:</b> No, no, no, it's alright. It's alright.</p> <p><b>Rebecca:</b> <i>[Beat.]</i> Coffees are on me.</p> <p><b>John:</b> Yeah, fair enough. Cheers.</p>
00:03:54	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:55	Linda Holmes	Host	Hannah Waddingham, welcome to <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:03:58	Hannah Waddingham	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Awkwaaard!
00:04:01	Linda	Host	<i>[They laugh.]</i> Now, I have to ask you: am I pronouncing your name correctly, as a British person would? I—Americans, we hit the like “WaddingHAM”. I'm assuming—
00:04:08	Hannah	Guest	Well, do you know what? I don't—the thing that I love about Americans, you always check in about how it's pronounced. And Waddingham (Wadding-Ham) is just great or Waddingham (Waddingem) or more English, but Waddingham (Wadding-Ham) is just great as long as it's not blooming Waddington, which I get all the time in this country.
			<i>[Linda chuckles.]</i>
00:04:30	Linda	Host	And people then wonder why I get stroppy about it. And I'm like, “It's not my name, man!” Well, there's nothing wrong with having your thoughts invaded by a small, stuffed bear. But yes, it's not—it's not Waddington.
			<i>[Hannah laughs.]</i>
00:04:48	Hannah	Guest	I'm delighted that we can do this. You know? I have to assume that, as we've been talking about—that you're doing more American press around <i>Ted Lasso</i> than you probably have in a while. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Yes. I am. But I love it, because everyone that we've spoken to—all of us—everyone's loving it. And so, you know, what's not to enjoy for us? To have something that you all care about so deeply

00:05:06 Linda Host being so embraced and loved, universally, is—I mean, I can think of—definitely think of worse jobs to have.  
For sure. For sure. It's—you know, it—I think the first season of *Ted Lasso*, which was so well-received, was also so—it was so well-timed in the sense that I know that I was, and a lot of people were, you know, obviously stuck inside and not really able to go out and do things. Having something that is so warm and positive show up, it was the right time I think for the right kind of show.

00:05:30 Hannah Guest I think it was in two ways, really. Sometimes, I feel like it does the show and its message and vibe a disservice by talking about it in terms of the pandemic. I do think that because the writing is so exquisitely drawn, I do think that it probably would have had this effect on everyone anyway. 'Cause I feel like there was a need for it in society. People being kind to each other just because you should treat people as you would wish to be treated.

00:05:59 Linda Host Yeah, and I think that's absolutely right. And it's interesting because I love the first season. I enjoyed it so much. But I am—you know, I am on the team that says I think the second season is a real leap in terms of the amount that the—that the different characters have been able to develop and grow and, you know, as welcome as that first season would have been at any time, I think the second one is so, so impressive.

00:06:35 Hannah Guest Is that—is that your sense? Do you feel like there's a big jump in the second season, in terms of letting more people breathe a little bit?  
Well, more importantly than anything, I'm just thrilled that you think so and I hope that most people do. You know? Yes! I would agree. I would say that the show is immediately jumping into greater depths, higher heights, greater lows for everyone. And for the writers' room, who are an absolute bunch of ninjas. I think that they have fed absolutely every character and fleshed it out to the absolute perimeters. And that's not necessarily always the case with shows, I don't think.

00:07:11 Linda Host Yeah. How much did you read when you first read the role of Rebecca and kind of to decide whether you were interested in it—how much of it did you read? Because in the first—you know, in the first couple of episodes, she could have really been a sort of a type and she obviously isn't. But she could have been.

[Hannah hums in agreement.]

00:07:30 Hannah Guest How much did they give you?  
You would be really shocked to know that when I went in for the first meeting—obviously it was only a few scenes or sides, as we call them—and then when I was flown out to LA for a chemistry read with Jason, to the Warner Brothers lot, I'd been given like what I can only describe as a travel brochure amount of scenes to look at.

[Linda chuckles and affirms.]

But, still, it was only from the pilot. I had no idea of the trajectory through it, you know, in terms of Rupert, in terms of how much—you know—a tiny little shortbread biscuit would mean to her. About her and Sassy. About her and Keeley. I had no idea at all.

And I certainly had no idea about the outcome of episode nine, where she's on her knees with the—with what Rupert tells her. I had decided that, for myself, that if they allowed me to play it at the age I am now, I wanted to make it that she had wanted to have children and had had that opportunity taken away from her by her husband saying, "No, no, we're not—it's not right at the moment. We're busy at the moment," when she was in her 30s.

So, to then see that come to fruition, that I had no idea about, I found quite odd that I'd already decided that for myself when I went into the audition. 'Cause I was—I just had hardly any idea at all past the basic kind of first episode of, "This is a wronged, usurped woman who is trying to make somebody atone for their behavior in the worst way possible."

00:09:05 Linda Host

Well, and it's interesting, because she's so—she is so different now from, you know, the way she would have looked at that time. And one of the things I appreciate about Rebecca is there is that scene where it's clear that it really hurts her that she did not have children—especially, she didn't have them under sort of false pretenses from Rupert, but that also she has this lovely—she doesn't obsess over the fact that she doesn't have children. And she is perfectly able to adore and love individual children as she does Nora, in that really, really lovely episode that they just—that they just had.

She—no, she doesn't have her own kids, but she loves—she loves kids! Especially the right kid.

00:09:47 Hannah Guest

I do think she—I like the fact that there is a—and I tried to play it up as much as possible—a nervousness about, you know, when Sassy first says, "Oh, yeah, no she's with her for the whole weekend." And I wanted to put across that Rebecca's like, "Oh, Jesus. The whole weekend? What am I gonna do?" Because—not because she doesn't want to be around a child, but because she feels her own failings and her own inadequacies in that moment.

00:10:10 Linda Host

Yeah, for sure. You know, I think a lot of people who primarily get their entertainment through, you know, television—particularly television in the US, you know, might think of you as somebody's who's like, "Oh, all of the sudden I see her everywhere." But you have been working and very successfully working for a long time in theatre. Is it—is it strange to have that sort of overnight success label attached?

00:10:38 Hannah Guest

*[Chuckles.]* Yeah, it just makes me laugh. Because, as you say—you know, I've been a leading lady in the West End and on Broadway since I was 22. *[Laughs.]*

*[Linda affirms.]*

So, the whole overnight success thing I do find funny. But I have to say, this kind of attention from such a fabulous show—I'm not entirely sure I would've been ready for it before now. You know, I obviously very much know who I am, in my mid-40s. I know who I am as a person. I know who I am as a performer. I know what my values are and what I hold nearest and dearest to me. So, I think—you know, I'm a big fatalist. I think the universe delivers you that which it's meant to at the time it's meant to. So, I don't mind being called a newcomer.

00:11:21	Linda	Host	<i>[They chuckle.]</i> What kinds of skills do you think you have now, in terms of deciding—like you said—who you are and what you wanna do? What do you think has changed about your approach to work that makes it the right time to find a project like this?
00:11:34	Hannah	Guest	100% being a mother and being a single mother. It has to be a damn good piece of whatever—theatre, film, TV, whatever—to take me away from my girl. And if it's not, I'm afraid—she always comes first, but the work—I'm happy to be a very tight, close second if the work is outstanding. And this one really is.
00:11:56	Linda	Host	Yeah. You know, it's interesting. You talked about doing West End and Broadway and, you know, you haven't just done musical theatre. You've done some of the—what I think of as the really hard kinds of musical theatre. You've done a bunch of Sondheim. Sondheim is hard!
00:12:12	Hannah	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> It is! But it's the most rewarding by a country mile. I have to say, as a—as a singer who comes from an opera background with my mother, I love the intricacies of crazy amounts of harmony. If you look at <i>A Little Night Music</i> , Sondheim's <i>A Little Night Music</i> , that I did—the leadersleaver, who are the main core of singers, they'll be in five-part harmony and then my character drops into it as well. And if you look at <i>Into the Woods</i> , the intricacies of that and the Brother's Grimm storytelling there.
00:12:39	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:12:41	Clip	Clip	"Children Will Listen" from <i>Into the Woods</i> .  <i>How do you say to a child in the night Nothing's all black but then nothing's all white? How can you say it will all be alright When you know that it mightn't be true? What do you do?</i>  <i>What do you leave to your child when you're dead? Only whatever you put in its head Thing that your father and mother had said Which were left to them too Careful what you say</i>  <i>Careful the wish you make Wishes are children Careful the path they take Wishes come true</i>
00:13:25	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:13:26	Hannah	Guest	I love detail. I think if I was doing a long running show where there wasn't detail and something to challenge me, I would get very bored very quickly. I like keeping my creative juices flowing. And it's why I've never taken over from anyone in a role. I've, rather, waited and created something with the writers or producers.
00:13:46	Linda	Host	Yeah. You know, I wanted to—I was reading a little bit about some of your theatre work and when I found a review of <i>Kiss Me, Kate</i> , which you did.
00:13:56	Hannah	Guest	Oh, god! Now don't tell me—! Oh, god, I hate—I've—do you know I've never read a review in my life?
00:14:01	Linda	Host	Well, it's not—it's not the review part. I promise, it's just fun.

*[Hannah agrees.]*

It says, “A beautiful blonde diva with the lungs of an operatic beauty and the pout of a monumental minx.”

00:14:18	Hannah	Guest	<p><i>[They cackle.]</i></p> <p>Oh my god, that’s so funny. But you see, the people always wonder why I don’t read reviews, and it’s because—as much as everybody wants to be, you know, having their performances affirmed—you could read 100 great reviews and it’ll take one review where people don’t think that much of you and that’s all you then take into—and if you’re working in live theatre, I don’t wanna take that into my next performance! You know, someone going ooh, they didn’t like this part of the song. Or they didn’t like it when I glanced over stage right or whatever.</p>
00:14:50	Linda	Host	<p>So, I’ve always thought it was just safer to stay away from it all. Well, and even the positive ones—you know, even somebody who clearly thinks they’re writing from a position of admiration—you know, it can get in your head, in terms of their characterization of who you are and what you’re work is.</p>
00:15:02	Hannah	Guest	<p>Yeah. I think that you—if you let all of that in, it’s the same with—you know, people keep laughing that I don’t watch myself in the shows I do, but there’s a very specific reason for it. Like, for example, I don’t want to watch particularly the scenes in Rebecca’s office, because I like viewing the world from behind her desk. I don’t want to see it from the other way round. I don’t want to see it from the audience’s point of view, because then I don’t feel like I’m sitting in the middle of that character.</p>
00:15:27	Jesse	Host	<p>We’ve got so much more to get into with Hannah Waddingham. After the break, she’ll talk about how her years of performing in theatre prepared her for her part on <i>Ted Lasso</i>. It’s <i>Bullseye</i>, from <a href="https://www.maximumfun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.</p>
00:15:40	Music	Transition	<p>Funky synth.</p>
00:15:43	Jesse	Promo	<p>This message comes from NPR sponsor Discover. Discover matches all the cashback you earn on your credit card at the end of your first year, automatically. With no limit on how much you can earn. It’s amazing because of all the places where Discover is accepted. 99% of places in the US that take credit cards. So, when it comes to Discover, get used to hearing “yes” more often. Learn more at <a href="https://www.discover.com/match">Discover.com/match</a>. 2021 Neilson Report. Limitations apply.</p>
00:16:17	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p><b>Music:</b> Futuristic music.</p> <p><b>Maddie Sofia:</b> Maddie Sofia here, host of <i>Short Wave</i>: the daily science podcast from NPR. Listen for new discoveries, everyday mysteries, and the science behind the headlines, all in about ten minutes every weekday. It’s a great addition to your daily listening, whether you’re a science nerd or, you know, just a little science-curious. Subscribe now to <i>Short Wave</i> from NPR.</p>
00:16:38	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music ends.]</i></p> <p><b>Music:</b> Light, cheerful ukulele and xylophone.</p>

**Dave Holmes:** Are you feeling elevated levels of anxiety?

*[Ding!]*

**Dave:** Do you quake uncontrollably even thinking about watching cable news?

*[Ding!]*

**Dave:** Do you have disturbing nightmares, only to realize it's two in the afternoon and you're up?

*[Ding! Ding! Ding!]*

**Dave:** If you've experienced one or more of these symptoms, you may have FNO: *[censored]* News Overload! Fortunately, there's treatment.

*[Music changes to buzzing, aggressive electronica.]*

**Dave:** Hi. I'm Dave Holmes, host of *Troubled Waters*. *Troubled Waters* helps fight FNO. That's because *Troubled Waters* stimulates your joy zone! On *Troubled Waters*, two comedians will battle one another for pop culture supremacy. So, join me, Dave Holmes, for two—two—two doses of *Troubled Waters* a month. The cure for your *[censored]* News Overload. Available on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org), or wherever you get your podcasts.

*[Music fades out.]*

00:17:30 Jesse Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Hannah Waddingham. Hannah is currently starring alongside Jason Sudeikis on *Ted Lasso*, the hit sitcom about an American football coach running a British soccer team. That show is in its second season. Hannah plays Rebecca, the team's owner. She's up for an Emmy for her part in the show. If you've seen it, it's not hard to imagine why. Let's get back into her conversation with our pal, Linda Holmes—the host of NPR's *Pop Culture Happy Hour*.

00:18:00 Linda Host

I wanna play a clip here. This is from season one. It is where Rebecca comes to Ted's office and she kind of confesses that she's been kind of sabotaging him. It's a—it's a scene that gets—that gets pretty heavy. I wanna listen to a little bit of it.

00:18:16 Sound Effect Transition  
00:18:17 Clip Clip

Music swells and fades.

**Music:** Melancholy piano.

**Rebecca:** This club is all that Rupert has ever cared about and I wanted to destroy it. To cause him as much pain and suffering as he has caused me. And I didn't care who I used or who I hurt. All you good people just trying to make a difference... *[On the verge of tears.]* Ted, I'm so sorry.

**Ted:** Mm. *[Beat. Footsteps. The sound of a chair being moved.]*

**Rebecca:** If you want to quit or call the press, I'll completely understand.

**Ted:** *[Sighs.]* I forgive you.

00:19:01	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:19:02	Linda	Host	You know, what I like about that and why I wanted to play that clip is that I think this role of Rebecca is so funny so much of the time. But then also, so heartbreaking. And I wonder whether the breadth of stuff that you've done in theatre sets you up perhaps the best for the range of things you're called upon to do in this role.
00:19:28	Hannah	Guest	Undoubtedly. I think the combination of the amount I've been stretched with characters in the theatre, the caliber of directors I've worked—and I'm thinking particularly about Sir Trevor Nunn—and then, you know, the age I am now and weathering the storm and then—you know, the peaks and troughs of one's own life. And I'm always very vocal, because I think it's important for audiences and listeners to know that I have lived an abusive relationship—verbally abusive relationship. And I don't hold back from sharing that which I've experienced and hopefully, come out the other side of. And the fact that I can use this show as a catharsis for that and whatever I've picked up along the way from my own life and from theatre, then this is what I mean about feeling like this show came along at the right time in my life in every way for me to lend what I needed to, to Rebecca, to make her completely three dimensional.
00:20:37	Linda	Host	Mm-hm. Before you did <i>Ted Lasso</i> , were you a football person? Were you a football watcher?
00:20:42	Hannah	Guest	<i>[Loudly.]</i> Hell no! <i>[Laughs.]</i> Do you know what? If we knew each other any better, you wouldn't have even asked that question.
00:20:53	Linda	Host	<i>[They cackle.]</i> Well, you know, it's just—perhaps it's just that it's such—you have such a persuasive love of football on my television!
00:21:01	Hannah	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i> Do you know what? I do think, though, that with Rebecca—certainly for season one—the whole fact that it's around football and that she's gone after this—she's gone after that football team 'cause she knows, as she says in season one—she says in episode one, "I've gone for the only thing that Rupert ever really cared about." And just as he ripped her heart out and smashed it on the floor, she's ripping his heart out and trying to smash it on the floor. And that is the football club.
			So, it could have been anything. It could have been a troop of darts players or a kid's netball team. It's that which the person has loved—this other person has loved—and she's trying to use it as a tool for retribution. So, season one, I didn't need to know anything about it. Season two, I have kind of upped my interest and love of it all—especially the kind of backstage vibe of the players. I've definitely upped that, because now—as we join her in season two—she is absolutely the owner of that team because she wants to be. She loves those boys. She loves those players and woe betide anyone—as you've seen in episode three—woe betide anyone that tries to come in between her and her boys.
00:22:22	Linda	Host	She is the figurehead of that team and really wants to be there. Absolutely! You know, this is clearly a role that brings you a lot of personal satisfaction. Have you—have you always felt like the



access to the kinds of roles that you wanted was there? 'Cause I've heard you say—

00:22:35 Hannah Guest *[Interrupting.]* God no!

00:22:36 Linda Host —a few thing interviews where it sounds like you haven't always felt like things—like all the doors were open that you wanted to be open.

00:22:43 Hannah Guest No, the television doors—certainly in this country—was—I feel was kind of—was let open always just a little crack and that I always felt like the *[inaudible]*. And it wasn't until—

00:22:55 Linda Host Why do you think—why do you think that is?

00:22:57 Hannah Guest God knows. I'd love to know, myself. I've no idea. But you know what? I don't care about that anymore. *[Cackles pointedly.]*

*[Linda affirms.]*

Because like—the people that really swung the door open wide and accepted me in, in a role that I perhaps would not have been considered for—well, I know I wouldn't have been considered for, because when I went for the meeting, I actually rang my agents and said, “I genuinely think I'm in the wrong place. Everyone that's here is five foot tall and 70 years old.” Was *Game of Thrones*. And David Benioff and Dan Weiss decided that I should be Septa Unella. And in that moment, they decided that I was allowed in. And so, other people did. And it's as simple as that. And I'm hugely grateful to them.

00:23:41 Linda Host I've even heard you say on a couple of occasions that it has been, for some people, a problem that you were tall?

00:23:48 Hannah Guest Oh god, that's always been a problem. But I mean, who knows what it is. God knows.

00:23:53 Linda Host Maybe the—maybe the men are just too short?

00:23:56 Hannah Guest Well, I know! Tell me about it. That's been a thing all my life. But I feel like I'm kind of flying the flag for tall women, for women of a certain age, and for people from musical theatre who've been banging on the door of screenwork as long as I was.

00:24:13 Linda Host Yeah, you know I wanted to ask you too—and watch your feet, 'cause I'm about to drop a name.

*[Hannah chuckles.]*

But I heard one time Sir Patrick Stuart say that he felt that, in the UK, the lines between the sort of highbrow and lowbrow—whether you're doing movies or TV or theatre—were not as pronounced as they are in Hollywood. And this came up, obviously, because he had been—you know, a stage actor and also Picard on *Star Trek* and all that stuff. Do you think that's accurate that they're not as high—that those barriers aren't as high in the UK as they are in Hollywood?

00:24:47 Hannah Guest Uh, what do you mean? The barriers aren't as high? I would—I would certainly say—because bear in mind, Sir Patrick is coming from largely a straight, um—

*[Linda agrees.]*

You know, straight theatre—like plays. Whereas, I would say that West End musical theatre—it is better now. I would say in the last three to five years, casting directors and producers are looking to

musical theatre actors, you know, to give them the chance to jump mediums and be able to do both. But god, in the last 20 years, I was bashing that door down and—I mean, literally bashing the door in. And I know—and I’m the one that’s made it through. And I feel there are so many other people who were bashing it down, bashing it down, and would be ignored. And I absolutely don’t mind standing on my soapbox about it, because I just think it’s wrong. There have been brilliant people in musical theatre always that have been overlooked.

Not now—and I must stress that—but yes. For a good many years, a massive, massive difference between musical theatre and not even being seen for things onscreen, because you’re considered too big. And you just think, “Well, do you know what? How about just telling the person to bring it down? Make it smaller.”

00:26:05	Linda	Host	Is that what it is? It’s that—it’s that the perception is that it’s gonna be too big of a performance?
00:26:09	Hannah	Guest	I think so. I think so—that your faces are too active. And you think, “Well, you know what? I’m sure we’re quite malleable.” Because if people are singers, actors, and dancers, they’re already quite talented people. I’m sure they could handle you whispering in their ear, “Can you think it rather than showing it?” <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:26:28	Linda	Host	Yeah. You know, you mentioned earlier—you mentioned your mom, who is an opera singer, yes?
00:26:35	Hannah	Guest	She is! Well, retired, but yes.
00:26:36	Linda	Host	Is a—is a retired opera singer. Was there ever a plan for you, in your own mind, other than theatre? Other than performing?
00:26:45	Hannah	Guest	Oh gosh. No. What—not singing, acting, or dancing? No, no, no. I—in fact, more to the point, I remember when I was little—when I was about three, I remember—distinctly remember being told that people sit in offices behind desks and I remember thinking, “They do what? They go and they do what?”

*[Linda laughs.]*

00:27:08	Linda	Host	“They sit—but they go to the same—? What?! They go and sit behind the same desk and do what?!” <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:27:10	Hannah	Guest	And nobody—nobody watches them. No! I was like, “Ooh.” And I think—because, you know, my mom was a principle at Covent Garden before I was born, and then she stopped for 11 years to bring up my brother and myself. And then she went back into the chorus at the English National Opera at the London Coliseum. So, I used to sit—as a little eight-year-old—obviously, realizing now that it’s because of a lack of childcare. I used to sit in the auditorium watching every rehearsal, every show of every opera, thinking that that was normal. And I realize now—well, I realized many years ago, of course—how—what a huge privilege that was.
00:27:46	Linda	Host	Yeah. Was there anything about her experience that made you hesitate about performing or being a theatre person?
00:27:54	Hannah	Guest	No, it didn’t make—I didn’t question it for a second. I never have. It was just a—it feels like a vocation, for me. As it—as it was for her. Both her parents were opera singers as well. So, I feel like the—you know, when I first started doing musicals, my mum used to say—because, of course, she’s <i>[dramatically]</i> very up here and,

you know, ooooh! *[Returning to her normal voice.]* She, um—she used to say, “Oh, doesn’t that hurt your voice?” Because of course you belt more in musical theatre.

*[Linda affirms.]*

And she was just like, “Is that not hurting your voice?”

I was like, *[irritated]* “Nooo, mother!” And I think I went out of my way to, perhaps, not go with what my natural voice is—which is a mezzo soprano opera singer. And I’ve realized—

00:28:31 Linda Host  
00:28:33 Hannah Guest

*[Laughs.]* Interesting!

—since last year, just before we all had to lockdown from this horrible plague that’s beset us, I was doing a show at her theatre—the London Coliseum, which was rather amazing. Me coming full-circle on our lives. And I was playing Queen Elizabeth I in Boubil and Schönberg’s *The Pirate Queen*. And doing full-on high, operatic soprano trilling. And I did think to myself, “Oh, *[censored]* damn it. I’m so annoyed that my mum’s right that this is what I should have been doing in the first place.”

*[They laugh.]*

00:29:06 Linda Host

So annoying!

Ooh, yeah. You know, it’s interesting—I assume that Rebecca sings because you sing. Is that correct?

00:29:12 Hannah Guest

No! Well, yes. Rebecca sings because I sing, because Jason and the producers and writers were like, “Well—” I mean, I even said to Jason, when they said that there was gonna be a karaoke scene where Rebecca sings, I said, “Why?”

And he said, “Why not?”

And I went well, “Well, because she’s a football club owner!”

And he went, “Yyyyyeah. But she could really like karaoke singing.”

And I went, “You’re just putting this in ‘cause I’m a singer.”

00:29:38 Linda Host

And he was like, “100%.” *[Laughs.]*

Yeah, but you know I also like the fact that when Rebecca—because you meet Rebecca through, you know, she was married to Rupert. She’s now the owner of this—of this football club, but she would have had some other dreams and aspirations for herself.

00:29:53 Hannah Guest  
00:29:54 Linda Host

Yeah, well that’s what he said. That’s what he said.

Because she’s such an interesting person.

*[Hannah agrees.]*

00:30:02 Hannah Guest

So, it makes sense to me that she would have something that she loves doing and it makes sense that it might be singing.

Well, the way that I settled it in my brain and inspired myself to find that was I was very keen to not just have her being this perfect singer who’s a professional singer. I wanted her to be

somebody who, when she finally does let her hair down, brilliantly—in that “Make Rebecca Great Again” episode—it comes at a time when she is letting her hair down with her football team for the first time. She’s letting her hair down with Sassy, who is a glimpse into her previous life. Like Sassy says, “Oh, you don’t know Rebecca. Rebecca is silly and funny and loves karaoke and is a lighthearted spirit. But Rupert has squashed her.”

So, you get that, and you also get the juxtaposition—the brilliant juxtaposition—of Jason’s character, Ted, having his first anxiety attack that we see onscreen. So, what an absolutely brilliant episode that you see all those things train-crashing together at the same time.

00:30:56	Linda	Host	Yeah, I agree. And I think, you know—it would be so easy for the first episode where people really hear you sing to come off, you know, somewhat—you know, like a—like a stunt. Like a—
00:31:10	Hannah	Guest	Yeah! Well, that’s what I was so worried about.
00:31:12	Linda	Host	Yeah! Here is somebody who we have who is a brilliant singer, so of course we’ll just put the character in a karaoke bar. But I think because of what you’re talking about—especially the juxtaposition with the—with the panic attack. It makes perfect sense, and it has a reason to be there, because you see that the—you know, the crossing up of her sort of feeling very free and open, which in some ways makes it possible for her to go and be helpful and supportive to Ted when he’s outside freaking out.
00:31:45	Hannah	Guest	Yeah. Well, not only that, but—you know, she is singing it to Nora, because that’s the song that they would sing together in the years before she nigh on deserted her because she was so far lost in the world of Rupert. But I also said to Jason at the time, “If I am going to sing, can we at least not outstay our welcome? I don’t want it to suddenly be, ‘Oh look, Rebecca’s singing.’ Can it be like a verse and a bit of the chorus and out?”

And he said, “No, no, no. We’ll totally be on Ted by then.” And he went, “I have to just say, though, I can’t believe—you must be the only performer I’ve ever met who wants to hide their light under a bushel.”

And I said, “No, I don’t care whether we’re serving me or not. I am absolutely passionate about Rebecca, and I don’t want it to muddy the waters.” And of course, it didn’t and of course they were totally ahead of me, and it was only ever gonna be how much it is, anyway.

00:32:35	Linda	Host	Right. And it makes sense to me, given what you have been saying about wanting to make sure that people understood that you were a musical theatre performer, but also—you know—an actor who could do a variety of other things, that you wouldn’t want too much musical theatre too early in a performance like this that was really different and special.
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*[Hannah affirms.]*

00:32:58	Hannah	Guest	You don’t want it to seem like it’s kind of propping up Rebecca with musical if that makes sense. No. Well—that, and also, you know, had they said that Rebecca was an absolute genius snooker player or brilliant at potholing
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then I just want to embrace whatever it is. But I need a damn good reason why she's doing anything.

00:33:14 Linda Host Right. Yeah. For people who kind of don't know—we're jumping around a little bit, but you know, we talked about growing up around the theatre and growing up around your mom and her work. What was your first sort of work in theatre?

00:33:31 Hannah Guest Oooh. Mine was a thing called *Saucy Jack and the Space*—well, the very first thing, actually, was a thing called *Joey and Gina's Wedding*, which had previously been in Chicago as *Tony and Tina's Wedding*. And it was a—

[Linda affirms.]

A comedy wedding thing, but it was interactive. So, the audience were the guests of the wedding.

00:33:49 Linda Host I was just gonna say, that's the interactive one. Right? Yeah.

00:33:51 Hannah Guest Yeeep! So, I was in that. And that's a brilliant place to cut your teeth, because you have to think on your feet. So, I would be improvising every night, pretending that I was this kind of over-the-top Chicagoan dolly bird who was married to a mobster. And it was brilliant trying to convince people in the audience that they were—they—some people had brought their friends along and told them they were actually at a wedding reception. And to convince people, you're like—you know, "Why didn't you bring a gift?"

And they're like, "Oh, we thought this was a theatre show."

You're like. "No. No. Oh dear." And I'd go off and get them something to give to the bride. And, you know, and it just—it was just a brilliant, immersive theatre. So, there was that. And then the main—the first main thing I did, in terms of a pros arch theatre production was *Saucy Jack and the Space Vixens*, at the Queen's Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue, which was a very similar thing to kind of *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, *Rocky Horror Picture Show* kind of vibe. Quite culty. And that's kind of where I cut my teeth, in terms of being known for being a kind of belter, onstage.

00:34:55 Linda Host Mm-hm. That's—and what is that—so, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*-ish. And who were you?

00:35:02 Hannah Guest I, in this—*Saucy Jack and the Space Vixens*, it was called—and I played this—I can't believe I'm even talking about it. This is like 20... 23 years ago. [Cackles.] I played this character called Chesty Prospects. So, it was all tongue in cheek and very silly. Like, the leader of the Space Vixens was called Jubilee Climax.

[Linda laughs and affirms.]

And it was just really a kind of very tongue in cheek, silly show. But the music was absolutely just cracking. Really fantastic.

00:35:35 Linda Host So, you were a Space Vixen.

00:35:37 Hannah Guest No, I wasn't a Space Vixen. I was the naughty—

00:35:39 Linda Host Oh, you weren't a Space Vixen?

00:35:40 Hannah Guest I was a naughty, fetish plastic smuggler.

[Linda affirms.]

And it was brilliant, 'cause my parents ended up coming to see it and I just thought, "Oh my god, this is so embarrassing." But they loved it because it was very tongue in cheek and very kind of silly, but with really banging tunes. So, I did that for like the first year of my theatre career. And then, after that, moved on to *Smokey Joe's Café*, which I believe has been in the states as well. I was the shimmy girl in *Smokey Joe's Café*. Nearly gave myself a hernia doing the shimmy.

*[They laugh.]*

00:36:13 Jesse Host

We'll wrap up with Hannah Waddingham in just a minute. After the break: what it's like performing in an award-winning musical when a mouse—a live mouse—is stuck in your dress. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:36:28 Promo Clip

**Music:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

**Speaker:** Over this last year and a half, the world's been through a lot. So, on this season of the *StoryCorps* podcast, we'll hear stories reminding us that even when times are hard, we can still begin again. Listen to our new season wherever you get your podcasts.

00:36:43 Promo Clip

*[Music fades out.]*

**Music:** Gentle, upbeat piano music.

**Helen Hong:** Hey, J. Keith.

**J. Keith van Straaten:** Hey, Helen! Hey, you've got another true/false quiz for me?

**Helen:** Yep! Our trivia podcast *Go Fact Yourself* used to be in front a live audience.

**J. Keith:** True! Turns out that's not so safe anymore.

**Helen:** Correct! Next. Unfortunately, this means we can no longer record the show.

**J. Keith:** False! The show still comes out every first and third Friday of the month.

**Helen:** Correct! Finally, we still have great celebrity guests answering trivia about things they love on every episode of *Go Fact Yourself*.

**J. Keith:** Definitely true.

**Helen:** And for bonus points, name some of them.

**J. Keith:** Recently we've had, uh, Ophira Eisenberg plus tons of surprise experts like Yeardeley Smith and Suzanne Somers.

**Helen:** Perfect score!

**J. Keith:** Woohoo!

**Helen:** You can hear *Go Fact Yourself* every first and third Friday of the month, with all the great guests and trivia that we've always had. And if you don't listen, you can go fact yourself!

**J. Keith:** That's the name of our podcast!

**Helen:** Correct!

**J. Keith:** Woohoo!

*[Music finishes.]*

00:37:32	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> and I'm Jesse Thorn. We're talking with Hannah Waddingham. She's an award-winning theatre actor and one of the stars of the TV comedy <i>Ted Lasso</i> . She's being interviewed by Linda Holmes. Let's get back into it.
00:37:45	Linda	Host	I think if people google you, one of the things that they will come across is the story of the mouse in your dress.
00:37:51	Hannah	Guest	Yeah, well that's come up again recently, because somebody said to me, "Have you ever had any nightmare situations onstage?" I mean, I don't think you can get much worse than a live mouse in your costume, stuck between the lining and the outer part of the dress, panicking that it can't get out. And I thought it was a muscle spasming and then I stretched my—this was when I was doing <i>Spamalot</i> in the West End. I stretched my arm out to walk across to Tim Curry and reach out the Holy Grail to him, as you do, and the spasming—I thought—stopped, when actually, to cut a long story short, it was a live mouse in my costume for one performance and dead for two before we realized what it was.
00:38:29	Linda	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah. Yeah. You know, I think anybody who's ever had mice anywhere understands that they would not want them in anything that they are wearing.
00:38:37	Hannah	Guest	Oh, it was horrific. Absolutely horrific. And it's amazing that my brain, in that moment when you're coming up through the floor holding the Holy Grail, as you do—that this feeling you feel, like just in front of your armpit—you don't immediately think it's a live mouse. You think it's your muscle spasming.
00:38:59	Linda	Host	<i>[Linda laughs.]</i> Thank god I didn't think it was a live mouse! I would have had a panic attack onstage.
00:39:01	Hannah	Guest	Why would your brain think to itself—
00:39:02	Linda	Host	Thank god it didn't! Uh, "Maybe there's a live animal in there."

*[Linda laughs.]*

You know. It doesn't seem like it would. Yeah, it's—it's interesting, because theatre—to me, theatre stories are always the best show

00:39:20	Hannah	Guest	business stories, in my—in my biased opinion. Because you do do it every night and because it's different every time.
00:39:34	Linda	Host	Well, it's that old thing, isn't it? The smell of the greasepaint, the roar of the crowd. There's nothing like it. The visceral response of, you know, in the front row and your sweat goes flying off on the front row's face and they <u>love</u> it! <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:40:13	Hannah	Guest	I've talked to a bunch of people over the last year or so who have a lot of experience in theatre and to a person, they have such concern over the future for theatre. Not just because of the long shutdowns that it's been dealing with recently, but sort of that being a blow to what is—you know, a very healthy industry in some places. I think Broadway's pretty healthy. But, you know, certainly smaller theatres—smaller opera companies, you know, it's a—it's a tough time for that. I assume that you have spend a lot of time talking to people you know from theatre over the past year or so.
00:41:19	Linda	Host	Yeah, I have. And I'm acutely aware of how privileged I am to have essentially jumped ship when I did. Because my dad always talks about this as well. He always says how lucky it was that <i>Ted Lasso</i> fell into my life, because my peers from musical theatre, I've been so impressed by their response and their survival during this 18-month period. I mean, let's not forget that these are all people that were in jobs in the West End or regionally and suddenly the pandemic comes along, and they not only lose their jobs, but there's no furlough in theatre. And I don't think people talk about that enough. I'm appalled that people have been so universally had the rug pulled out from underneath them and they've just had to get on with it.
00:41:33	Hannah	Guest	Now, if you look at people who might be married or with somebody else or with children, that's two incomes just gone. And the fact that I've heard that some people have had to reaudition for their own part that they left previously—I just think that's—there's—where is the respect, there?
			For sure. What do you think the American or the UK appreciation for arts—like what do you think it needs? What do you think the arts needs from us that they're not getting?

*[Linda affirms.]*

Money, money, and a bit more money.

*[Linda laughs.]*

The West End and our regional theatre were doing great guns—going great guns before the pandemic happened. And it just feels like—I mean, it's—other than Broadway, you know, on par with Broadway, the West End in particular is the most revered theatre in the world. But that means that the people that are in that line of work should be revered as well. And all these regional—like you were talking about, all the smaller theatre companies that have been closed down, regionally, and I'm sure it's the same in America as well. Give them the money to survive this moment and get them back on the map. Because they deserve it. Because they are the absolute, hardcore workforce at the coalface and the first



thing people will want to do after this pandemic is go and see live theatre or live shows, festivals, whatever.

00:42:32	Linda	Host	You have to feed that industry, otherwise it will die! Yeah, it's definitely—it's very high on my list of things I wanna do when I go back to, you know, going to New York and things like that. 'Cause I was in a pretty good groove of seeing a relatively regular supply of plays and musicals and haven't been, obviously, in a year and a half at least. And I think it's high on a lot of people's—high on a lot of people's lists. And it's been hard. I—as you say, same thing here. It's been difficult to get that support, I think, lined up. And people have tried and advocated, but it's definitely—it's a huge challenge.
00:43:04	Hannah	Guest	Well, also, the amount of—I don't know whether it's the same in America. I presume it is. The amount of West End performers who have fallen through the cracks in terms of being given any financial help.
			<i>[Linda affirms.]</i>
			You know. So, they've had to go off and be delivery drivers or find some other form of income. I just think it's shameful. I really do. And thank you for asking, because whether people like me or not, commenting about it, if I don't use this platform that I have been afforded the luxury of having for good and raising this subject that I don't think enough people know—that people in theatre were not furloughed—I don't see why—I don't see how that was allowed to happen. Because everybody needs—there is a reason why it's one of the oldest industries in the world, and it's because there is an absolute basic human need for entertainment and distraction.
00:43:58	Linda	Host	Well said. Absolutely agree. Could not agree more. It's funny, I—as I'm thinking about what else I wanna ask you before I let you go, I looked at the tabs at the top of my computer and I realized that earlier today I was watching one of the Stephen Sondheim—have you ever watched the masterclasses?
00:44:18	Hannah	Guest	Oooh, no I haven't.
00:44:20	Linda	Host	So, there are these—they're old. They're from, I don't know exactly—from, uh, when they are. But they're from maybe the '80s? Maybe the '80s-ish? And he's instructing students on—
00:44:31	Hannah	Guest	Ah! I didn't—! Yes, I have seen it. I didn't realize that's what it's called. Yes! Yes, I have seen those. Like a one-on-one thing but with an audience there.
00:44:38	Linda	Host	Uh, yeah. And I thought—I was thinking of that because every time that I look at, you know, something about "Send in the Clowns" or something like that, I always look up that masterclass. Because I always think, "That has gotta be the most terrifying thing in the entire world, to have him sit there and watch you."
00:44:54	Hannah	Guest	Well, funnily enough, you know what was lovely for me? When I did <i>A Little Night Music</i> for him, obviously you've just said how scary it is to have him in your midst, but I was so glad that when I was—because, of course, I'd had to sing "Send in the Clowns" every night and I was nervous that it's always been played by an older woman. So, I was thinking, "Oh god, is he gonna go for this?"

00:45:26	Linda	Host	And he came up to me after our dress rehearsal and said, "I'm sorry that I was contributing my own percussion. You had me in tears, and I couldn't hide it." Amazing.
00:45:29	Hannah	Guest	Aww! All you need is that for the rest of your life! Right? I know! I know. But then again, when I did <i>Into the Woods</i> at Regent's Park, he sidled up to me, and I think because he and I then had a shorthand from <i>A Little Night Music</i> , he came up to me. He didn't even look at me. Stood shoulder to shoulder to me and went, "Where's Cinderella."
			And I went, <i>[strangled]</i> "Um—she's over there."
			<i>[Linda laughs.]</i>
			And he went over to her and said, "My dear, it is wood, not woods."
			<i>[Linda reacts with shock.]</i>
00:45:58	Linda	Host	And just walked off and I thought, oh. Crikey, that's gotta hurt. <i>[Laughs.]</i> You know, the other thing about <i>Ted Lasso</i> that's interesting is that it does have a largely English cast. But it is, you know, kind of in the world of American television, at least the way that it's described. Do you think, for British people, is it an American show? Or is it a—is it a British show that American people just think is theirs?
00:46:20	Hannah	Guest	No, I would say it's 100% an American show in British people's eyes. Because, of course, it's Apple TV and Warner Brothers. And judging from the response—I mean, don't get me wrong, we have a great response here. But it is definitely less than we did when we touched down about three weeks ago in LA and then went to New York. And all us main cast were like, "Woah-ho-ho! Right!"
			<i>[Linda affirms with a laugh.]</i>
			Big ol' billboards and your face like 20 stories tall on the side of a building. We were like, <i>[singing]</i> "This is not like England. We're not in Kansas anymore."
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			But I am—they are definitely—Apple are definitely aware of that and are pushing it brilliantly here at the moment. There have just been some brilliant bits and pieces that they've done here which have definitely started the conversation more.
00:47:14	Linda	Host	Yeah. American television—Americans are odd in the sense that it is really television that will put you in that space where you can't go to a bar in peace. Do you know what I mean?
00:47:24	Hannah	Guest	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Yes! Well, of course—it was funny, because when myself and Brett Goldstein and Jeremy Swift, who plays Higgins—so, that's Rebecca, Roy, and Higgins—going out for a drink. And we all are such pals that we would choose to spend the evenings together even if we'd been doing press junkets all day. And we suddenly realized that it's basically like three cartoon characters walking down the street together.

*[Linda wheezes with laughter.]*

And people would scan from one—they'd go, *[in an American accent]* "Oh my god, I love you in the sh—wait—oh my god, I love—! Oh my god! Wait—you—oh my god! I love you!"

*[They laugh.]*

00:48:04	Linda	Host	Or if people hadn't noticed, I'd go, "That's Roy Kent." And they'd go, <i>[screaming]</i> "Oh my god!" It's really lovely.
00:48:09	Hannah	Guest	Well, he needs to—he just needs to—he just needs to stand back and say, "Oi!" 'Cause then people'll know it's him.
00:48:13	Linda	Host	Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Or another word which we won't repeat. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:48:16	Hannah	Guest	Yes, exactly. That's the—I chose the—I chose the only that I'm—that I'm permitted.
00:48:19	Linda	Host	You did. You chose very gently.
00:48:22	Hannah	Guest	Yeah. Well, Hannah Waddingham—WaddingHam. Either way!
00:48:24	Linda	Host	Waddingham, WaddingHam. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:48:27	Hannah	Guest	Thank you so much for doing this. This was absolutely delightful, thank you.
			Aw, well, Linda—let me tell you, it is always a pleasure speaking to someone who has absolutely immersed themselves in the subject matter, and I really appreciate it.

*[Linda thanks her.]*

00:48:38	Music	Transition	Bright, relaxed music.
00:48:41	Jesse	Host	Hannah Waddingham. You can watch her in <i>Ted Lasso</i> on Apple TV+. We are smack in the middle of the show's second season, right now. She is also nominated for an Emmy for her part in it. Find out if she won on September 19 <sup>th</sup> . Our thanks to Linda Holmes for conducting that interview. Linda is a writer and co-host of NPR's <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> , which you can listen to every weekday wherever you get your podcasts, direct from NPR HQ. Or, I guess, the homes of people who would otherwise be working at NPR HQ. Linda is also the author of a terrific novel. It's called <i>Evvie Drake Starts Over</i> . Go find that at your local bookshop. It is real—I mean, it's really great. It's funny, romantic, and an incredible character study. Go buy it. Linda Holmes. The best.

*[Music fades out.]*

00:49:34	Music	Transition	Thumpy, upbeat music.
00:49:36	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house, I bought a mango tree at the farmer's market, and I just planted it in my backyard. And, uh, we'll see how mangos grow in my backyard, I guess.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer, Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Special thanks this week to Jack Allen for recoding Hannah Waddingham's interview for us, in London. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks

to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. They've got a new record out that you should check out.

You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews in all of those places. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:50:44 Promo

Promo

**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*[Music fades out.]*