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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Star Witnesser". Dorin brings the case against her husband, Hsiang. Hsiang is a classical pianist. He wants Dorin to be there when he greets the audience after his shows. She feels awkward. They thank her for his performance. Dorin would rather skip the meet and greet and read a book. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise, as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

*(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)*

**John Hodgman:** I will speak for you, Bailiff Jesse. I speak for all the mediocrities in the world. I am their champion. I am their patron saint. Mediocrities everywhere, I absolve you. I absolve you. I absolve you. I absolve you all.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise and raise your right hands.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

*(They swear.)*

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he himself is a woodwind?

*(They swear with a chuckle.)*

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** I am not merely a woodwind, having played the clarinet until the age of 18, but also a string, having played the viola at the same time! Never simultaneously though. I will dispel that myth right now.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughing.)* Oh, okay. I thought you—I thought it was an *America's Got Talent* situation.

**John Hodgman:** No, I would alternate between them. *(Laughs.)* In any case, two great party instruments. I just want it to be liked at a party. Viola or clarinet's the only way. People love when you take out a viola at a party. Dorin and Hsiang, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors.

(Chairs squeak.)

Can either of you name the piece of culture I referenced when I entered the courtroom?  
Dorin, do you have a guess?

**Dorin:** Episode 19 of Season 3 *Frasier*.

**John Hodgman:** Episode 19 of Season 3 *Frasier*. I'm—hang on, I gotta write that down. EP19S3, *Frasie*. And for the first time, I am actually writing it down. You can check on YouTube. I did write it down, didn't just scribble. Why that one?

**Dorin:** Well, *Frasier* loves classical music and this episode's about classical music, ish. So, that's my prepared guess as best as I can.

**John Hodgman:** If I were to give you another hint—you're welcome to take another guess. You can think about it while I'm asking Hsiang. But the other hint is this is a movie about classical music. Hsiang, what's your guess?

**Hsiang:** I feel like I've seen this recently. I'm gonna say it's gonna be the movie *Tar*.

**John Hodgman:** *Tar*. About the famous fictional conductor Lydia Tar?

(*Hsiang confirms.*)

That's right. I'll write down *Tar*. I even wrote it down for real.

**Jesse Thorn:** *Frasier* Season 3, Episode 19: “Crane vs. Crane”. “*Frasier* and Niles have a courtroom face off over the question of a wealthy eccentric's sanity.”

**John Hodgman:** That's a really good one, because that's a courtroom themed *Frasier*, and this is a courtroom themed *Hodgman*.

**Jesse Thorn:** Seems like we're dealing with a regular Emily Heller here.

**John Hodgman:** But I'm going to tell you, Dorin, right off the bat that the *Frasier* guess is wrong, as you know. Because it's a movie. Can you think of any other movie themed to classical music?

**Dorin:** *Pianist*?

**John Hodgman:** *The Pianist*. It's a good guess. I'm writing it down. Out of respect for your wonderful, good guesses, I'm writing them all down. Buuut I'm also throwing this notebook on the floor! Because all guesses are wrong. I need to get that notebook again in case I need to take notes.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

But we'll leave it there on the floor for a moment while I say it's from 1984's *Amadeus*.

**Hsiang:** Oh, I thought that would be too obvious!

**John Hodgman:** Mmm, I worried that it would be too obvious! We psyched each other out. We psyched ourselves out, and we psyched each other out.

**Hsiang:** That was my prepared guess.

**John Hodgman:** It was your prepared guess, and if you had only guessed correctly, we could all go home. But instead we have to hear this case. That is, of course, the famous closing lines of the film, performed by F. Murray Abraham in his Oscar-winning performance as Salieri. “Mediocrities everywhere, I absolve you.” Boy, oh boy, did that—I mean, what does it say? I was 13 years old when that movie came out. And when Salieri was absolving all the mediocrities on Earth, I was like, “I feel that. Thank you. I take your absolution.”

(*They laugh.*)

What did I know? What did I know or think about myself at the time? If you have not watched *Everyone in the World*, they're making a new TV show out of it with Paul Bettany, who's terrific as Salieri, but I mean, Miloš Forman's adaptation of the Peter Schafer play, *Amadeus*—a screenplay written by Peter Schafer. Very few movies are as beautiful—look as beautiful or sound as beautiful. And of course, it's about—

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It's about a superstar classical pianist, composer. I mean, you've heard of him. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, do you know what the F in F. Murray Abraham stands for?

**John Hodgman:** No.

**Jesse Thorn:** Fart. Fart Murray Abraham.

(*They laugh.*)

**John Hodgman:** Fart Murray Abraham, no!

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Deadpan.*) That's why he uses the initial.

**John Hodgman:** And one guy who definitely wanted to be at the meet and greet every single time, Salieri. But Dorin does not want to be at the meet and greet. So, let's get into the case.

Dorin, you seek justice in this court. Tell me a little bit about your husband, Hsiang, and what kind of music he performs.

**Dorin:** He is a classical pianist, so solely plays piano. Classical.

**John Hodgman:** Right. And would it be fair to say he's a superstar?

**Dorin:** Yeah, in the household.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** In the household! Right now, you are living in Northern Florida, correct?

*(Dorin confirms.)*

And that's where you're based, but where do you perform, Hsiang?

**Hsiang:** Well, so I teach at the University of Florida. So, besides teaching, I'll perform in different universities throughout the country. And every other year, I'll go back to Taiwan, where we're both from, and I'll give some concerts there.

**John Hodgman:** And I'm going to go ahead and say you're a superstar pianist.

**Hsiang:** Not like Mozart. Nobody can compare to Mozart.

**John Hodgman:** What if you were on this podcast going like, "Yeah, I'm about as famous as Mozart"? "I'm as famous and talented as Mozart."

**Hsiang:** Then I'll be really famous, maybe.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah! Then you'd be very famous. Dorin, what do you do? What do you do all day long?

**Dorin:** I work at home. I'm a product manager for a software company.

**John Hodgman:** And when you go and see your husband Hsiang perform, what normally happens after the show? 35-minute standing ovation, obviously.

**Dorin:** Maybe 30 minutes. Usually after the show, people will either like get together or line up at the front door or in the backstage to greet him and tell him about his playing and like how much they enjoy it or yadda-yadda. That's usually what happens after the recital.

**John Hodgman:** And what do you do during this time? If you're at the concert.

**Dorin:** Usually—we've been together for about 12 years. In the latter eight years or so, usually I will sit in the audience space continually while the space got empty. I'll just really read a book there until the space empties, and then I will go out and find him. Usually, that's when the meet and greet's kind of like done.

**John Hodgman:** So, that's what's been happening in the latter few years of your marriage. But back when, when you first got married and the spark was still there—

*(They chuckle.)*

Hsiang, what would Dorin do during the meet and greet? Would she sit in the audience reading a magazine or a book or what?

**Hsiang:** She was more likely to stand either beside me or somewhere behind me as the people came up. And I must admit, in the early time of our courtship, one thing I find a little awkward to do with strangers is to introduce the people I'm with or introduce people to them. Some, sometimes I'll forget to introduce to the audience who this person standing behind me is.

And I think that made Dorin feel quite awkward and uncomfortable, but I just assumed that people would know. And after a while, I think she also figured out that really nothing much is really that interesting communicated through these meet and greets. *(Chuckles.)* And perhaps she thought there's a better use of her time.

**John Hodgman:** That's interesting, Hsiang. You've made a very good case for her blowing off the meet and greet.

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

When in fact, you're in court now because you would like her to hang out with you during the meet and greet.

**Hsiang:** That's right, because she's such an important part of my life, and I believe the reason—one of the reasons that I can perform well is due to her contributions. And I wouldn't mind, you know, to let her also share the spotlight. And I think people are often interested to find out a little bit more about me rather than just this person playing the piano for an hour. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** No, it's so you can sort of say, “I don't just—I'm not just a superstar classical pianist as famous as Mozart, but I also am married to this beautiful woman.”

**Hsiang:** That's right.

**John Hodgman:** There are many elements to Hsiang. Many levels.

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**Hsiang:** Yes, if I could, I would like to show them my Lego sets as well. So.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) Wait, Hsiang, if you had a top five things that you could show them—

(*Hsiang laugh.*)

So, beautiful wife, Lego sets, of course, handsome pianist. That's three, so what are the other two things? You got any other stuff with pride of place in your house you'd like to show off in show and tell?

**Hsiang:** Well, I have some baseball bobbleheads.

**John Hodgman:** Baseball bobbleheads.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Cool! What's your favorite bobblehead?

**Hsiang:** I'm a Red Sox fan, so grew up with Nomar Garciaparra as my favorite player, so I have a couple of his stadium giveaway toys.

**Jesse Thorn:** I get it. I get it. Ben Harrison's parents once got me an E-40 bobblehead in San Francisco Giants clothes.

**Hsiang:** Oh, wow. Okay. (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** What's number five? So, you have bobbleheads, Lego, handsome pianist, beautiful wife. That's four. What's number five?

**Hsiang:** I guess we like to cook, so we have a good collection of cookbooks, including the friend of the podcast, Kenji Alt-López.

**John Hodgman:** Sure! Kenji López-Alt. Yeah!

**Jesse Thorn:** Great.

**John Hodgman:** This is not my beautiful wife. This is not my Nomar Garcia bobblehead. How did I get here? You want something to express your amazement at the good fortune you've had in this world, just like a Talking Heads song.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's Nomar Garciaparra, Judge Hodgman, and it's pronounced Nome-ah.

**John Hodgman:** Here, let me do it again. This is not my beautiful life. This is not my Nome-ah Garciaparra bobblehead. How did I get here?

**Jesse Thorn:** Nome-ah! Judge Hodgman and I are from Massachusetts.

**John Hodgman:** You want to express your amazement at the beauty of the world that you inhabit. And it's—

**Hsiang:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Yes, exactly. Just like a Talking Heads song. Why don't you have David Byrne standing by?

*(They laugh.)*

Now, that I think about it. Beautiful man, beautiful artist I'll respect 'til the end of time, but he does make the room a little awkward. I'll stand by that. I'm going to stand by that.

**Jesse Thorn:** He'd tell you the same. He told me that when he was on *Bullseye*.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I think he would too. Wonderful man.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

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**John Hodgman:** So, Dorin, you mentioned that part of the thing that makes it awkward when you do stand by at the meet and greets is that people thank you for Hsiang's performance. Tell me about that.

**Dorin:** Yes. Usually what happened is when I stand next to him, after people say, "Well, we really enjoy your playing this piece and that piece. It's like so beautifully played and this and that." And when they saw me, they will immediately also say, "Thank you so much. And we really enjoyed the concert and—" You know, all the praise and all the kind words and all of that. But I feel incredibly weird, and I don't know how to respond when people thank me for his performance.

**John Hodgman:** How do you know they're not thanking you for your expert project managing'?

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

**Dorin:** Maybe that's true, because I did create some of his concert posters.

**John Hodgman:** There we go!

**Dorin:** But it's because—Judge, I'm not a musician myself, so I don't even have rhythm. So, when people thank me for his performance—which I literally, really, genuinely think I didn't contribute anything. I didn't play a note or help him practice or—like nothing. It just feels very awkward when people are nonstop thanking me one after one, saying thank you, thank

you, thank you, thank you. I don't know what to respond. And after a while, I'm just like (*sighs*) it's probably better I'm not there.

**John Hodgman:** Let me stop you right there, Dorin, and say you're a liar. Because I know. I know that you have rhythm. This is a little behind the scenes here at the podcast, but you know, when we start the podcast, we have to do something called slate each of the parties on a separate recording—Jesse over there in Los Angeles, me here in Brooklyn, and Dorin and Hsiang in Gainesville, Florida at the studio—have to clap loudly into the microphone like this. Guard your ears! (*Claps loudly.*) And that helps our editor sync up the audio. And you have to do it to a—you know, we watch a clock countdown, and we do it to synchronize the clock and the recording. And I said—what did I say, Dorin, after you clapped real loud?

**Dorin:** Well, you said, “That's a fantastic clap.” And you said you never lie, but then Jesse said you always lie. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** No, I say—

**Jesse Thorn:** In that case, it was the truth, though. That really was a good—

**John Hodgman:** I always say that was the best slate ever, but this time I was telling the truth. Like, you clapped at the exact right time, and I know a lot of people don't do it. They don't do it as good as you. So, you're a really good one-clapper at least. Aaand I suppose that's a kind of rhythm. So, don't sell yourself short.

**Jesse Thorn:** Dorin, I have a question about this meet and greet line. So, I used to work on a radio show called *West Coast Live* in the Bay Area. And one time—

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This is my only experience with musicians, basically. But one time a famous pianist named Lang Lang came through, and he played on the show. And it was a show before a live audience, and so there was like a meet and greet afterwards. Maybe there was 100 people in the audience or 80 people in the audience. And these elderly people lost their minds. (*Laughing.*) Like, I had no idea that someone playing Chopin or whatever this like Beatles-level of passion in the audience.

So, obviously like when you're greeting a classical music audience—maybe they're patrons, you know, maybe they're important people from the university or from the arts organization that's brought your husband in—but like, what is the vibe of those people that are waiting in line to meet your husband? And I'll also stipulate, I can see on the video that your husband is a hunk. I'm just gonna stipulate that.

(*John agrees.*)

**Dorin:** Well, it depends on the occasion. So, for example, sometimes at a university, the vibe—if there are younger students and younger generations, the vibe is, you know, like a little mini fan kind of like action. Or if it's in a community—for example, at a concert he



played in Salt Lake City, it's a more mature audience. And the vibe is just, you know, they want to talk about the process he practiced, how he played, or how he interprets it. So, it really varies, but in general the vibe is very enthusiastic as like—very charged, almost. Like, they enjoy a good concert, and they take in a lot of good vibes or good cultural nutrition, and it's always very, very appreciative from the audience.

**John Hodgman:** So, no one in the audience is ever coming up going, “Hey, I got a few critiques for you.”

**Hsiang:** Occasionally. Occasionally.

**John Hodgman:** Ohhh! Okay.

**Hsiang:** Someone will say, “Well, I used to play piano, and I know that piece very well. And someone's recording, you should check it out.” *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I was gonna—I just presumed that it was universal praise all the time that Dorin was bored of it.

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

I was trying to establish was there ever any drama where the person would say, “You, sir, are no Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart!”

**Hsiang:** Well, they probably just would not waste their time standing in line. *(Chuckles.)* They'll just leave, probably.

**John Hodgman:** You'd be surprised. You'd. Be. Surprised.

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** The judge and I have had some contrary experiences, let's just say. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I have had people—I can think of one person in particular who came up after the meet and greet and basically told me my career choices have been very bad for the past ten years.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, he us some really—a really thoughtful outline.

**John Hodgman:** Reeally instructive feedback as to what I had done wrong in my career.

**Hsiang:** Well, that couldn't be farther from the truth.

**John Hodgman:** That's very kind of you to say.

**Jesse Thorn:** This is what I wanted to know though, Dorin. Do you ever experience thirstiness for your husband? Is there—are you ever made uncomfortable in part because—not just that you have to be friendly to people, but that it is a weird situation to watch your husband be a star to others. Whether their interest is or otherwise, you know. Like, there's different kinds of thirstiness.

**Dorin:** No, but to go back to the question Judge asked earlier, is he a superstar? Yes, to me he's absolutely a superstar. He has a mini following locally whenever he plays and this and that.

**John Hodgman:** It took you a long time to correct yourself, there.

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

I asked that question a looong time ago, and you're like, “In the household, he's pretty famous.” Obviously, it’s been weighing on you.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're like I gotta mention this mini following!

**Dorin:** I've been checking my time like, okay, it's time to correct that. But to answer your question, Jesse, is that—? No, I mean, it's always nice to see him—because it's a lot of work he puts in, a ton of work. It's always nice to see the positive feedback and this and that. But what's always also weird is like, not only people will thank me, people will also ask me, “What do you play?” And I am not a musician, and I always say I play the audience role, which is important. And—but—

**John Hodgman:** Right. You literally play the claps! *(Applauds.)*

*(Hsiang agrees.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. You should just say *Settlers of Catan*.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** Let me ask you a question, Hsiang. When you perform a concert, you're playing piano, right?

**Hsiang:** Right.

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**John Hodgman:** You use all 10 fingers?

**Hsiang:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** She's right, Jesse. It's a lot of work. He's putting it all in.

*(They laugh.)*

**Hsiang:** But most of the time I do play by memory. And with a regular teaching schedule, it can be pretty demanding. And we're all not getting any younger, so that does take a toll as well.

**John Hodgman:** Of course! I was not trying to suggest it isn't hard work to be a classical pianist! It's incredibly—!

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

I mean, you study, and you practice, and you perfect your technique and your musicianship, and you deserve all the accolades that you receive. It just seems to make Dorin uncomfortable for some reason. Dorin, what happened in New Hampshire?

**Dorin:** Well, there are a couple of things. One is because I've been hiding in the audience space for a couple of years, and he hasn't been complaining about it much. But at New Hampshire, where we used to live for a couple of years, where he used to teach. At that occasion, I continued doing my hiding ritual, and afterwards he got really upset. He was like, "You are nowhere to be found. Lots of people are looking for you. Lots of friends. And I was like, 'Hey, Dorin's here. Where is she?'" And the meet and greet took a much longer time than usual, I would say. And after that, he just expressed like, "I really wish you were there," and he also brought up a few past concerts, I wasn't at the meet and greet. And then that's when I learned like he actually prefers I am at the meet and greet. So, we just kept talking about like then why do you need me to be there? And this and that, so that's kind of what sparks the case.

**John Hodgman:** Hsiang, how did you feel when Dorin ghosted you in New Hampshire?

**Hsiang:** Well, so we—this is an unusual situation where I was invited back to a place I used to work. And it's a place we're very fond of, and most of the people who came backstage were people we know, former students, former colleagues, and also friends. And I should also explain that this is a concert venue inside of a music building, and it is a very old structure, so there really wasn't a green room nearby. So, all my stuff is locked away in an office far from the backstage. So, I wasn't able to just text Dorin quickly. And after a while I actually seriously wondered what happened to her. *(Chuckles.)* Did she get lost in the building?

**John Hodgman:** Oh, you were worried.

**Hsiang:** That's right. Yeah, and it was a pretty long time, so I thought she could have come look for me. I mean, of course, as she said, people were asking about her, and a lot of people knew we traveled together for this occasion, so that's why.

**John Hodgman:** So, it sounds like it moved from a little bit of missing her to a little bit of social embarrassment, because your friends were asking after her and you didn't know where

she was, and then ultimately the sheer panic maybe that she had disappeared or left you or gone into an alternate dimension or something.

**Hsiang:** *(Laughs.)* Or she found the concert to be so unappetizing that she decided to just go back to the hotel if possible. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I understand. And how does it feel—aside from the lack of panic, how does it make you feel when she is standing with you during the meet and greet?

**Hsiang:** I generally found her presence to be very calming for me, and after the concert usually—I could get pretty exhausted and very sweaty, and as I'm sure you all know, it is still part of the performance, still part of work.

**John Hodgman:** To do a meet and greet after when you do one, yes. It's tiring.

**Hsiang:** It can be, but I'm also curious to find out about people. And I think—

**John Hodgman:** *(Interrupting.)* Well, that's where you and I are different.

*(They laugh.)*

For me, it is an entirely robotic performance, because I'm not curious about people, nor do I want to do it! But I know it's expected of me, so I go, “Bleep bloop. Thank you very much for coming.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Right after we get off stage, John and I look at each other and we say, “We've got another show to do.” We stop listening and start performing again.

**John Hodgman:** Not true. I enjoy the meet and greets very much. Everybody who has come to meet and greet us, we really love it. But it is—but I mean, you know, it's a lot of time with a human being. And you know, people are there. They want to express their—not only their thanks to you, but they want to maybe express what your performance made them feel.

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And you have to hold space for them, as they say in contemporary parlance. You know, you have to be very open, and you have to take a lot in when you're doing it. And that's why if I were Dorin, I would get the hell out of there!

*(They laugh.)*

**Hsiang:** Well, that's when I think she could actually be a positive being there. She could maybe share some of the conversations and help the line to move along, things like that. That could be beneficial.

**John Hodgman:** A little bit half emotional support, half personal assistant, is that what you're saying?

**Hsiang:** *(Laughs.)* Dorin is very caring, and she assists with many other factors in my life, and if the court is interested, I'll be happy to share.

**Dorin:** The short answer is yes.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Like, if she were to help like facilitate moving the line along and getting people going and so forth and helping you in a personal assistant capacity, how much would you pay her? You're going to pay her in bobbleheads, sir?

**Hsiang:** *(Laughing.)* I don't think they're worth anything to her.

**John Hodgman:** Dorin, are you an introvert?

**Dorin:** Half and half. I grew up as an extrovert, but the older I am, the more introvert I become. I used to work in marketing, so I kind of have a switch. I can turn it on and off. So, a lot of times when we talk about the meet and greet, at least in this New Hampshire occasion is, we talk about, well, if I'm there like what function you want me to be? Am I capturing people's information and doing a little bit of relationship building or—? Like, that's alright, but like usually, nowadays especially, I work from home. I think I'm an introvert for the most part. And as you, your honor, like I'm an only child myself.

**John Hodgman:** Great! I think I know everything I need to in order to make my decision.

*(They laugh.)*

**Dorin:** I need to know the rules. I like to follow them. If I'm there, what are the rules? What should I do?

**John Hodgman:** Mmmm, interesting.

**Jesse Thorn:** I like that Hsiang wants Dorin to be his producer/personal assistant. Dorin is like, "Let me project manage this thing."

*(They laugh.)*

She's like, "I got a database I'm working on. Let's put some information into it."

**John Hodgman:** How often does it happen that you are by yourself, versus when you guys are traveling together?

**Hsiang:** It varies year to year. This past 12 months, surprisingly, she came to maybe 70% of my solo performances.

**John Hodgman:** So, it looks like she likes you.

**Hsiang:** I hope so, Judge!

**Dorin:** Just enough, just enough.

**John Hodgman:** Just enough. Famous in the household.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** And he has a mini following!

**John Hodgman:** That's true. One mini following.

**Jesse Thorn:** Local mini following.

**John Hodgman:** Do you feel like when she's not there that this somehow reflects on you poorly, Hsiang?

**Hsiang:** No, not at all. I mean, I'm capable of handling the meet and greet. And again, it's also a case by case. When we went back to Taiwan this past summer, I think one of the reasons she doesn't really want to be standing around is because there's a lot of friends of my parents. And Chinese people has a way to like ask very—a little bit intruding personal questions, like when are you gonna have a kid and things like that. And I think she just feels a little more uncomfortable.

**John Hodgman:** Dorin, when do you feel more uncomfortable at the meet and greet? When it's a bunch of strangers thanking you for Hsiang's performance and sort of awkwardly fumbling around for conversation with people you don't know? Or when it's friends in New Hampshire or family in Taiwan, and they know a lot about you, and they're just gonna really get into it with you?

**Dorin:** About the same, but for a different reason. Like—

**John Hodgman:** So, all people. You hate all people. Okay.

**Dorin:** Yeah, yeah, kind of.

**Jesse Thorn:** Dorin just flipped the switch.

**Dorin:** Well, when it's people appreciating him and then thanking me, I genuinely don't know how to respond. Like, literally. When people say, "Thank you for the performance," I just like freeze. I just don't know what should I respond. And usually, I just say, "Oh, thank you for coming." That's literally the only line I feel appropriate to respond to that. Because I'm profoundly proud of his performance, but there shouldn't be any credit to me, really, because I did nothing for what's happening on that stage. So, that's one.

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And then for families in Taiwan, that's just culturally—you know like people in Taiwan tend to ask a lot of personal questions and I don't know how to respond to some of the like really personal questions. And to that degree, it feels like, (*sighs*) oh, okay. Then it's not about PR or marketing social engagement, right? It's really about family getting together and knowing the personal details and things like that. And that's slightly different than talking about performance.

**John Hodgman:** In a non-family context, where it's people just saying thank you for his performance, thank you for whatever it is, and you feel awkward because you don't know what to say, have you considered just sitting there with your book and a piece of paper that says, "I am not a musician. I am very proud of my husband. Thank you for coming. That is my prepared statement, and that is all I will say"?

**Dorin:** I kind of did in some degree. (*Chuckling.*) Like, I will—people say—I'm glad like you enjoyed the performance. Thank you for coming. But I—and that's it. And usually the conversation runs dry right after that, because there's really not much to go on. And usually what happens next is they will ask me like, "What do you play? Like what instrument?" And—

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's why I said put a piece of paper out that says, "Don't ask me about music, I don't know anything. I'm a really good clapper. John Hodgman said so. But otherwise, ask me a question about anything else."

**Jesse Thorn:** My first thought was get a t-shirt printed, but now I'm imagining maybe one of those tall, skinny popup tents that you use to change at the beach or like try on clothes at the flea market.

**John Hodgman:** Is it—do you feel left out of the classical music circles and appreciators? I mean, Dorin, do you even like classical music?

**Hsiang:** Good question! (*Laughs.*)

**Dorin:** Oh my god, you're terrible. I do! I mean, I'm not knowledgeable in it. I'll be the first to admit. Something we do a lot at home, which really scares and annoys me, is that whenever there's a classical piece comes up at any movie, he will pause and say, "What's the piece? Who composed it?" (*Laughs.*)

(*Jesse cackles.*)

**John Hodgman:** Oh nooo.

**Dorin:** And then I'll have to guess. Again, I'm not a musician by any—like, not at all. And I'll guess, let's say, Chopin or Debussy or whatever. And then if it's off, he will say, "Oh my god, you're 100 years off. It's a completely a different style." Or—

**John Hodgman:** Wow. You're 100 years off!

*(Hsiang cackles.)*

From now on, I'm not saying "all guesses are wrong" anymore. I'm saying, "Uh, you're all 100 years off."

**Jesse Thorn:** No matter what the piece is, I'm guessing a fifth of Beethoven.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. *(Hums an upbeat bar.)* You know, the disco version?

**Hsiang:** Yes. Of course, yes.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, you could—yeah. I guess you didn't wanna sing along with me, but that's fine. That's cool.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's cool. It's fine. It's not a big deal.

**Hsiang:** Honestly, 50% percent of the time it's Debussy's "Clair de Lune". And then—

**John Hodgman:** 50% of all movie soundtracks, Debussy's "Clair de Lune".

*(Hsiang agrees with laughter.)*

Let that sink in.

**Hsiang:** And then another maybe 25% would be Chopin's "Raindrop Prelude", or it's one of the Nocturnes.

**John Hodgman:** Who's your favorite? What kind of pieces do you love to perform?

**Hsiang:** My three favorite composers are Bach, Chopin, and Debussy.

**John Hodgman:** And anything by them, you'll do it. 50% of the time, it's—

**Hsiang:** *(Laughs.)* Yeah, I mean, I devoted my life to it, and I find it to be endlessly enriching and challenging.

**Jesse Thorn:** What's the hipster choice though? Like, I've heard of them! What would you say if you wanted to impress a classical music enthusiast about who your favorite was, even if they were like actually your sixth favorite?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. What's your deep cut? Any weird ones?



**Hsiang:** Hm. The American composer William Bolcom. He wrote great rags, and also very modern, but very pianistic compositions that are impressive and also very entertaining.

**John Hodgman:** Say the name again. 'Cause I don't know this one. I'm going to look them up.

**Dorin:** William Balcom, B-O-L-C-O-M.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. And we'll bleep this out if you don't want it out there, if you don't want it on the websites, but what composer's just trash?

**Hsiang:** (*Laughs.*) I never really liked Mendelssohn, myself.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, come on, Mendelssohn. (*Blows a raspberry.*)

**Hsiang:** He wrote—I love his violin concerto. The—

[00:35:00]

**John Hodgman:** Oh, sure! He's great for violin concertos, but—

**Jesse Thorn:** Everybody loves the violin concerto, but the rest of it!

**John Hodgman:** No one's saying anything against the violin concertos, but—

(*Jesse blows a long, sputtering raspberry.*)

Hey, hey, hey! Hang on a second. Hang on a second. I gotta have order in this court. Hey, Fart Murray Abraham, you're a hundred years off, alright? Take it down 1,000 with the fart noises, Bailiff Jesse. I love you, but you got to shut your fart hole.

**Jesse Thorn:** Shouldn't have brought up Mendelssohn if you didn't want the Bronx cheer to come out. The horn section's out here for Mendelssohn.

**John Hodgman:** (*Sings a few notes.*) I gave you another chance.

**Jesse Thorn:** Hsiang, have you ever done that thing where you stand up while you're playing and then you kick the bench behind you like Jerry Lee Lewis?

**Hsiang:** (*Laughs.*) Once, at the last chord, and I just stood up and (*laughs*) pushed the bench back. Yeah, I did that one.

**Jesse Thorn:** Quite carefully and thoughtfully.

**John Hodgman:** For those of you who are interested, of course, we're going to have a link to Hsiang performing some of his favorite composers on the show page. If there is such a recording that exists. Have you ever been recorded before Hsiang, or do you refuse to be recorded?

**Hsiang:** No, I actually have two solo albums. So.

**John Hodgman:** Wonderful. What are they called?

**Hsiang:** The first one's called *Bestiary on Ivory*, it's a series of old solo piano works inspired by animals.

**John Hodgman:** *Bestiary on Ivory*. And the other one is called *Mendelssohn's Sucks*?

**Hsiang:** (*Laughs.*) But then what would I put on there? Well, so—

**John Hodgman:** *Anything but Mendelssohn*, it's called.

**Hsiang:** Yeah, that's right, so it's all Chopin. It's all Chopin.

**John Hodgman:** All Chopin, all the time. 100% Chopin. What's your favorite music to listen to, Dorin?

**Dorin:** I actually play a lot of Classico when I'm at work and just doing quiet work. And I also play a lot of Beatles, jazz, and sometimes Taiwanese pop in the old days and things like that.

**John Hodgman:** What's a Taiwanese pop group that I should be listening to that you love? Because I got William Bolcom here that I got on my work list.

**Dorin:** I am a solid fan of Mayday. Yeah, so that's a band that I grew up with.

**John Hodgman:** Got it. I wrote it down. I really wrote it down. I'm gonna listen to these. I kind of need to separate—like, going to Taiwan and dealing with family is kind of a separate issue, because that's just family. Then there's also feeling out of sorts with Hsiang's professional circle of musicians, because what are you gonna talk to them about? Mayday? They're all over here going like, “Doesn't Mendelssohn suck? Sure does. What about that guy?”

And you're like, “Uuuh, what about is Paul dead or not? The Beatles, remember?” Or whatever. But in terms of just sort of generic performance for a regular audience, not burdened with the extra charge of family or professional colleagues. It says here, Hsiang, that you would like to feel more comfortable when she is thanked for your work, because—and this is a quote, Dorin—he wouldn't be playing the same way without her. That's very touching. That's very touching. Can you expound upon that a little?

**Hsiang:** Well, I believe an artist's performance has everything to do with his or her or their life. And I myself always find it difficult to compartmentalize or separate my emotion from one thing to another. So, Dorin's support and love and also the various things that she takes care of in my life, really helped me to be able to focus and play the best to my ability. And I think that's not something that one should take for granted. And I feel very lucky to have that.

**John Hodgman:** Dorin, how do you feel when you hear that said into a microphone in a studio in Gainesville, Florida, for the whole world to hear?

**Dorin:** (*Chuckles.*) Well, it's very endearing. And then I feel very loved by hearing that. And you know, like it's a lot to be a musician, right? There's a lot of things, and it's nice to know like those are being appreciated. And I mean, we're good partners, and we take care of things like together in the household. So, yeah, it's very nice.

**John Hodgman:** Great. I'm glad you love each other, but that doesn't change your mind.

(*Hsiang laughs.*)

I take it, Dorin, you'd still like to blow off the meet and greet if you—?

**Dorin:** Well, it's also about, like I said, I like rules. If you give me, I'll follow them. I want to know if I need to be there, if I am there, what should I do?

[00:40:00]

What role should I play? Like, what's my task?

**John Hodgman:** You feel that this has not been clear on a case-by-case basis. You're not sure it is that Hsiang would like you to do while he's meeting his public.

**Dorin:** Yes, yes. I mean, early days when we first started dating, this did happen. One of the earliest recitals I attended that I literally just stand next to him, and he didn't know how to introduce me. Again, that's very early dating days. And I just kind of stood there the whole time and not knowing what should I do. Like, who am I? And people kind of look at me like, "Who are you?" But of course, later in our lives, like people do know who I am or could have guessed. Still, I just want to know what's my role at each occasion ahead of time. Then I can—then I will turn on the switch. Okay, my role here is da-da-da-da, and then I'll get those done.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse Thorn made a comment that you might want to project manage the meet and greet. Is that true?

**Dorin:** I don't think the audience can be project managed.

**John Hodgman:** Ohhh, I highly disagree.

*(Dorin laughs.)*

I mean, there are all kinds of ways that you can communicate expectations to an audience, both on stage and at the meet and greet after. Some of which are just saying like, “Hey, we only have 30 minutes. So, you know, please be mindful of the people behind you in line.” Or, you know, for example, if you wore a very professional suit and stood behind Hsiang, people would just presume that you're security. You know? And they wouldn't be—they wouldn't necessarily be thanking you for his performance. And you might be able to keep things moving along on time by like taking pictures or saying, “Okay, that's all the time we have.” Really project managing it. And I don't know—I'm just trying to get a sense of like is that something you inherently want to do? Is to manage it for him or not? And the answer no is a great answer, by the way. I'm just trying to figure it out.

**Dorin:** Probably not, but I do think a suit is a good idea.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. No one wants to talk to someone wearing a suit.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. And probably sunglasses and a weapon of some kind. A conspicuous weapon.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, and putting like in a little earpiece.

**Hsiang:** That's right, I was just thinking.

**John Hodgman:** Do you need—Hsiang, do you need help at the meet and greet? Whether it's Dorin's help or someone else's help to move things along?

**Hsiang:** In the larger performance, yes. Although sometimes in those situations, there will be someone there as well to make people stay in line and help with pictures. So, I would say, you know, that's not something I really would ask or require Dorin to do. I don't think that should be the reason that she will be there during the meet and greet. I just wish she would just enjoy herself more. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** Right, but you can't force fun on someone if it's not enjoyable to them.

**Hsiang:** That's right.

**John Hodgman:** So, I guess my question to you is why would I—I were to rule in your favor, how could I possibly force her to endure this unless you had some real need? Do you know what I mean? And I guess I just say: when she's not there, how do you feel? Abandoned? Lonely? Worried?

**Hsiang:** Well, part of it is also that I would like to get a reaction from her as to how the concert went. And if I don't see her for a long time, you know, regardless—of course, I appreciate people telling me they liked it, but I also want to hear from her.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Well, they're all liars.

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. We've met these people.

**John Hodgman:** I mean, we've already established if they don't like it, they probably aren't gonna stick around to say so. That only happens at *Judge John Hodgman* shows.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. These people are sitting in the audience, whispering to each other, "This is some Mendelssohn level baloney."

**Hsiang:** *(Giggles.)* Oh my god, I'm gonna get in trouble for the Mendelssohn.

**John Hodgman:** You're not going to get—what? With the Mendelssohn estate?!

**Jesse Thorn:** What, you think Mendelssohn listens?

**Hsiang:** *(Laughing.)* From the heaven, maybe. But—

**John Hodgman:** More like from hell, where he belongs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, the devil plays the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast for Mendelssohn every day.

*(Dorin laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Well, it's his torment. That's what he deserves.

**Hsiang:** I think it's a pretty simple, reasonable ask that she should feel okay if people thank her, and I'll be okay if she could just hang around somewhere where I could see her. So, if people who know us, I could just point them to her direction. And if they want to talk to her, they can, you know, go find her.

[00:45:00]

**John Hodgman:** And if I were to rule in your favor, Dorin, what would you have me rule?

**Dorin:** I am more than happy to be at a meet and greet. But I wanna know—

**John Hodgman:** Doesn't sound like it! Doesn't even sound like you'd be plain happy, never mind more than!

*(Hsiang laughs.)*

**Dorin:** I will turn on the switch.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I feel that.

**Dorin:** I want to know what role I'm playing at the occasion, and then I can feel prepared to be at the meet and greet.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go in my green room for a while and relax finally. And then I'm going to draaaag myself back out here for the second part of this performance! I only wish—luckily, I have my friend Jesse Thorn to run interference for me. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

*(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)*

Hsiang, how are you feeling about your chances in the case?

**Hsiang:** I think I feel pretty good. I think the judge is also a performer, and I think he would sympathize with how the meet and greet process is taxing. And it's great to have your loved ones in the presence and to support.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'll tell you what, I've done meet and greets with the judge. Lately, we've sometimes had VIP tickets. That constrains the meet and greet a little bit, but I have done two-and-a-half-hour meet and greets with Judge John Hodgman. *(Laughs.)*

**Hsiang:** Wow.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've done meet and greets that were longer than the show, for sure.

**Dorin:** Jesus.

**Hsiang:** That's a different level.

**Jesse Thorn:** It turns out he likes interacting with others.

*(They laugh.)*

**Dorin:** That's a role.

**Jesse Thorn:** Dorin, how are you feeling about your chances?

**Dorin:** I am not sure. I mean, it's very endearing and lovely to hear why he wants me to be there. And I feel like I need to switch introvert part to extrovert and be supportive there. So, I'm not feeling great about my case.

**Jesse Thorn:** Dorin, the librarian listeners of *Judge John Hodgman*, which is to say 80% of the listeners of *Judge John Hodgman*, want to know what you're reading while you're hiding from your husband's fans.

**Dorin:** Well, it depends on what I'm reading at the time. Currently, I'm reading *Unreasonable Hospitality*, and it's been delightful.

**Jesse Thorn:** We'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we get back in just a moment.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge John Hodgman, a lot of our listeners are in the Northeast.

**John Hodgman:** That's true.

**Jesse Thorn:** A lot of our listeners are Wilco fans.

**John Hodgman:** That's true. That is true!

**Jesse Thorn:** If only there was some kind of abandoned warehouse full of art installations that they could go to enjoy the comedy taste of *Judge John Hodgman* and the music of Wilco.

**John Hodgman:** Well, Jesse, I know you've never heard of a region of the United States called New England, but I'm here to tell you it's real, and your dreams have come true. Mass MoCA is the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. It's a wonderful museum out there in the very west of the very east. And every other year around this time, the incredible band Wilco takes it over and hosts the Solid Sound Festival, a three-day festival of music, arts, and indeed, comedy. And as you know, or maybe you don't—I mean, you're about to find out—I co-host and co-curate the comedy stage at the Solid Sound Festival with our good friend and occasional guest bailiff Jean Grae. And this year we've got an incredible lineup, including Dave Hill, Todd Barry, Brittany Carney, Sydnee Washington, and Eugene Mirman. It's going to be a lot of fun. There might even be some surprise guests. I can't say, but you want to be there!

Just go to [SolidSoundFestival.com](http://SolidSoundFestival.com). That is [SolidSoundFestival.com](http://SolidSoundFestival.com). It's a really good time, and you'll see me and Monte Belmonte wandering around. And there's incredible food and drink and surprises around every corner. And of course, two—not one, but two huge Wilco concerts on Friday and Saturday night. And don't you worry, the comedy is all done when the Wilco starts. So, don't want to miss this, 'cause you're not going to miss anything. [SolidSoundFestival.com](http://SolidSoundFestival.com). It's coming up at the end of June.

Jesse Thorn, what do you got going on?

**Jesse Thorn:** I was thinking actually about our meet and greets from our last tour, John. One of the things that I found the most gratifying, one of the things that—well, look. Something that people often talk to me about is my wife's work, her work cohosting *One Bad Mother* and her book *It Feels Good to Be Yourself*. That's always very touching to me, but I would say a close second is—I feel like this time out, we heard from a lot of *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* fans, folks who had either found *Judge John Hodgman* through *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* or the other way around—found *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* through *Judge John Hodgman*.

[00:50:00]

So, I want to thank all those people. And I want to say that if you enjoy *Judge John Hodgman* and you wish that it was more ridiculous, had no premise, and there were a lot of swear words in it, maybe go check out *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*. It is a blast of good vibes and gleeful profanity and vulgarity. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. If you don't have Jordan Morris in your life, I feel sorry for you. 'Cause he's such—he's one of the funniest, nicest guys in the world. And you know, obviously a very, very old and dear friend of yours. And you guys have chemistry like nothing else. And *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* is just a great fun listen. So, if you're driving around and you don't have kids in the car, 'cause there are some adult themes, I would say.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) Yeah, distinctly adult themes.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, take a listen to *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*. It's a lot of fun with some amazing guests too. Some of the best guests in comedy.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've been working with Jordan. I think he's the only person I've been working with longer than I've been working with you, John. Like, we've been working together for something like 15 years now, and I've been working with Jordan for more than 20. So, sometimes people are like, "They have the rapport of old friends!" (*Chuckling.*) Yeah, well, once a week for 20 years!

**John Hodgman:** Since you were children, pretty much. Since you were children!

**Jesse Thorn:** 20 and 19, I believe we were when we started working together. 20 and 19.

**John Hodgman:** Don't go—do go over to [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and search up *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*. And I'm just going to put in a plug for your incredible interview program, *Bullseye*. Which, week after week, incredibly insightful conversations with the most interesting minds around—including one with Alison Brie recently, which I really enjoyed listening to.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I really loved—we just played one with DJ Quik, the rapper and producer, that I loved. If you've ever listened to a DJ Quik produced record and wondered what that thing is that goes boyoyoing, it's his signature instrument. DJ Quik has such passionate feelings about the boyoyoing stick. You're going to want to listen to that.

**John Hodgman:** (*Chuckles.*) Alright, I'm going over there right now.



**Jesse Thorn:** Let's get back to the case.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

**John Hodgman:** I will confess that it is true that I've had meet and greets that go on deep into the night. And Jesse's not wrong. I do enjoy getting to meet the audience and getting to know them. And I'll even be honest, I enjoy the praise and the feeling of being thanked. And I enjoy it because I did it! And you know, if I were being thanked for something I didn't do, I'm not really sure it would be a lot of fun for me. And I also will say that I really enjoy sitting there with my friend and loved one, Jesse Thorn. Because it would not be the same if I were doing it by myself. I would not—I would feel more overwhelmed. I love hearing people talk to Jesse and thank Jesse for all of he brings to the live shows and these shows and *Bullseye* and all the stuff he does on his own. Like, I love sharing that time with everybody.

But the difference there, of course, is that Jesse Thorn gets paid. And he's there for—he also did it, you know. I appreciate that it's hard to be a soloist. It's partly why I don't really travel and perform solo anymore. It is a lonely road. And even something as pleasant, truly pleasant, as being thanked by people who have come to see the show can feel lonely when you are literally alone, and you don't know where your spouse is, and they haven't even bothered to come up to you after the show to say, “Nice job, I'm going to go read *Unreasonable Hospitality* now. I think you did good,” or whatever. It can be lonely. And I really—look, the answer is pretty obvious, you know. You love your wife. You love your music. Those are the top two. You also love your Lego sets and your bobbleheads.

**Jesse Thorn:** And the cookbook collection, Judge Hodgman.

**John Hodgman:** And the cookbook. And you love Kenji López-Alt.

*(Dorin and Hsiang confirm.)*

Yeah. And I mean, here are two possible solutions that leave Dorin in the clear. One, get a Lego portrait of your wife. That can be done. Two, bobblehead of your wife. Three, get Kenji López-Alt to stand there.

*(They laugh.)*

Then I think you would feel a little shown up, honestly. I think people would want to talk to him. No offense, Hsiang. People looove to talk to Kenji López-Alt, me included. All those things are options for you. But the fact of the matter is—and what really resonated, aside from Dorin saying that she was an only child and therefore I was going to rule for her from the beginning, obviously—was that she needed to know what the rules were. And there is ambiguity. In each of these conditions, it's a little bit of a different game.

[00:55:00]

When you are performing for a bunch of strangers in Altoona, or performing for a bunch of old friends and colleagues in New Hampshire, or performing for family in Taiwan or wherever else it might be, or performing for, you know, classical music heads/Mendelssohn haters and other colleagues—kind of the rules are a little different in each of those situations. And Dorin doesn't know what they are. And she, you know, has—like a lot of us—gone from a very—well, I'll speak for me, a very, you know, sort of natural extroversion into a now more geriatric Gen Xy introversion. And it's reasonable. The hospitality is reasonable in the sense that it really would benefit Dorin to know what the rules are. And, you know, Dorin, first and foremost, you can make the rules for yourself. I mean, the rule can be, “I'm not doing this anymore, period. I love you, but it's not fun for me. And you got to figure out a way to do it on your own.”

That's a rough one. ‘Cause I think that you feel like you want to be able to help your loved one and offer a certain hospitality that is not unreasonable. And so, I think that you need to establish the rules together. And I think I'm going to offer a suggestion of the rules, and then you guys can go and talk about it and see if that works for you and your marriage. I think one of the things that I sensed from Hsiang is he doesn't trust his audience. He believes that their praise is empty. I'm feeling this very much, right? And that he would like to get some feedback from one person he knows that can be honest with him, Judge John Hodgman. But since he can't be there, Dorin. And I think, Dorin, it would be good to offer to come backstage right after the show, before the meet and greet, and just say, “That was a wonderful job. I loved it. I'm not lying. Here is my clap, (*a singular clap*)—I did another great one.” And then to ask, “Should I turn on the switch?”

Because you talked about turning on the switch. You are capable of turning on the switch. And that is to say, to turn on the switch from introvert to modulated extroversion to perform a specific task that Hsiang needs in that situation. And that switch has to be sort of figured out by you, Hsiang. Do I need Dorin here during the meet and greet? It could be something like, “I know that you don't feel like it, but there are some old friends in the audience who are—you know, and they'd love to see you. Do you mind just talking to them and making sure that they feel seen and happy for being here?” Or whatever it is. You know, the kind of things that spouses often ask of each other and hopefully equally as things go on. Or if there's a thing like, “This is a really long line, and I'm really—I hate to ask this of you, because I'm not paying you, but if maybe you could keep it moving a little bit or offer to take pictures,” or whatever it is, you know.

And would suggest that you ask Dorin to turn on the switch rarely, you know, to really determine whether you absolutely need something other than a moment together right after the show for you both to connect and you, Hsiang, to feel good about your performance and gain some energy for the meet and greet after. But if there's something that she can really help you with in terms of moral support or, you know, literal support—not literal support; she's not holding you up, but you know what I mean—practical support, then I think it's reasonable to ask from time to time, “Do you mind turning on the switch this time?”

And I also think, you know, Dorin, that you can make the rules in the sense that if you are asked to be there, and it's acceptable to you, and you say yes, when people thank you for his performance, just come up with something to say. And just say it over and over again until you go into a dissociative fugue state, perhaps. But you know like I get it. It's a weird thing, but people just want to express their happiness that this happened, that we are able to be

together and music is being played and it sounded good. And you know, when they say thank you for Hsiang's performance, obviously it makes no sense. And all you have to say is like, "Oh, thank you. He's wonderful, isn't he?" Or something. Just come up with a line so that you can evade that awkwardness.

Or if people say, "What instrument do you play?"

Say, "I'm actually a project manager, and I'd rather be reading a book right now," or something.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, I used to get letters all the time at Put This On from people who said, "Since I've started dressing more nicely, people often compliment me on my clothes, and I don't know what to say. I'm overwhelmed, and I hate it." And the answer for what to say is, "Thank you. That's kind of you to say."

**John Hodgman:** Right.

[01:00:00]

If someone compliments you on what you do, Dorin, or on what Hsiang does, say, "Thank you, that's kind of you to say. Make sure to check out my menswear blog at [PutThisOn.com](http://PutThisOn.com)."

But my baseline ruling is I'm ruling in Dorin's favor. The baseline is you don't have to do this. I think it's just decent to check in with your loved one at the end of each concert, and say, "I saw it. It was great. I'm here for you if you need me. I hope you don't. I am not going to disappear. I have not gone back to the hotel in disgust at how you performed. And I'll be ready to go when you are ready to go." Or "I need to go back to the hotel, because of X, Y, and Z, and you're just gonna have to do it without me." Like, if you don't know what the rules are, make the rules. Set the rules together. And there you go. And also, I rule that Mendelsohn sucks. This is the sound of a gavel.

**Sound Effect:** A broad, orchestral swell of classical music that transitions into funky disco.

**John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

*(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)*

Hsiang, how are you feeling about the judge's decision?

**Hsiang:** I think it's excellent advice, and it should solve most of the issues. And I look forward to implementing them for my next performance.

**Jesse Thorn:** Dorin, how are you feeling?

**Dorin:** I feel great! There's a rule. Now I can follow.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughs.*) Hsiang, Dorin, thank you so much for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Hsiang:** Thank you for having us.

**Dorin:** Thank you.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to Redditor u/Bentzsco for naming this week's episode, "Star Witnesser". If you want to name a future episode, join us on the Maximum Fun Reddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). That's where we ask for those submissions. It's also a great place to chat about each week's show. Always got a lot of fun, pleasant people there on the Maximum Fun Reddit. You know, Reddit sometimes gets a bad reputation. The Maximum Fun sub is all about good vibes. Love it there. Love it there.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. All of online has a bad reputation, and just so. I mean, earned it pretty much.

(*Jesse agrees with a laugh.*)

But the Maximum Fun subreddit is a good vibe, and it's a good time, and I enjoy hanging out over there and seeing all your good vibe comments and your incredibly funny title suggestions. So, thank you for those.

**Jesse Thorn:** Evidence and photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account. That is [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). You can also find them on the open web! On the episode page for this week's episode, at [MaximumFun.org](https://www.MaximumFun.org). We're on TikTok and YouTube [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). On YouTube, you can watch full episodes of our program plus live premieres Wednesday morning, 9AM Pacific, noon Eastern. Live premieres of each week's *Judge John Hodgman* video on the *Judge John Hodgman* YouTube page. And a lot of times Jen and John and I are hanging out in the chat when that happens. But certainly, you can chat with other MaxFun fans and *Judge John Hodgman* viewers. It's a nice time over there in those live premieres. Follow us, subscribe to us there, please.

**John Hodgman:** And thank you RDVMD over on Apple Podcasts for the recent five-star rating. Dr. RDV, I presume, writes, quote, "As a 50-something Caucasian woman, I am contractually obligated to love true crime podcasts. And I do. But it turns out I love petty grievances and being judgy just as much. The hosts of *Judge John Hodgman* are funny. The guests are off beat." Except for Dorin, who was exactly on beat; it was amazing. "And the complaints are ridiculous in the best way." End quote. Do you hear that, Jesse? We're as popular as murder podcasts.

**Jesse Thorn:** Woohoo! We finally reached crime levels of popularity! (*Chuckles.*)

**John Hodgman:** Thank you very much, RDVMD, or shall I say Dr. RDV. And thank you to everyone who's been reviewing the podcast all over the place and spreading the word, even if it's just talking about it to a friend. It really helps people discover the show.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, pick a favorite episode. Homework for this week, if I might. Pick a favorite episode, think of someone who might enjoy it, and send it to them. Send it in a text message or an email or @ them on social media or post it on their Facebook wall, Myspace it to them, send it to them on Friendster. Pick your favorite episode and send it to somebody that might enjoy it. It really—look, we're not buying advertisements, you know what I mean? We don't have advertisement buying money!

**John Hodgman:** No.

**Jesse Thorn:** We've only got camera buying money right now. (*Chuckles.*) So, send it to a friend. It really does make a huge difference if you love the show.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, and share the YouTube video. Just click the share, and post it to some place or whatever. That's fun.

**Jesse Thorn:** Post it to someplace or whatever. *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman.

[01:05:00]

This episode, engineered by Lily Ruckstuhl and Abigail Clark at Pulp Arts in Gainesville, Florida. The podcast edited by A.J. McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. Nattie Lopez runs our social media. And our producer is the ever-capable Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment. Amy asks, "Are anklets tacky? I say no."

**John Hodgman:** I saaaay no. What do you say, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, yes. But I'm not gonna get in the way of anybody's fun.

(*John laughs.*)

You know what I mean? They're a fun kind of tacky, for sure. I mean, they have a Limited Too vibe.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I suppose that's true. I don't know. I don't know. I feel like—I bet you that—I bet you with the right anklet, no matter what, you can carry it off.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jennifer Marmor, host of *March Madness*, on the Maximum Fun podcast, if you were gonna buy an anklet at the mall, what store would you be hitting up?

**Jennifer Marmor:** A Limited Too, for sure.

**John Hodgman:** Limited Too.

**Jesse Thorn:** I nailed it! That's great!

**Jennifer Marmor:** Yeah, although I think they're gone now, so now probably Justice.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. Probably hit up Justice, Judge Hodgman.

**John Hodgman:** Alright. That's where I'll go. And I'm going to put my ankle where my mouth is. Which is very uncomfortable.

Hey, we talked a little bit today about what it is to be a solo artist. I'd love to hear more artist disputes. Did someone in your ceramic studio always snag the best pottery wheel? Do you have a friend who always tries to touch the art at the museum? Did you get splashed by soup while admiring the Mona Lisa in January? And you want to sue for damages? Get some of that Louvre money? Submit your art cases at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho).

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, can I tell you something I learned from my colleague, Kevin, here at Maximum Fun? He's the senior producer of *Bullseye*.

*(John confirms.)*

He used to work at the Orange County Art Museum. The way you can tell a classy museum from a two-bit museum is whether the security guards get chairs. If there's a chair or a stool there, then it's a classy joint. If there's no chair or stool there, there's a two-bit operation.

**John Hodgman:** Two-bit operation. Yeah. Everyone deserves to take a load off from time to time. But we don't only want to hear art related disputes. Right, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** Any subject is welcome at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). No case is too big or too small, and our whole show runs on them. So, please share them with us. That form is at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Very easy to share them. And we're answering cases in all kinds of forms these days. Not just here on the podcast, but also, of course, John answers them in the *New York Times Magazine*. We've been answering them on social media in video form. And Judge Hodgman, we've got big plans for a new, regular *Judge John Hodgman* feature for members of Maximum Fun only.

**John Hodgman:** You talking about a members only mailbag, something like that?

**Jesse Thorn:** Bingo-bango. So, if you are a member of Maximum Fun—and thank you to everyone who has been a member forever; thank you to everyone who joined during the MaxFun drive—once a month, we're going to be clearing out the member mailbag. So, if you have a case for *Judge John Hodgman*, submit it at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Indicate that you are a member, and for the time being, we guarantee we will solve any dispute. All member

disputes will be solved if you submit it at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho) and you tell us you're a member in that members only monthly *Judge John Hodgman* members mailbag.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, and if you're—the members only mailbag is a great place for you to clear out your other kinds of questions too. Questions about etiquette, questions about advice. If you want to defend Felix Mendelsohn, the composer, that's a good place to do it.

**Jesse Thorn:** This is a big tent. This is going to be a big tent program.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, exactly so.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) For our local mini following.

**John Hodgman:** Anyway! Submit your cases at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Become a member at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). And keep those cards and letters coming!

**Jesse Thorn:** We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Transition:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

**Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

**Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

**Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

**Speaker 4:** Supported—

**Speaker 5:** —directly—

**Speaker 6:** —by you!