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| 00:00:00 | Music | Transition | Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue. |
| 00:00:01 | Promo | Promo | Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR. |
| | | | <i>[Music fades out.]</i> |
| 00:00:14 | Jesse Thorn | Host | I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> . |
| 00:00:16 | Music | Transition | "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. |
| 00:00:24 | Jesse | Host | Brian Cox is an actor with over 250 credits to his name. That includes award winning performances with The Royal Shakespeare Company, playing the original Hannibal Lecter in the 1986 thriller <i>Manhunter</i> , and playing the headmaster of Rushmore Academy in the Wes Anderson classic, <i>Rushmore</i> . |
| 00:00:43 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:00:44 | Clip | Clip | Max (<i>Rushmore</i>): So, you received the package. I just wanted to inform you about what's going on. <i>[A low clap of thunder.]</i> Dr. Guggenheim: I never took you for an informer, Max. Max: What's that supposed to mean? Dr. Guggenheim: <i>[Mockingly]</i> What's that supposed to mean? |
| 00:00:59 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:01:01 | Jesse | Host | But the truth is, he'll probably end up best known for playing Logan Roy on <i>Succession</i> . <i>Succession</i> is a TV drama about the mega-rich dysfunctional Roy family and the giant media empire they control. Cox's character is the family's patriarch and perhaps the coldest, grumpiest man on television today. |
| 00:01:22 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:01:23 | Clip | Clip | Logan (<i>Succession</i>): Someone spiked Pierce. Which one of you boys did it? TOM! Tom: Yes? Logan: <i>[Booming.]</i> Sit on the floor! It's fine. Tom: Seriously? Logan: Yeah! It's a game! Boar on the floor! Tom: I really—I feel— Logan: <i>[Shouting.]</i> Get down! What now? Roman: Nothing, I'll tell you later. Logan: Go on! <i>[Censored]</i> , say it! |

Roman: It's not a big deal. *[Beat.]* Lisa Arthur is going to represent Kendall.

Logan: Ha! Fine! Let's get Leo. We'll *[censored]* beast them.

[Orchestral string music fades in.]

Logan: We'll go FULL *[censored]* BEAST! *[Whispering.]* You're marrying a man fathoms beneath you, because you don't wanna risk being betrayed. You're a *[censored]* coward.
Music swells and fades.

00:02:14 Sound Effect Transition

00:02:15 Jesse Host

When you put all those credits together, I don't think it's going too far out of line in saying that's a lot of different stuff! Really different stuff! I think it's fair to say Brian Cox has had an interesting life. He wrote about it all in a memoir. *Putting the Rabbit in the Hat* covers his childhood growing up in post-war Dundee, Scotland, his time studying and performing Shakespeare in the UK, and his big break into TV and movies in the '90s. I'm really excited for you to hear our conversation with him, but before we do that, let's hear a little more of Logan Roy being mean.

This clip is from the season two finale of *Succession*. The Roy family are onboard their yacht. Logan is in a stateroom with his son, Kendall, who's played by Jeremy Strong. It's always seemed like Kendall would be the one to take over the business. It feels like he's been set up to do that. But he never has. So, he finally puts the question to his dad: what gives?

00:03:15 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:16 Clip Clip

Music swells and fades.

Kendall: Did you ever think I could do it?

Logan: Do what? The top job? Oh, I don't know. Maybe.

Kendall: You can say.

Logan: I—well, *[sighs]*. I just... you know, you're smart. You're good. But I just don't know.

Kendall: What? Come on.

Logan: *[Beat.]* You're not a killer. You have to be a killer. But nowadays maybe you don't. I don't know.
Music swells and fades.

00:04:03 Sound Effect Transition

00:04:05 Jesse Host

Brian Cox, welcome to *Bullseye!* I'm so happy to have you on the show. I'm really, really excited about this.

00:04:10 Brian Cox Guest

00:04:12 Jesse Host

Thank you. Nice to be here.

Do you think of your character, Logan Roy on *Succession*, as being motivated by money? Or something that's more than that?

00:04:27 Brian Guest

Well, ostensibly he's motivated by money, because that's his business. That's what he likes. But I think there's also something going on as well which is quite mysterious and they're still trying to fathom it out. You know? Where he's actually coming from. Because you know, he's a guy who's had a life. He's had a—created an incredible business. But there are kind of missing bits.

His background, his history, what he gets out of it, his enjoyment—you know. Does he enjoy it? Well, I think he likes the hunt. I think he likes the whole business of the hunt and the play. But I think there's also an element that is difficult for him, because he does love his children and he does try to make his children as part of the frame of the existence and the future of the company.

But there he's endlessly found wanting. Endlessly. And it's just—it's just very difficult for him. You know. And I feel—actually, I feel a lot of sympathy for him. I mean, everybody says, "Ooh, he's a bad father! Oh, a terrible father! And no wonder he's a terrible father—no wonder the kids are terrible, 'cause he's been a terrible father." Well, he was a tough father. He wasn't a particularly emotional father. He wasn't a particularly *[inaudible]*—but I don't think—I—you know, those kids never wanted for anything. You know? They were spoiled. And that's the prime satirical element of the show is these people who are entitled and don't deserve to be. You know. And the show kind of deals with that at its most extreme.

And poor Logan is actually caught in the middle of it all, because they are his kids but at the same time, they're a handful and they're not rewarding. You know. He's not getting anything back from them. He's not feeling that his children are—you know. I mean, my favorite thing is in the scene—the very end of episode three when he says—he swears and he says, "Make your own effing pile." You know. And that's what he understands; he's done it. It's hard work. And they don't do the work. They wanna cut corners. And he's hoping—he thought that Shiv might be the answer, but she talks too much. You know. She dissipates herself on her own verbiage. You know and Kendall's clearly unfit because he's neurotic and he's a drug addict and he's indulgent and he can't see the wood for the trees. And Kieran—I mean, Roman is hopeful, but he's got this potty mouth and he's to be not trusted.

So, I think it's a natural conclusion that he's looked to Tom Wambsgans. Because Tom is a country kid. He's a hick. And he's been thrown into the deep of it and he's experienced something which was way beyond his ken. Yet, he's shown care. He's the only person whose shown any real care towards Logan. So, that is something that Logan checks and says, "I'll remember this." You know. 'Cause his boy's done something. So, there's an interesting development to be had in that relationship.

00:07:53 Jesse Host

And he also has to deal with the reality before him that these people who are disappointing him, according to his values—like, these people who are not doing what he wishes they could do to preserve what he has created or to take care of what he has created, are in part bad at it because he is their dad, and it is a failure of the parents to not raise their kids right.

00:08:17 Brian Guest

I don't really buy that. You know. I—you know. My friend, Brian Dennehy—the late Brian Dennehy—was a dear friend of mine. He said, "You know, after 22, all best are off." You know? After 22, you're in your—you're really taking care of your own thing. You can blame your parents, but if you go on blaming your parents, you're not living your life 'cause you're saying that to—and I think that's a misnomer, as far as I'm concerned. You know. My parents—you know, my father died when I was eight and my mother was

seriously mentally ill for most of my—right into my teenagehood. You know. I mean, she got marginally better, but she was—had electric shock treatment and that damaged her.

So, I don't blame my parents except circumstances. And I think that Logan—you know, when you have kids, it's hard. I don't consider myself a particularly great father, 'cause I don't understand—because I was never raised to understand—the notion of boundaries. You know? Which is what they tell you: you've always got to exercise boundaries with your children. I'm hopeless. I've never been able to do that, 'cause I don't—I don't even understand what boundaries mean. It's a kind of—it's something which is already preset as opposed to something which is organic, and you find out as you live what the story is.

And I think that's the trouble with the Roy family is everything is preordained. So, there's nothing that's organically ripe, new, fresh. You know? And that's the biggest problem that they have. And it's the—in a way, it's the tragedy of Logan's life. You know? That he's lived and he's built, and he's created this extraordinary empire. And it's dubious indeed and he's ruthless and all of that and he's a character that people project certain things onto, which is understandable. But he's canny. He doesn't give a lot away. So, I don't know, I have a lot of—I have a lot of empathy for him, because I think it's a difficult situation. If he didn't love his children, it would be a lot easier. You know? Because then he wouldn't love them and that would be it, but he does love them and that's his—that's his cross.

00:10:36 Jesse Host

Brian, your character—Logan Roy on *Succession*—is Scottish American, which is roughly what you are, though you've lived all over the world. And both you and the character are from the same place, Dundee, Scotland.

[Brian confirms.]

00:10:54 Brian Guest

Is that why *[chuckling]* you are so much more Scottish talking than the character?

Well, no. It's a short story. When I was first approached by Adam McKay and Jesse, I said, "Do you know what, this character could be Scottish!"

And Jesse said, "Oh, no, no. He's gotta be American. He's gotta be American."

I said, "Okay. Fine, he's American." So, then they decided I was born in Quebec, which meant that I was a sort of mid-Atlantic mutt. *[Laughs.]* So, I said, "Okay, fine. That's okay. So, I'll do that." So, for nine episodes, I played Logan—you know. There was—the Scottish thing was not even there. And then Peter Friedman had—did an ADR session, you know, which was a post-syncing session.

And he said, "You know, they've changed your birthplace."

I said, "What do you mean they've changed my birthplace?"

He said, "You're not born in Quebec anymore."

I said, “Well, nobody’s told me!”

He said, “No, you’re not. I mean, you’re now born—” He said, “Oh, I can’t remember where you were born. Oh, let me look it up.” And so, he went up and he said, “Oh yeah, here we are. You were born in somewhere Dundee, Scotland?”

And I said, “Well, that’s where I was born!” [*Chuckles.*]

And he then said, “Well, that’s a coincidence!”

I said, “Yeah! It’s a hell of a coincidence!” I said, “I don’t know what’s going on.” And then I said to Jesse, “What is it? What is this? I mean, why am I suddenly—?”

He said, “Oh, we thought it’d be a little surprise.”

And I said, “It’s a hell of a surprise! For nine episodes, I’ve been playing this sort of mid-Atlantic mutt and now you tell me that I’m a Scot!” So, I can indulge my Scottishness a little more, now. I can be more Scottish American, which is what I eventually became. But it was so bizarre!

00:12:33 Jesse Host

So much more with Brian Cox still to come. As we said, he’s done a lot of classical theatre, and we’ll talk about how all that training has informed his role on *Succession*. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:12:47 Promo Clip

Music: Exciting, upbeat piano.

J. Keith van Straaten: Most gameshows quiz contestants about topics they don’t even care about.

Helen Hong: But for 100 episodes, the *Go Fact Yourself* podcast has asked celebrity guests trivia about topics they choose for themselves.

J. Keith: And introduced them to some of their personal heroes along the way.

Speaker 1: Oh my gosh!

Speaker 2: Shut up! [*Laughs.*]

Speaker 3: Oh! I feel like I’m gonna cry!

Speaker 4: Oh, my sta-a-a-rs!

Speaker 5: I’m so—I’m so excited to meet you.

J. Keith: Join me, J. Keith van Straaten.

Helen: And me! Helen Hong! Along with special guests DJ Jazzy Jeff and Faith Salie, plus some amazing surprise experts on the 100th episode of *Go Fact Yourself*.

J. Keith: And join us twice a month every month for new episodes of *Go Fact Yourself* here, on Maximum Fun.

[Music ends.]

00:13:32 Music Transition
00:13:37 Jesse Host

Chiming synth with a steady beat.
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, I'm talking with Brian Cox. He's a veteran of The Royal Shakespeare Company and has literally hundreds of film and television credits. You might have seen him in the past few years playing Logan Roy on the smash hit HBO show *Succession*. He has a memoir about his life and work, called *Putting the Rabbit in the Hat*. Let's get back into our conversation.

00:14:11 Brian Guest

Your father—as you mentioned—died when you were very young. You were eight years old. What do you most remember about him? It was just an extraordinary—I mean, that's one of the reasons it's very hard for me to be a father, because my father was mythic. He was generous, he was kind. I mean, he's—I wasn't—they put me in front of a television set when he was—at his funeral. So, I never attended his funeral. But apparently, there was over three or four hundred people there, you know, who knew my dad and loved my dad. And my dad did a lot for the community, which is—he had his little shop in. You know? And helped people. I mean, I went to this thing—I went to a book tour. I did a book tour of Scotland and I ended up in Dundee and there were people there, 70 years after the event—guys in their 80s—who remembered my dad and remembered how my—how kind and caring that my father had been.

Now, my problem—the problem of our family was that my mother felt that he was too caring for other people and not enough caring for his own people, for his own family. She kept saying, "Charity begins at home." And of course, I think that would've been a torturous thing for my father if that was true, and I don't think it was true at all, but he did care about people. He would go and help an old couple. He'd be working all day from five o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. And then he would go and help an old couple decorate their apartment. You know, that's the kind of man he was. And that was—he believed in that. He was a true socialist, in that sense. And—

00:15:47 Jesse Host

But people took advantage of him, and it made for a lot of—particularly for my mum—a lot of deep unhappiness.

00:15:52 Brian Guest

Do you remember when you were aware of your mom's mental illness?
Um, yeah. I suppose I was aware of it—I mean, it'd been deteriorating. And then the time I came back and... she said she was cleaning the oven. There was this—*[chuckling]* an amazingly strong smell of gas. So, it kind of hit me then. And I was ridiculously young. I was only about nine. And I just thought, "No, that's—something's not right." You know. "My mum's not right." And she wasn't right. You know. She wasn't. And she—and the only way they could deal with her disaffection and her bad memories was to try and eradicate them through electric shock treatment. And it was very primitive and very destroying.

It destroyed a lot of my mother's personality. She recovered, but you know, she was severely weakened as a result. And tragic. A tragic thing. Uh-huh.

00:16:52 Jesse Host
00:16:54 Brian Guest

Did you feel like you could rely on her, when you were a kid?
Uuh. *[Sighs.]* No, not really. I mean, she was—no, it was—it was hard for her. It was so difficult. And you know, I kind of mourned the stuff that we lost as a mother and son, 'cause it was never there. It was there initially. It was certainly there in my—in my toddlerhood, right from the—right up until the age of eight. Even though before that she had run away. I mean, she was under crazy pressure of her—you know, just 'cause she was an intelligent woman. She was a smart woman. She was a poetic woman. But she had no means of expressing herself and that was what made it really very painful for her.

And eventually, it—and she felt terribly guilty about my father's death. She felt that she was responsible. And she wasn't, of course. He had pancreatic cancer. But that was exacerbated by circumstances of investing a lot of money which she lost and the family ending up in poverty. Or—the family, it was me and my mum. That was it. My brother ran off to the army and my sister immigrated to Canada, so she was well out of it. So, we were left holding the proverbial *[chuckles]*...

00:18:12 Jesse Host

At what point did you feel like you had some perspective on this really intense family of origin? Like, at what point did you feel like, "Okay, I'm doing my own thing in the world."

00:18:24 Brian Guest

I was born with a—I was born with a survival mechanism. So, in a way, even though I would—I mean, I knew that part of my absence was to do with preserving myself. There was this thing of self-preservation which was kind of—that's what motivated absence. And when I felt that I was gonna be overwhelmed by something, I would just cut out. Because I think I—you know, I'm out of here. You know. I'm not gonna—you know, it's like—did you ever see a series called *Soap*? Do you remember *Soap*?

[Jesse confirms with a chuckle.]

It was Richard Mulligan. And Richard Mulligan used to do this snap-snap and, "I'm out of here!" *[Mimics stomping feet.]* And he'd—he would—he would literally disappear! Not there, but he would actually go, "I can't. This is all too much." And I—you know, that's I think what happened to me. But I also, at the same time, I was able to structure my life just in terms of its chaos. I had some kind of sense of purpose. And that was the lucky thing that kind of really... really kind of kept me going right from very—even before all the tragedy in my life was a sense of purpose. And I got that from really knowing that I was gonna be an actor and knowing that's what I wanted to do, because it was—you know.

And it goes back to those New Years Eve celebrations where my dad—we had a coal bunker and I used to stand on the coal bunker and I'd do jokes and impersonations and I could feel the feeling in the room, and it was the feeling in the room that I just thought, "I need to be part of that feeling in the room." I need to be—I need to be in an—in a position where I'm kind of instituting that feeling. You know? I mean, I—and that was from—you know, that age when I

was tiny wee. And I'm so grateful for that. I'm so grateful that I was given that experience. And that's why I value my profession, because I think my profession is a very—it's a very fine profession.

A lot of people kind of laugh at actors and say actors are spoiled. And you know—and of course there's elements of that which are true. But also, they're like—you know, they're like sort of—they have a kind of quality of—well, you know. They're seekers. You know? They seek. They're seekers. And so, there's a sort of religiosity about them the way that they're trying to find out—basically, they're trying to find out what does it—what does it mean? What's it all about? Why are we here? What's *[stammers]*—what are we doing? What is this whole thing? You know, we create all these myths and things that we surround ourselves—art, religion, this, that, Buddhism, you know, Taoism, Latter Day Saints, *[chuckles]* you know, Jehovah's Witnesses.

00:21:17 Brian Guest

We create all this in order to sort of get at something else and sort of—because quite a lot of the time we're just doing all that but still missing the point like bigtime.

[They chuckle.]

00:21:31 Jesse Host

Big time!

You got into theatre professionally when you were a young teenager. You were like 14 when you started working at the—at a—15. 15.

00:21:37 Brian Guest

00:21:38 Jesse Host

15 when you were working at a—when you started working at a theatre in Scotland and eventually went to Lambda, in England.

[Brian confirms.]

And I was not there, but my understanding is that this same time that you were going from—you know, a teenager who thought, "I'd like to be an actor," to—you know, a real, professional, successful stage actor as a 30-year-old or whatever was a real period of tumult and change in theatre in the UK.

00:22:11 Brian Guest

It was certainly a tumult—change and tumult in theatre, but it was also a change too that, you know, we were living—you know, the best time was the '60s. There's no question about it.

[Jesse chuckles.]

Because—you know, and everybody goes on about it, but it was true. Because we'd come out of a war and the first 50 years of the 20th century were hell. Absolute hell, what with the—you know, with the Boer War followed by the first World War, which was basically a row between three ruling families and millions of people were killed as a result of that. And then going into the Depression of the '30s and then finally the rise of Hitler and the second World War and—you know, and all coming to a head. And then—so, out of that, after '45 and we all got to that period of peace and we went through and of course, in our country, it became—you know, we lost our socialist government that had created the National Health Service, that had nationalized the railways, nationalized the mines.

And it was—it was an amazing time! But it was very stark and of course it was very anti-feudal. And that's ostensibly what the United Kingdom is; it's a feudal country. So, there was this whole feeling of social mobility, which was astonishing, so that I could come from Scotland, and I wasn't judged. I wasn't regarded as, "Oh, he's this guy from that world, and he does that." You know, I was welcomed. And the theatre community completely welcomed me that I could do anything. And it was just—you know, it was like unbelievable! I mean, I had a grant. I had—I had my—my fees were all paid. My expenses were paid. My living allowance was paid. That was unheard of 10 years later, 15 years later. Because people got cued to it. "Oh, they're getting it for free. We're gonna stop it." You know?

And there's always been that, but I'm—you know, I'm in the wake of people like Albert Finney, Alan Bates, Peter O'Toole, Tom Courtenay, those amazing actors. And then people like Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson, Carl Rice, John Schlesinger, who created that free cinema of the—of the '60s. And that was so liberating! That anything was possible! And it existed for—you know—a good ten years. And then the doors started to close, and the old ways came back to such an extent now that we—you know, working class kids don't have access to the theatre in the way I had, as a young man. I mean, it's still there; there is still the possibility of it, but there was a system whereby you were encouraged to earn—take your place. And they gave you your place.

And nowadays, you know, the top schools—I've got nothing against them; they're talented. There's no question. But they had such amazing kind of conditions. Their conditions were phenomenal. I mean—and the theatres in these public schools were second to none! And ironically, they were all taught by ex-actors, failed actors who came along and they could earn their living teaching at—you know, one of the major public schools. Now, that's fine, but what happens is to the other end of it, where the working—the working classes just got more and more alienated and less—that was less available to them. It was completely available to me. So, that's why I prize it. And I'm so angry that that has gone and I wanna see it reintroduced, because it was so necessary.

00:25:46 Jesse Host

You have done a huge amount of classical theatre in your career—basically throughout your career, you have done classical theatre. And I sometimes think that like the whole like classically trained thing is just a thing that culture critics say when they can't think of anything else to say. But I do think there is a connection between the work that you do on *Succession* and the work of acting Shakespeare, and that is that—you know, there are multiple parts of acting—you know. One could say that part of acting is reflecting an emotional truth of some kind to the audience, that kind of thing.

[Brian agrees.]

Then there is also—you know, like David Mamet said in his book about acting, it's just like saying the words loud enough so the audience can understand them. And David Mamet's contempt for acting aside, like the thing *[laughs]*—the thing that those—that *Succession* and Shakespeare have in common is there are so many words, and you have to both have the heart—the feeling—to

connect to the unemotional truth that is conveyed wordlessly to the audience. And you have to have incredible specificity with how you're using the language, because otherwise they will just lose track. *[Laughs.]* You know what I mean?

00:27:13 Brian Guest Yeah, yeah, yeah, no. No, no, I mean—*[stammering]* there is that. The line is—there's—you know, the writers do make a very clear line. And if the actor is—you know, worth his weight *[chuckling]*—you know, as a performer, then he can do that. I mean, the classical training—for me—was invaluable. You see, I wanted to be a movie actor. I never wanted to be a theatre actor. That was not what I was intending. I loved the movies. I wanted to be in the movies. But when I—when I got into the theatre and I discovered the theatre, it was like a revelation. I thought, “My god! The language!” You know? I mean, in Shakespeare you go, “Really?” And then when you work on Shakespeare more and more, you discover how subtle and how seducing his language is—how his ideas are so extraordinary and so brave and so—

And all his plays all relate to one another. He tries out something in one play and then he follows it through in another play. And also, this—always with Shakespeare is that it's all lessons about the country in which he lives. So, there's an allegorical sense to him as well. He's a—he's a political writer in that way. And that's rich! That's a rich cake! And you go, “Wow!” You know, it's—it revolutionized me. It made me into a theatre actor, which I never thought I was gonna be, because of the quality of the work! The quality of the writing. And then you get on, and not just Shakespeare, but you get onto Bowman and Fletcher, you get onto the Jacobean writers. You get onto the Restoration writers. You know, Farquhar—you know, all those amazing plays, and you discover a whole different land that you didn't—I didn't even know existed! But it fed me, and it made me. It gave me the gravitas that I needed to be an actor. And I value it highly.

So, when you come to something like *Succession*, of course it's there at your grasp, 'cause you've had the experience. You know how to deal with that language. You know how to just allow the language its top layer, but not overinflate it so that it becomes—you know, it's a kind of—you have a—you have to have a delicacy of touch dealing with this stuff. And I just—I mean, I—you know, I mean, it's like mother's milk to me. *[Chuckles.]*

00:29:42 Jesse Host I wanna ask you about a couple of American things. So, you were on *Fresh Air*, our I guess sister show on NPR, with my semi-colleague/definitely hero Terry Gross.

00:29:55 Brian Guest Yes, absolutely. I agree with you.

00:29:58 Jesse Host At the end of the interview, which I caught some of on the radio, she slipped in a cast recording of you in the mid-'90s playing Harold Hill in *The Music Man*.

[Brian confirms.]

I don't know if she asked you about that and it didn't make it into the cut, but there wasn't a conversation about it, as much as Terry loves the great American musical—certainly more than I, overall. I think I probably can compete with her in loving *The Music Man*. So,

[chuckles] how did you end up playing the most legendary American flimflam man of the musical stage?

00:30:34 Brian Guest Well, I love *The Music Man*. And I particularly love Robert Preston. You know, he was a struggling actor for many, many years. He did great stuff. He did [inaudible] and then he comes, and he hits it with that performance. And it's an astonishing performance. It's committed. It's witty. It's funny. It's sharp. It's—he dances it brilliantly. I mean—and by dancing I mean the just—the delicacy of his movement throughout the whole performance.

00:31:04 Jesse Host And he played Harold Hill onstage, then in the movie.

00:31:07 Brian Guest He created the role!

00:31:08 Jesse Host And then for many—like into his 70s, he played it onstage thereafter.

00:31:11 Brian Guest Yeah. So, I—you know, I just—actually, I was asked to direct. It was—it was at Regent's Park, and I was approached by the director of Regent's Park. And he said, "Listen, Brian, I want you to direct *Richard III*. Are you happy to do *Richard III*?" Now, I'd done *Richard III*. I was in it with Ian McKellen. And quite honestly, I didn't like the production. I was in it, and I didn't like it. I thought it was kind of—we did it as a sort of—you know, we set it like it was Nazi Germany. And it was—I thought—quite wrong, really. That was my opinion. But it was successful, because of Ian McKellen, who played Richard. You know, he gave an extraordinary performance.

But I just didn't like the play! The play I thought—you know, this isn't right. I don't know what it is, but the play is not gaining the value. So, when he said to me would you like to direct *Richard III*, I said, "Well, I would, because I'd like to get something out of my system about that play." Because I grew to hate *Richard III*. And now, I—having worked on it and directed it and, you know, realized a lot of—well, it's an early play. It's full of a lot of his early ideas, like *Titus Andronicus*. 'Cause it's written at exactly the same time. They're almost sister plays. So, I thought, okay. I'll direct the play. And I got into—and then I discovered that they were doing *The Music Man*. Now, my eldest kids—we used to watch it regularly. And I—and they said, you know, "Dad, it would be great if you did that sometime."

And it came along, and I said, "Would you mind if I auditioned?" 'Cause I—you know, I didn't audition. I said, "I'd like to audition for *The Music Man*."

They said, "You wanna audition?! Sure!"

I said, "Yeah, yeah, because—you know, I don't wanna do anything if you think that I'm not good enough. I will bow out. But I'd like to have a go." And have a go I did! And it was one of the best experiences ever. I loved it. And then finally recorded it and that—on its—we did the whole album, but I don't know what's happened to the rest of the album. It was probably terrible. But anyway, the one thing that survived is "Seventy-Six Trombones". And the clarity of—you know, that wonderful—you know, friends—you know, all that open—

But it's all an homage to Robert Preston. I couldn't have done it without Robert Preston. I kind of copied him. I pinched from him.

00:33:44 Jesse Host But I kind of inhabited him. You know. It was like I was playing Robert Preston, and I loved it. The reason I say “American stuff” is because I think that the themes of *The Music Man* are so distinctly American in that it lives in this world as—

[Brian agrees.]

That as the 19th century turns into the 20th century, and as modernity leads people to question faith, you know, that there opens this world of flimflam, which is like things that live between truth and falseness and just stay there. You know? PT Barnum—it’s not that people were fooled; it’s that people were okay in between.

[Brian chuckles and agrees.]

They—just as they were between the city and the—and the country and they were between faith and atheism. You know. Godlessness, right? Like, it lives in between. And what I love about it is that it also like—it embodies musical theatre, American musical theatre, in that it is absurd. I mean, it has the silliness, the fundamental silliness, of musical theatre. Like, musical theatre’s very goofy for everybody to go up and sing these songs. Right? But it also lives within that totally honestly. Like, it’s both things. You know what I mean?

[Chuckles.]

00:34:58 Brian Guest It is. It’s funny you should say that, because I—Liz Robertson, who played—who was married to Alan Jay Lerner and when she was very young she was married to him. I think she was his widow, I think, eventually. And Liz has retired, and she’d gone back to England, and she was married to a guy who subsequently—he’s gone now, sadly. He ran the Albert Hall. And Liz gave me a present on the first night, which was Meredith Willson doing the pitch of *Music Man* with his Russian wife who sang all the high notes. And it’s—I mean, I’ve gotta find the tape. I’ve got it back in London, somewhere. It’s a wonderful thing! Because there he is doing the whole bit, and it’s just incredible.

00:35:47 Jesse Host I mean, it’s an incredible show. Incredible show. We’ll wrap up with Brian Cox after a quick break. Stay with us. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:35:56 Promo Clip **Music:** Suspenseful, orchestral music.

James Arthur M: It’s the dramatic conclusion of *Minority Korner*, with your host, James Arthur M. Yes. That’s right. After seven years, *[echoing]* this. Will. Be. The. End! Will James and his guest cohosts solve racism, homophobia, and sexism? Will James end his longtime feud with Jennifer Hudson? Will someone get married? Turn out to be an evil twin? Will James and his guest cohost talk about news, pop culture, history, and all things nerdy?

[Music cuts out abruptly.]

Probably. Yeah, that’s probably the one that will definitely happen.

[Music fades back in.]

Find out on the dramatic conclusion of *Minority Korner*, right here on Maximum Fun or wherever you get your podcasts. *Minority Korner*, because together, we're the majority.

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| 00:36:39 | Music | Transition | <i>[Music fades out.]</i> |
| 00:36:44 | Jesse | Host | Chiming synth with a steady beat. It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with actor Brian Cox. |
| 00:36:53 | Brian | Guest | Did you think of yourself as a comic actor when you were a young actor? I—well, my inclination was always towards comedy. You know. But I kind of got diverted into—'cause, you know, I played a lot of kind of young heroes and things like that. And I didn't do the comedy that I would like to have done. You know. 'Cause I was a very—as I say, you know, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis—I loved Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. And I loved Danny Kaye. And Danny Kaye, who had this kind of goofiness and elegance combined. It was quite extraordinary. I mean, he's an extraordinary talent. So, I really did wanna do a lot more comedy, but it just wasn't coming my way. You know. I mean, it's only in recent times that—I mean, you know, the nice thing about Logan is he gets a few laughs, which is—which I love! <i>[Chuckles.]</i> |
| 00:37:37 | Jesse | Host | I asked on Twitter like, "Oh, Brian Cox is coming on the show tomorrow. Is there anything you should ask—I should ask him about?" And you know, like everybody just said the same three things from <i>Succession</i> , which is great. <i>Succession's</i> great. And then I would say by a very wide margin, the number two thing that people wanted me to ask you about was <i>Super Troopers</i> . |
| | | | <i>[Brian affirms with a laugh.]</i> |
| | | | <i>[Chuckling.]</i> Which is a—you know, it is a cult comedy film from when I was in college. So, I was in the cult, certainly. It came out in 2001. And this—I'm just gonna play a scene from it. So, it's a bunch of state troopers who are doofs. And you are the captain of the barracks. So, in this scene you are trying to give them the "get your act together" talk. |
| 00:38:21 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:38:22 | Clip | Clip | Captain John O'Hagan: (<i>Super Troopers</i>): We got 50 miles of highway here. That stretch of highway's ours, and I'll be damned if I let Grady and those buttonheads get their hands on it. Thorny! You're the ranking officer, here! Let's do your jobs and keep this place open, huh?! Let's do it! Robert! your suspension continues. Hit the radio. |
| 00:38:38 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:38:40 | Jesse | Host | How did you— <i>[stammering into a laugh]</i> this movie! Like— <i>[laughing]</i> . |
| 00:38:44 | Brian | Guest | Well, it was—you know, it's again—you know, it's what people don't expect. You know? And it's the job. But man, I love the range of the job. You know? To play—you know—Captain whatever his—Hannigan? No, not Hannigan. Captain— |
| 00:38:59 | Jesse | Host | O'Hagan! |
| 00:40:01 | Brian | Guest | O'Hagan. Captain O'Hagan. That's right. John O'Hagan. Yeah. I mean, I played another character at the same time in a film called |

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| 00:39:10 | Jesse | Host | <p><i>L.I.E.</i> and he had an Irish name as well. And I used to get them confused. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p>I was—I mean, I was literally thinking of like this is I think the same year that you did this like very intense, independent, pedophilia themed drama, <i>L.I.E.</i></p> <p><i>[Brian confirms.]</i></p> <p>That you were doing the dumbest, goofiest, silliest comedy.</p> |
| 00:39:28 | Brian | Guest | <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>Yeah! Well, but that's exactly what the job's about! You know. It's the range of what we do! You know. And you have to—I feel it's great—you know, you learn so much from embracing it! You know. I mean, there are actors who will—you know, just will not do that, because they will—they say, "No, that's not my—you know." I—you know, like Gary Cooper always said, "I have to play the hero." You know? "I can't do anything else."</p> |
| 00:40:11 | Jesse | Host | <p>And you say, "Well, what a shame, poor Gary. You're missing out. You're missing out." I don't feel that. I feel anything goes. You know? If the part is appealing, I'll go for it. And O'Hara was—you know, he was <i>[chuckling]</i>—he was a great character, and he was frustrated and all those shenanigans and these kind of mad guys that he was having to deal with. I mean, I always—</p> <p>And you get to—you get to say "shenanigans". That's the—like, the other thing is you're almost no matter what the role is, you're singing a little song. Like Danny Kaye—whether it's like Danny Kaye or, you know, like one of the great Shakespearian actors of the 1920s on a shellac disk or whatever, they're singing a little song. And you know, when you get to sing—I'm gonna play—this is one of my favorite line readings in a movie, ever and one of my favorite movies, <i>Rushmore</i>, which came out around the same time—you know, it's about this kid who is in school. He is a working-class kid and a genius, but he is also like completely dissolute and like does not know how to be a student or relate to rich kids or anything.</p> |
| 00:41:13 | Sound Effect | Transition | <p>And you're the headmaster of the school, and this scene you're talking to Bill Murray, who's like a rich guy whose kids go to the school, but he's a sort of more salt of the earth rich guy and Max Fischer—the kid, who's played by Jason Schwartzman—comes up to you.</p> <p>Music swells and fades.</p> |
| 00:41:14 | Clip | Clip | <p>Music: Light, playful music.</p> <p>Max: You know, I really think you're right about <i>Rushmore</i>. <i>[Inaudible.]</i></p> <p>Herman: What's his name, again?</p> <p>Dr. Guggenheim: Max Fischer.</p> <p>Herman: Sharp little guy.</p> |

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| 00:41:37 | Sound Effect | Transition | Dr. Guggenheim: <i>[Beat.]</i> He's one of the worst students we've got. Music swells and fades. |
| 00:41:38 | Jesse | Host | <i>[They laugh for a while.]</i> |
| 00:41:52 | Brian | Guest | You ever surprise yourself with one of those? Well, it's just—yeah, I can hear it now, but at the time I just thought, "Oh, he's terrible. He's one of the worst students we've got." You know. It's just that they—it's said with—well, I mean, he's so frustrated. I mean, he's so—Guggenheim is so frustrated by Max. He has these—he can't—he can't get through to him. You know. And he almost gives him a stroke <i>[laughing]</i> , 'cause he cannot get through to this kid. And it's—he's impenetrable. So, he kind of gives up, but he kind of goes, "Oh well, that's it." You know. |
| 00:42:22 | Jesse | Host | In all these things that you've enjoyed writing about in your book and saying in recent months that have been—you know. There's a—there's a quote every four days that—something delightful and ridiculous that you've said doing press for this book or from this book. <i>[Brian affirms.]</i> |
| 00:42:47 | Brian | Guest | Are there any that you <i>[chuckles]</i> would take back if you had the chance? No! Je ne regrette rein. You know? I mean, the thing is—you know, when I was younger, I would—I would censor myself a lot. You know. Oh, you can't do that. Oh, you can't say that. Oh, you can't <i>[trails off into a mumble]</i> . But you know, when you're 75—you know, I don't give a <i>[censored]</i> . |
| 00:43:28 | Jesse | Host | <i>[Laughs.]</i> I really—I'll say what I feel! I'll say what I think. And it's not always what people think I think. They think I think one thing and they—and I just have to realign them and say, "No, no, no. You've got that wrong. Actually, it's this. It looks like that, but in fact it's this. You know. And that's—that's the great thing about language and intension. You know. They're—people don't always get it. They don't. They think you're doing one thing and in fact you're doing something quite else. |
| 00:43:32 | Brian | Guest | Well, Brian Cox, I sure appreciate you taking all this time to be on <i>Bullseye</i> . It was really nice to get to talk to you. |
| 00:43:35 | Jesse | Host | Nice to talk to you, too. |
| 00:43:37 | Brian | Guest | And I guess in conclusion, <i>[censored]</i> off! |
| 00:43:40 | Jesse | Host | <i>[Pleasantly.]</i> Yeah, yeah. <i>[Censored]</i> off, yourself. |
| 00:43:47 | Music | Transition | Brian Cox, folks! His memoir is called <i>Putting the Rabbit in the Hat</i> . You can get it at your local bookstore. |
| 00:43:54 | Jesse | Host | Bright, relaxed music with a steady beat. That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where, here at my house, my daughter hosted a front porch party welcoming the delivery of her used PSP. I—I don't know, 15-year-old portable video game system. She was really excited about it. She saved for it. |

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie

Moffat. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation" recorded by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us there. Give us a follow. We'll share with you all of our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:44:57 Promo Promo

Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]