

**[Pod and Prejudice theme]**

**Becca:** This is Becca.

**Molly:** This is Molly.

**Becca:** We're here to talk about Jane Austen.

**Molly:** We're here to talk about Jane Austen adjacent things, today. Listeners, you're getting an episode on a Wednesday, you're getting an episode on an off week. We are so excited to be joined today by Zackary Grady, who has created a podcast called Gay Pride and Prejudice, which is out now, and we are obsessed with it. Zackary, hello and welcome.

**Zackary:** Hello, I am obsessed with both of you. I'm so excited to be here.

**Becca:** Oh, my God.

**Molly:** I'm geeking out.

**Becca:** Made my heart jump.

[laughter]

**Becca:** In this very special edition, listeners, you're going to learn a little bit about this fantastic podcast, Gay Pride and Prejudice, that is premiering this same day on Spotify by our illustrious guest, Zackary Grady. Zackary, hello. Why don't you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself?

**Zackary:** Yeah. I am a writer-director. I have [00:01:00] mostly been working in theatre for, oh, my God, like a decade now. I've done everything from very traditional plays to these large-scale immersive productions, shows where everyone in the audience wears headphones, and the whole show comes at you in an audio sense. I have been getting into film. I had a short film run at a bunch of festivals two years ago. And now, I am neck deep in audio fiction. I have this show, and a handful of other shows that are in development. So, basically, I run around all different mediums and just never stop writing all day, every day.

**Molly:** That's amazing. That's the dream. You're living my dream.

**Zackary:** [laughs]

**Becca:** [laughs]

**Molly:** Well, we're going to start out Zackary by asking you our classic questions that we ask all of our guests before we dive into Gay Pride and Prejudice. So, first of all, what is your relationship to Jane Austen?

**Zackary:** Oh, my God. It is long and [00:02:00] storied. I feel other people on your show have said something similar to this. I think it was summer reading in fifth grade, if you're like 10--

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Zackary:** Someone at my school put *Sense and Sensibility* on that summer reading list. I, as a 10-year-old little gay boy, was like, "That is the book I'm reading this summer." I got it, and I read a page, and was truly had no idea what was being said. So, I had this weird opinion about Jane Austen that it was really difficult and really intellectual. And then in high school and then again in college, I just found myself surrounded by people that loved Jane Austen. My friends would have heated discussions about the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* or the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*. I was like, "Why are people having really, really heated arguments right now?"

**Molly:** [chuckles]

**Zackary:** I finally just in college was like, "I need to dive in." I dove [00:03:00] in, I read *Pride and Prejudice* first. I, then was like, "Oh, this is the same thing of that Kate Winslet, Emma Thompson movie. Then I read *Sense and Sensibility* and it was a downward slope from there, upward slope.

[chuckles]

**Zackary:** In college, I had the idea to adapt *Pride and Prejudice*. I've always wanted to, and I really committed about six or so years ago to doing it. My relationship is, I love Jane Austen, I love all of her works. The scale is weighted very heavy to *Pride and Prejudice*, because I've been through the process of getting to know her at her core and I hope to get to know the other ones as well.

**Becca:** Ah, I love that answer. I'm still reeling over the idea of a sixth grader trying to read *Sense and Sensibility*.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** I feel so bad for him too, because he was so excited to be smart and be like, "I'm going to read the hardest book on the list." Then, there was really no one-- I didn't tell anyone. I just got sad and didn't read [00:04:00] it. There was no one that was like, "No, it's too old for you." But then, I found it again. So, I was bound to find it. Yeah.

**Becca:** Don't worry. I had the same experience when I read [unintelligible 00:04:12] theory, except I was 22 years old.

**Zackary:** [laughs]

**Molly:** I had the same experience reading Jane Austen, and that's what this podcast is about.

**Zackary:** Yes. [laughs]

**Becca:** Yes. We are all about making sure people understand that Jane Austen can sound and feel heady, but then when you actually get into it, it is-- I'm trying to find a different adjective, but the only one coming to mind is the tits.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Becca:** So, it's the tits.

**Zackary:** It absolutely is. Yes. [laughs]

**Becca:** Next question is, what is your favorite piece of Austen content? I think you just answered this, but the question is very broad, so it can be one of her books or it can be an adaptation you really connected to, something inspired by it. Some have said *Clueless* as an option.

**Zackary:** Hello, it's the greatest.

**Molly:** [chuckles]

**Zackary:** Oh, I love Curtis Sittenfeld's *Eligible* book. [00:05:00] I thought it was so fun. It was *Pride and Prejudice*, but say-- I'm think in, I want to say, Cleveland.

**Molly:** Oh, cool.

**Zackary:** Cleveland or Cincinnati? I don't know. Kitty and Lydia were these girls that never stopped talking about cross fit. I just thought that-

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** -that was such a funny choice. But I think actually, my favorite thing is probably Kate Hamill's *Sense and Sensibility*. She's a playwright, who's done *Sense and Sensibility*, she's done *Pride and Prejudice*. I think she's doing *Emma* right now. And that *Sense and Sensibility* was just the most fun. It was just like it had all the energy, and humor, and modern energy that *Bridgerton* has. But she was doing it eight years ago and I think I just have such fond memories of that production. It was like, everything was on wheels, and they would just roll into a scene, and then roll out of it, and [00:06:00] it was so creative. Yeah, I think her *Sense and Sensibility* is my favorite thing ever. It just was one of those productions where you felt like everyone in it, was having so much fun and so, the audience therefore was like, "Jane Austen, so much fun."

**Molly:** Yeah, I feel that was one of the first ones also. We talked about it on the pod. You mentioned it, Becca, and you were like, "I wish I had seen this production." So, it will always live in our hearts as one that we really wish-- [crosstalk]

**Becca:** The one that got away.

**Molly:** Yeah. [chuckles]

**Zackary:** Well, they should bring it back. I feel we should start a campaign. Bring it back. I want that.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Zackary:** I feel it needs to just happen again. It was so good.

**Becca:** It'll start tweeting at them.

**Zackary:** Yeah, let's do it.

**Becca:** All this to say, Kate Hamill, if you want to come on this podcast, honestly, please do.

**Molly:** Becca, I messaged her already.

**Becca:** [laughs]

**Molly:** Okay. To veer off the content portion, what Austen character do you relate to the most?

**Zackary:** [laughs] Oh, my God. [laughs] There's so many that I want to say. In my group of friends, we always play this game with [00:07:00] random things, and the rule is always it's not who you want to be. It's who like other people would say you are.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Zackary:** Because like, "I want to be Lizzy, I want to be Elinor, I want to be everyone." I'm Mrs. Bennet. Let's be real.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Zackary:** I think also as I get older, I understand her panic. I get it. She has a mission, and she will not rest until it's done. I love her so much and I love every version of her. Yeah, I have shades of other ones, but I think externally, I present as a Mrs. Bennet. [chuckles]

**Becca:** I love that, and I want to know your resting heart right now.

[laughter]

**Zackary:** Oh, through the roof. Just [crosstalk] running. I can't sit down. It's like, "Oh, my God." [chuckles]

**Molly:** I relate to that. I really do. It's the picture of her in the 1995 when she's looking for her smelling salts and just wailing.

**Zackary:** [laughs] [00:08:00]

**Molly:** That's me most days, but I want to be Daddy Bennet.

**Zackary:** Oh, yeah.

**Molly:** I aspire to that level of chill, but we all know we'll never get there.

**Zackary:** Yeah. I feel that's what the journey of a writer is. I think in many, many creative forms where

it's like, "I want to present as a chill person who's over it and just makes these really great stories and is very calm." But at the end of the day, I'm like, "Do you want to produce my script. Do you want to marry my daughter? Please, please, please? It's very important that you do."

**Molly:** Right.

**Zackary:** So, I try a little more Daddy Bennet.

**Becca:** I love that. So, our last standby Austen question is, do you have any really notable Austen hot takes?

**Zackary:** I don't know if it's a hot take. Well, in researching *Pride and Prejudice*, there was so much that I just found so fascinating, because I went deep and I felt I didn't have permission to adapt it. So, I felt [00:09:00] this need to research the hell out of it. One thing that I found that I personally think is really cool is there's a lot of discussion about its similarities to Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and how similar Beatrice and Benedick are to Lizzy and Darcy, and then you have hero and-- Is it Claudio or Claudius?

**Molly and Becca:** Claudio.

**Zackary:** Claudio are very similar to a Jane and a Bingley. It's not to take away from Austen at all, because she made it very much her own, but I keep obsessing over-- *Much Ado About Nothing* is 400 years old and *Pride and Prejudice* is 200 years old. I just keep thinking about how *Much Ado* was to Austen what *Pride and Prejudice* is to us today. It was already this old dusty thing to her. [00:10:00] I don't know if that's a hot take, but that was something that I just couldn't stop obsessing over, that she would have read Shakespeare, she was British, and she would have seen productions of Shakespeare, and I sort of feel her *Pride and Prejudice* is a take on Shakespeare.

**Becca:** I love that. I'm thinking about it now. What's the name of the villain in that?

**Zackary:** Oh, he's totally Wickham.

**Becca:** Yeah, he bears some similarity.

**Molly:** Don Pedro or Don John.

**Zackary:** This is what happens with Shakespeare. I know the protagonist and then everyone else is a wash.

**Becca:** And one of the brothers is Don John and one of the brothers is Don Pedro. I don't remember which one's the evil one and which one's the good one.

**Molly:** Yeah. Because also, isn't the evil one, he's not evil. He's just sad. Or, am I mixing them up? The other one [crosstalk]?

**Becca:** No, no. Keanu Reeves is evil.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** Yes, yes.

**Becca:** Incidentally, listeners, if you haven't seen that Kenneth Branagh *Much Ado About Nothing*, Emma Thompson does play Beatrice and Zackary is completely right. Beatrice walked so Lizzy [00:11:00] could run.

**Zackary:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Yeah. You're so right. I've never thought about that. I am also one of those who has not seen that movie of Emma Thompson and-- [crosstalk]

**Zackary:** Oh, it's so much-- Actually, now that I'm talking about I really want to watch it. I watched it early in when I was adapt-- because I've watched every single adaptation that was ever made. I watched that for the first time, I had never seen it, and it is so which-- It is Emma Thompson. So, it's just incredible.

**Becca:** It is. It's so niche and nerdy, but my personal favorite adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* is the Catherine Tate-David Tennant one-

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** Oh, my God.

**Becca:** -that was filmed on the West End, I believe.

**Molly:** Oh, my God.

**Zackary:** Oh, my God.

**Becca:** There's a live stream of it somewhere. I had a friend who was nerdy enough in college to have a subscription to the West End films like plays. And so, we would watch a few of them, and I saw that one, [00:12:00] and it is so good, but I don't know where to find it anymore. [laughs]

**Molly:** Oh, no.

**Zackary:** I going to tonight. That's my mission to find that. [laughs]

**Becca:** It's really fantastic. The only thing I'll give away about it is that David Tennant plays Benedick with his full Scottish accent.

**Zackary:** Oh, thank God. This is what we need. We need this right now. In 2022, we need that. [laughs]

**Becca:** Yes, it's the purest show you can find. But speaking of pure joy, we should probably start talking about this amazing little podcast radio play that you have written, *Gay Pride and Prejudice*.

**Molly:** Yes, we should talk about that. And before we do, we're going to just play you the trailer, because it's amazing.

### [Gay Pride and Prejudice Trailer]

**Molly:** So, Zackary, without giving too much away, Becca, and I have both listened to the first episode [00:14:00] but for our listeners, can you just give us a quick rundown? What is the concept of Gay Pride and Prejudice?

**Zackary:** *Gay Pride and Prejudice* is an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. It's set in 2015, the day marriage equality passes in America, and it follows a group of college friends over the course of a year as they begin coupling off and finding long-term relationships. I don't want to give too much away, but I'll just say that Lizzy Bennet is Bennet in this version, and Bennet is the glue of the family, and he finds himself facing that age when your chosen family starts to evolve, and what does that mean, and it has all of the characters that you love from the book. I'm very, very, very excited for everyone to hear it. It's been a very long gestation and I cannot wait to share it.

**Molly:** It's so good.

**Zackary:** Oh.

**Becca:** We are so happy to be a part of sharing it out [00:15:00] with the world of you. So, anyway, to continue on the interview and not get too nerdy too quickly, although, we already went down a Shakespeare rabbit hole.

**Molly:** Yes, true.

**Zackary:** Well, I feel we're going to go deep on this one. Let's just get into it. [laughs]

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Oh, yeah. So, what inspired you to create this piece in the first place?

**Zackary:** I always joked about doing it. Again, in college, I fell in love with *Pride and Prejudice*. I was in my early 20s at the time and I always-- It was like a running joke. I went to school for theater. And so, it was very normal to say, "Oh, I'm going to make a play of *Pride and Prejudice*, but everyone will be gay." Not entirely mean it, but mean it deep in my soul. I remember the day marriage equality passed, I had the thought-- On that day, I had the thought of like, "Oh, we can do it now," because there's the backdrop of marriage and it could be a real thing. [00:16:00] That began the like, "Do I dare? What am I biting off here?" It was originally written as a play. I started in 2016 and I fully wrote it as a play. I did a small workshop of it, and it was one of the first major things that I wrote. It just bounced around for four years. About a little over two years ago, we got serious about it as a podcast. I've done a lot of work in audio in theater. I mentioned, did these crazy shows where everyone wore headphones. It felt I had these two skills of writing and audio design in a cool way. It's just lived with me for a long time. It started as a joke, I got serious about it, and then I thought, "Oh, we could do something really cool with it." And now, here we are today launching it as a 10-episode [00:17:00] audio series and it's so much cooler than what I was joking it would be when I first joked about it.

**Becca:** One of our questions later on that we're going to just pop up here, because you brought it up is that you are writing this as a podcast, as an audio play of sorts. And as your background is very much in theater with film as well, I wondered how you found it different writing this story in podcast form as opposed to in a theatrical form?

**Zackary:** Yes, it's so different, but so similar. What's great is, it is dialogue based. Coming from theater, I love writing dialogue. I think I have a knack for it. It got me into shape to writing dialogue. Because in audio, it really is all you have, and you have to trim the fat, and you [00:18:00] have to explain things, but also exposition really feels exposition in audio, but you have to be clear. It was this pushing this pole. I worked really hard to make this-- I had a rule in the script where you couldn't hear it like I can't describe it on the page. I really worked hard to make every stage direction just be sonic and not get away with describing anything. It really forced the story to present itself in audio.

There were really no phones in the play and the whole show lives in people's voicemails, and text messages, and apps. That grew out of it becoming audio. It was really challenging. It sounds fun. And then when you get into it and you face it, it's really hard to tell where people are in an audio scene. I had an amazing team of [00:19:00] producers work on this. Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Justin Makita, Katie Pastor, Julie Balefsky, and then Mimi O'Donnell who runs Gimlet media, which was our home. She has directed so many of these audio shows. She just is the wise keeper of what works and what doesn't, and she would always say in early drafts of the script, like, "That won't work." And it'd be like, "Okay." And then, she would totally be right-

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** -and I'd have to change it. Yeah, it's dialogue based, but you have to think in such a different way, and it's such a challenge and so exciting, and it just forces you to be creative in a way that film or theater doesn't.

**Molly:** That's amazing. I've tried to dabble myself in writing for audio and I gave up. [laughs]

**Zackary:** Oh, don't give up.

**Molly:** It's so hard.

**Zackary:** It's so hard, but it's such [00:20:00] an exciting moment, because I feel it's getting real traction, and people are really listening to them, and engaging with them. What I love about this podcast is you have so many guests on who create audio fiction. I've been hungry for the community for it, and I just think there's so much to discuss about what we find works and what doesn't, and why it's so hard. Keep going. Keep writing another one. I want to hear it. Go again. [laughs]

**Molly:** All right. I'll try.

**Becca:** Well, I can tell you from the perspective of listening to the first episode, I was both completely not shocked and a little surprised that this was a play first, because it really does lend itself so well to the audio form.



**Molly:** Really does.

**Becca:** Yeah. It just seems so seamless as that specific sensory experience. But I digress.

**Molly:** Yes, though I will say your designers, your audio engineers, and whoever was working on it did such a good job. I really [00:21:00] was transported to all the different locations. I knew exactly where we were.

**Zackary:** That's so good to hear. First of all, I will say I throughout the play, I had to. You just had to start over and they felt good. I never reread the play. I just had it in my head and started from scratch.

**Molly:** I love that.

**Becca:** But the sound design, it is remarkable. Daniel Brunel and Shane Hendrickson lead the design. I just would get early drafts of things and they'd be like, "Oh, we have a lot to really work on it," and I'd be like, "Guys, this is unbelievable." I think where they've landed with these episodes is-- You're so right. They have such a knack for one little sound effect or one little thing, and you know exactly where we are, and we don't need to say it in the dialogue. It's remarkable. It's magic.

**Molly:** It really is. We love audio engineers on this podcast.

**Becca:** Shouts to ours, Graham.

**Molly:** Yeah, we love Graham. [chuckles]

**Zackary:** Hey, Graham.

[laughter]

**Becca:** Throw a sound effect to hear right here.

**Graham:** Sound, the nerd alert.

**Molly:** Yeah. [imitating sound] [00:22:00]

**Zackary:** [laughs]

**Molly:** Let's talk about queering Austen. I'm a big fan. Always looking to just talk about how gay these books are. So, I'm so thrilled that this podcast is happening. Why do you think that Jane Austen and particularly *Pride and Prejudice* lends itself to a queer love story and what was the process of doing that for you?

**Zackary:** I think it's because they just immediately are going to balls. They just instantly start going to balls in the book. It's what the whole opening of the story is, with Bingley coming to town. I think that was my window in, where I was like, "Oh, they're just going to clubs and dating each other." That's what their life is. That's why it started as a joke. But then, yeah, you dig deeper into it and you're like there's so much longing, there's so much forbidden-- I think also the different classes [00:23:00] are really

interesting to play with because for me, especially living in New York City, gay culture, it just runs the gamut of wealth and you sort of feel you don't belong at certain places. Gay clubs, now, we're starting to have covers and I'm like, "Come on, we didn't have covers in New York City. That was such a--"

But yeah, there's so many Darcys that I've encountered in my life in the gay world. I also at the time, yeah, I was in my early 20s, and you just felt you would show up at the club with your group of friends, and you felt like the Bennet sisters showing up and being like, "Who's going to go home with someone?" [laughs]

**Molly:** When I was listening to your podcast, I was really struck by the fact that the Bennet sisters are a chosen family.

**Zackary:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think it couldn't be anything else. I talked a lot about-- the [00:24:00] nerdy term that I always use was, I always felt I was extracting the DNA from her book and then building my own dinosaur with myself, the rest of the parts. I always would try to be like, "What was this moment to the reader back then?" And that's a great example of like, "To the reader, it was about this family unit. It was about these sisters, and they were together, because they were family and their actions had consequences within the family unit." You extract that DNA, and you go like, "Well, what is that in the gay world?", it's your group of friends that you've had forever and that you know each other so well.

That extends to many types of life but in queer communities, your chosen family is so important and it is why people-- hopefully, they don't have to anymore, but it's why people move to cities. It's because you know you'll find your community. That felt like it brought a new energy to the story, and a new set of [00:25:00] rules, and it also helped with something that I don't really know is in the book that much, which is this feeling of like-- The book's so much about them getting married, but then we don't ever think about they're not going to see each other that much anymore.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Oh, yeah.

**Zackary:** That's why I love *Death Comes to Pemberley*, because you get to meet up with them later on and you see what's become of it all. But there is that energy that felt right for drama and comedy for this story of this group of friends, everything about each other's business, it's codependent, it's unhealthy. Someone start dating somebody and the whole group is like, "I don't think so." And then, when it starts getting serious, you're hitting late 20s, early 30s, and it's a moment that everyone goes through.

**Becca:** Absolutely. That makes a lot of sense. I will say this, I think you're totally right about the implications of dating in the Jane [00:26:00] Austen world. That is one of the through lines that doesn't always make it into modern adaptations where when you marry, and you hit that economic jackpot, and that romance jackpot in these books, unfortunately, the downside of leaving your family forever and becoming part of a different family and a different estate.

**Zackary:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** I think the story that does do that a little bit more *Sense and Sensibility*, where the sisterhood is

so valued as part of the story, which leads me to the next question, which is related, but there is a real sense in which we are part of the process of trying to bring a place for progressive and queer people to have fandom that's related to the regency era. I think we're not alone in that. There are other podcasts that do that, there are certainly [00:27:00] communities online that are pushing for this as well. I guess, my question is, there are certain areas of history, where there are these massive cultural explosions.

One of those areas that has remained timeless in a lot of ways is the area of the Regency and Jane Austen. You see that in how timeless her work is, the timeless work of the Brontës who follow her a few years later, but are still close to being her contemporaries. And then you also have shows like *Bridgerton* that show that the stuff is still really popular. I think that there's room to take a look at those themes and look at how they're gay, I guess.

**Zackary:** Yeah. Well, when you were describing, the first thing that I went to is, it just reminds me of musical theater and the fabulousness of all these stories. [00:28:00] I just think of *Les Mis*. It's a totally different era, a totally different country, but it shares a period piece drama and fabulousness. Well, *Les Mis* isn't fabulous. They're all poor.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** But I'm thinking of as the kid that picked up the *Sense and Sensibility* book, there's something fabulous about these eras, and it just feels pure, pure escapism, and it's such a great place to set a romance. Yeah, *Bridgerton* is so successful because we just love it. I think we're queer people love these heroines and musical theater. I'm thinking of *Sunday in the Park with George*, or *Hello, Dolly!* Or--

**Molly:** I think Judy Garland.

**Zackary:** Anything. Yeah. They share some energy and I think you get to watch people in these crazy outfits, [00:29:00] just sip tea, and they're talking shit about each other nonstop.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Zackary:** It's so dramatic. It's *The Real Housewives* too. When you think about it, I know that's not really queer culture, but gays love *The Real Housewives*.

[laughter]

**Zackary:** I would just say, it's so fabulous, it's so fun. I also love with stories like *Bridgerton* where they're sneaking in queer love very subtly and it doesn't feel whispering, and problematic, and drama induced. There's just that lovely moment in the last season, where Penelope and Eloise hold hands while they're laying down. It's not really commented on, and it can just exist. I don't know if they're going to develop that further or what. But I was like, "Yes, this is what we should be doing. We shouldn't have these problematic characters [00:30:00] who are clearly gay and it is taboo. We should find a way to let it exist in the world of the Regency Era or similar eras."

That was something that I was so drawn to with *Gay Pride and Prejudice* was, I've always said we don't have queer classics, because we couldn't. Because it wouldn't have been out and loud romance. So, part of doing this was reimagining it in a modern sense so that story can be queer. But I think the challenge

now is to tell a Regency Era story and not have it be filled with someone dying and drama. Someone please who's listening, or somewhere, or if it exists, please point me to it. It's such an amazing time period, and era, and it's so gay. I think that we need it. We really, really need it. [laughs]

**Molly:** We really do, because especially during the pandemic, so many people have turned to Regency romance to escape. [00:31:00] There has been a whole, because I want to read lesbian Regency romance.

**Zackary:** Yes.

**Molly:** I think there definitely are fan fictions out there. But what I think is looked over often is that, I mean, gay people didn't just appear. It was happening. I want the stories about it, and I will say that we had guests on our podcast who wrote a book called *Why She Wrote*, and it is about all of these different women throughout history who were writers. And two of them, one was Anne Lister, who is my new idol and I think there's a TV show about her.

**Becca:** *Gentleman Jack*, right?

**Molly:** Yes, *Gentleman Jack*.

**Zackary:** Oh, my God, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Molly:** And then, George Eliot, who was not gay, but who dressed like a man and wrote as a man.

**Becca:** Banged a lot of ladies.

**Molly:** Two queer icons.

**Becca:** Didn't she bang a lot of ladies or was that a different one?

**Molly:** Oh, maybe she did. Maybe she [00:32:00] did. And so did Anne Lister. They were both heroes. But yes, I think what we need now is-- I haven't seen this most recent season of *Bridgerton* but in Season 1, I was shipping those two really, really hard. So, I'm glad to hear that they-- [crosstalk]

**Zackary:** Well, without giving any spoilers away, they have announced that Season 3 is Penelope and I just really hope that it's secretly going to be a lesbian story.

**Molly:** I hope so too because she's such a queer icon, that actor.

**Zackary:** Oh, my God. Have we seen *Derry Girls*?

**Molly:** I haven't, but Becca has. [laughs]

**Becca:** I love *Derry Girls*.

**Zackary:** Oh, my God, yes, we can fully tangent on *Derry Girls*, if you want. This can just be a-- [crosstalk]

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Becca:** Oh, my gosh, I am actually, rabidly waiting for third season to come out on Netflix.

**Zackary:** Yes, yes. Yes. It's going to be a big day.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Becca:** This is fantastic, because first of all, I've been trying to get Molly to watch *Derry Girls*. I aggressively recommend heartfelt sitcoms to [00:33:00] Molly all the time.

**Molly:** Yes, she does and I always love them.

**Becca:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** Oh, my God. I think *Derry Girls* was also a play too, originally. I think it was written as a play and then they--

**Molly:** Yeah, it was.

**Zackary:** Yeah. And then, they turned it into a TV show. Nicola Cog-lin, am I saying it correctly?

**Molly:** I think it's Coughlin, but I also don't-- She's Irish, right?

**Zackary:** Yeah. Oh, Lord, [unintelligible [00:33:20]].

**Becca:** [laughs]

**Molly:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Zackary:** But Nicola has a scripted podcast. Oh, God, I'm going to forget the name, but it's very Irish and very funny. They put it out during the pandemic, and it was so, so, so great and so funny. I'm so sorry that I can't remember the name. Put it in the show notes or something.

**Molly:** Yeah. We'll definitely going to do it.

**Zackary:** But anyway, yes, the Regency Era is very queer. I would just love to see like a protagonist set in that time period, and have them going to the balls, and everything, and [00:34:00] what would that be, what would it be? You know there were spinsters, who were perfectly content being with another woman.

**Molly:** I always thought in reading *Pride and Prejudice*, I would have put Charlotte as gay and I really without giving anything away about the plot, I've only listened to the first episode of yours, but Charlotte's, there like token straight friend, which I was like, "Yes."

**Zackary:** Yes, yes.

**Molly:** That's queering my narrative that's been enough.

[laughter]

**Zackary:** Oh, my God, I'm so happy you picked up on that, because that was very intentional. I love Charlotte. Something I always want is, I want *Pride and Prejudice* through Charlotte's eyes. I want that story where she's the protagonist. Her and Mary are my two favorite characters-

**Molly:** Oh, yeah.

**Zackary:** -for different reasons. But Charlotte, I did so much work on Charlotte, because I was so worried about getting Charlotte right. I knew early on that I wanted her to stay a woman, and I played with her being gay. There's actually a really [00:35:00] good New Yorker article called On Charlotte Lucas' Choice. It came out in 2013 on the 200-year anniversary of the book. I found it, and it's fascinating, and it just goes into Charlotte's decision, and the argument of did she have-- The writer goes against the argument that she had no other choice and presents Charlotte as the most pragmatic person in the story, who is actually thinking 10 steps ahead of everyone else around her.

Anyway, I just became obsessed with Charlotte. There's a line early in the book. I think Mrs. Bennet says it that, "Charlotte was the first one to dance with Bingley at the ball." I was like, "I know that girl." I'm friends with that girl, and she comes to the gay bar, and she finds the one straight guy at the gay bar, and she goes home with him, and I'm like, "What just happened?"

[laughter]

**Zackary:** Yeah. [00:36:00] I just also wanted to flip the trope of the gay best friend from 90s rom-coms, because we always have the gay best friend, and I thought how fun to have the straight girl best friend, and let her be basic and messy. I won't give anything away, but Charlotte goes on a journey in this podcast.

**Molly:** Thank goodness.

**Zackary:** I hope my love for her comes through, but she's played by Vella Lovell, who is absolutely genius, and has done sitcoms, she's done animation, she comes from theater, and she just brought Charlotte to life with so much energy in this. You can hear it in the first episode. She's so, so funny, but also so grounded and she really brings Charlotte from being this really fun, drunk girl in the first episode to-- She's sort of the first friend that talk sense into Bennet later on and I was obsessed with Charlotte. When we [00:37:00] cast Vella, I was so excited and Vella really elevated the character to an amazing height.

**Becca:** As a full disclaimer, I am a *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* stan. So, Vella was very exciting for me to listen to. [laughs]

**Zackary:** Yes, yes. Yes. She's so versatile. If you watch *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and then you watch *Mr. Mayor*, the show she's on now, you're like, "This is not the same actress." She's so talented. I am a stan as well. She's remarkable. [laughs]

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** Can I ask a follow-up question before we move on? This one's not listed on the questions that we gave you, but how did you choose or decide which characters you were going to gender swap? How did you make all of those decisions?

**Zackary:** Oh, my God. Yeah, it was such a long process. I knew I wanted most of them to be gay men, because that's me [00:38:00] and that's the story I wanted to tell. Then, there became choices about-- going back to that the DNA metaphor that hopefully sounds interesting, because it's interesting for me. It became about what is the function of this character in the story? And Mary's always been really fascinating to me and Mary feels like an other. I just was like, "Well, she's the lesbian who hangs out with all the gay guys." She goes to all the gay events and they're always like, "Are you enjoying yourself?" But I think Mary is enjoying herself. Obviously, because Jane became James, and Bennet were men, and they were gay, we needed the Bingley and the Darcy to be men. It became fun.

Keeping Charlotte Charlotte became really exciting, because she added a new flavor. I decided to kill off Mr. [00:39:00] Bennet and just have Mrs. B who is now-- Mrs. Bennet is now Mrs. B, and Mrs. B changed so much. She started as an older gay man. I think she was something else and then I was like, "We need more lesbian presence in this. We need more female queer presence." I also just was like, "We need the lesbian of a certain age who is just an--" It felt fun being a gay man when it was a play, being this older, fabulous gay man who was running around screaming. But then in the podcast, I was like, "No, I need a woman to anchor this," and she became Mrs. B, and she's such a fun character in this.

So, it was all over the place. A lot of it changed over time, but I love the female characters that we have in this. Caroline Bingley just had to stay. She was so much more impactful as the younger [00:40:00] sister to the pop star celebrity, Carlos Bingley. She's Carolina in this. She just felt so much more threatening as a hot girl to Bennet. I didn't want there to be any attraction between them. I just wanted her to truly be an antagonist and that felt delicious, having her just be this rich influencer, who's so mean to Bennet.

[laughter]

**Becca:** I'll say this, I'm a huge fan of female villains. So, I was very pleased to see Miss Caroline Bingley remain. [laughs]

**Zackary:** Oh, yeah. I think if you've only heard the first episode, she gets obviously a lot to do in Episode 2. We really get to learn about her brand, and her Instagram, and all of her businesses that she has, and how self-important she is. She is wonderfully terrible.

**Molly:** Amazing.

**Becca:** Incredible stuff. Okay, so, on the note, we talked a little [00:41:00] bit about working with Vella Lovell. You're working with some like tour de force actors in this production. Based on your prior work, it looks you've collaborated with Jesse Tyler Ferguson before as well. I'm just wondering how you went about casting this and what the process of working with these actors was like?

**Zackary:** Oh, my God, it was nothing short of a dream. Jessie and his husband, Justin, are people I've known for, oh, my God, maybe I think a decade now. It's been a long time now. They've been such champions of my work, they've been such cheerleaders, they come to everything I do. When I started writing on a much bigger level, they were always the first ones to be like, "We want to read it, we want to read it." They read this play four years ago and were like, "It's great. Keep going." And then when it was becoming a podcast--

Actually, funny thing about that is I in a moment of panic, [00:42:00] I just was like, "I'm going to make this into a podcast, and I'm going to do it all on my own, and I'm going to figure it out." They caught wind and they were like, "Wait, can we be involved?" I was like, "Oh, you want to be involved?" They were like, "Yes." Then I come down, and we brought it through the proper channels, and it became this incredible thing it's become. They've been so instrumental in the birth of the show and the story and they've been so excited, and they've been so exciting to work with. Jesse, like Vella-- What Jesse and Vella have in common is they both come from theater, they've done sitcoms, and they just get audio. It was so, so incredible to work with them, because they play such characters that come in and you need them to be bold. We don't spend a whole lot of time with them. [00:43:00] I just was so blown away by it. They just come in and you're like, "Yeah, you bring it in your first take. It's incredible."

And then the casting process was quick and exciting, because what's great about podcasting is you really can get amazing people that do it, because it's not a lot of time. We can get through a whole character in a day of work. We recorded this remotely with people, and I would typically read opposite them to keep the pace, and we would capture them individually. But with Bennet, who is played brilliantly by Blake Lee, who's also been a friend, who I've been a fan of his work for a long time, and to finally work with him in such an intimate level. He recorded obviously the most, because he's in every single moment of the show, but we had some specific characters that we wanted him to record opposite so actually, [00:44:00] know what they were doing and we had Ronald Peet, who plays Darcy, who has the voice of a generation. He is unbelievable. His Darcy, I think, is going to change the game. I just want to say that. His Darcy is a Darcy for the ages. And opposite Blake, the sound of Blake versus Darcy, in terms of casting was a match made in heaven, because they sound so different. Whenever they spar, it's so enjoyable, because they're just vocally without even having to do anything, it's so dynamic.

And so, casting was a lot of that It was a lot of like, "We have this actor. Who do we put opposite them?" Knowing that all we're going to have are their voices, it became this game of like, "Let's get this one first, and then we'll go to the love interest." Blake was the first one we cast, because we knew we needed to know who our Bennet was, because everyone is opposite him. I also did something thing [00:45:00] that I haven't explained, where I had this rule where Bennet is what I call our vocal anchor for clarity. We never leave Bennet. We are always with him, so that way when a new character comes in, we're not wondering what's going on. We're just like, "Oh, this is a new person Bennet's talking to." Once we had Blake, we just went opposite him.

The one I was most worried about was James, because James and Ben had spent a lot of time together, and they are two men, and they are similar energies. We got Maulik Pancholy, who you might recognize from *30 Rock*. He was Jonathan on *30 Rock*. He's also a great theatre actor. He and Blake sound so different, and they're different energies, and we recorded them together. They really got into a great rhythm. And then, yeah, I feel I'm going off on a tangent here, but we got Rosie O'Donnell to play Mrs. B. And that was absolutely a dream come true. She was a one-take [00:46:00] wonder. She just came in and it was like, "Okay, yeah, that's it. Thank you. That's why you're a star."



[laughter]

**Zackary:** We have Javier Muñoz as Carlos Bingley. He was Hamilton, an absolute dream of a person. You hear a bit of it in the trailer, but we get a full song from Carlos in Episode 2.

**Molly:** Oh, thank goodness.

**Zackary:** Buckle up. We have a 90s pop song from Carlos Bingley. We're calling it the *Song of The Summer*. So, get ready.

**Molly:** Wow.

**Zackary:** Jesse plays Colin, who is a reimagining of Collins, and he's so funny, and absolutely brilliant. I always thought that Colin and Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. B in mine, I always thought about them being the Shakespearean fools of the piece. To get Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Rosie O'Donnell as the two iconic fools, it just feels they take [00:47:00] care of the energy and the pacing of the show, and then let the love, and the romance take its time when it needs to. Because in three minutes, Rosie O'Donnell is going to come barreling in. Marisol Sacramento is playing Carolina Bingley. She's someone I know from college and she's brilliantly funny. Sherry Cola is a comedian. She's playing Mary and she's one of the funniest improv people I've ever worked with. She wrote half of Mary's lines on the fly.

**Becca:** Oh, my God.

**Zackary:** She just riffed around. I was like, "You are a genius." Luke is a hybrid of Kitty and Lydia, which we can talk all about making them a hybrid. I mulled into that for about three seconds and realize, it's what I had to do.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Becca:** I mean, we call them Kydia on this show.

**Zackary:** Kydia. Oh, my God, Kydia. I love that.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Zackary:** Well, Luke is named Luke, because I took a letter from each. I took L and a K, and I was like, "It's closest we're going to get." Again, for clarity, we were like, Luke is [00:48:00] tough, the same in the book. We don't spend time with Lydia, and then Lydia become so important in the second half, and we had all these discussions of like, "How are we going to remember this character?" And then it was like, "Oh, he's Australian." We were like, "We need to find an Australian actor," and we found Rhys Nicholson, and he is an Australian comedian, and he's so brilliant.

Get ready for when fans of the book know what happens to Lydia, get ready for when Luke has some news for the family. It's one of my favorite scenes in the whole show. It's in Episode 7. So, buckle up. Then, Matthew Rhys plays our Wickham. His voice is that of a Wickham when you hear it.

**Molly:** [chuckles]

**Zackary:** I think I got everybody. Oh, my God, I hope I didn't forget a character. But it is a rockstar cast. It is [00:49:00] mind blowing. To work with them was a dream come true. They're unbelievable.

**Molly:** Yeah, listening to it, I was just blown away. I love that to get someone to be memorable, you made them Australian. I [crosstalk]

**Becca:** [laughs]

**Molly:** Rosie O'Donnell is amazing. It's just so good to listen to. And listeners, if that doesn't get you excited hearing all of these amazing cast members, I don't know what will, because it's going to be great. It is great. It's out today.

**Zackary:** Yes.

**Molly:** On the day that this drops.

**Becca:** And listeners, we cannot fake this much enthusiasm. We both had the best time listening to the first episode and we're definitely going to both listen to the entire thing. We strongly suggest you guys get your ears over to Spotify and take a listen to the first episode of *Gay Pride and Prejudice* by Zackary Grady. Zackary, thank you so much for joining us. Do you want to tell the people where they can find you?

**Zackary:** Yes. I also want to say when this is airing today on Wednesday, we are [00:50:00] launching two episodes. So, you'll get one and two.

**Molly:** Oh, great.

**Zackary:** And then every week, we're doing two episodes.

**Becca:** Fantastic.

**Zackary:** We're not going to make you wait too long. You'll get two episodes a week for five weeks. So, the story will keep going. But yeah, you can find me-- I'm really only on Instagram. Zackary Grady, my name is *@thackarybinx* on Instagram.

**Molly:** Yes, yes.

**Zackary:** [laughs]

**Molly:** Yes, *@thackarybinx*. Oh.

**Zackary:** As much as I love *Pride and Prejudice*, I also love *Hocus Pocus*.

**Molly:** Come on, *Hocus Pocus*.

**Zackary:** Yeah, that's mostly where I hang out. It's mostly pictures of my dog and then the occasional me pops in. But that's mostly where I am. Yeah.

**Becca:** I also just got a dog. So, my Instagram feed is exclusively my dog from now until forever.  
[laughs]

**Zackary:** Yeah, it's what happens. It's totally fine. Welcome. [laughs]

**Becca:** Thank you.

**Molly:** Before we go, I want to say that I did text Becca what my favorite line was from Episode 1-

**Zackary:** Oh, my God.

**Molly:** -and I'm going to tell you, because I think it's fun. It's Bennet and he just says, "Oh, [00:51:00] my God, Charlotte, did you just poop?"

**Zackary:** Oh, my God.

[laughter]

**Zackary:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Don't give the listeners context. Don't give them context.

**Molly:** No context.

**Zackary:** No context.

**Becca:** [laughs]

**Molly:** I lost it. As they say, lost my shit.

**Zackary:** Oh, that's so great. Oh, my God. I love that. Yeah, and Blake's delivery of that is genius. He's so funny. Oh, my God. Yes, listeners, get ready. [laughs]

**Molly:** Yeah, truly get ready. Again, we are so excited about this. When you reached out about this podcast, I was so excited. I was like, "Oh, my God, Gay Pride and Prejudice, we need it." I listened to it, and sometimes, you get an audio fiction and it's just you're immediately transported. And especially when you're doing something new with a classic, there are so many adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* out there, but you are truly doing something new with it. I just want to give you all of your roses, because it's so good, and fresh, and important. I did shed a [00:52:00] tear just because I was excited to be bringing this classic story into a modern lens and one that matters. So, thank you for making this podcast.

**Zackary:** So kind of you just say and I really appreciate that. And yes, I am just so happy to be a part of the Austen world now. It feels like a multiverse, and I get to be a little section of it. [laughs]

**Becca:** Yes. And you're quite the tremendous section of it.

**Zackary:** Oh, well, as are you. You exist in the Jane Austen multiverse too. It's really great that we synched up. This is so fun.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** It's incredible. Oh, I'm having the best time.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Zackary:** Yes, have me back. On a future book, I would love to dissect some movie or some-- I know you're probably finishing up *Sense and Sensibility*. But whatever you do next, I'm super excited about that *Persuasion* that's coming out on Netflix. So, I don't know what book you're going to do next, but I'm here to discuss any adaptation in the future.

**Molly:** Amazing. We'll definitely have you back.

**Becca:** Absolutely. You've set it on air. So, this is [00:53:00] officially a promise to come back.

**Zackary:** Great. Thank you. I'm happy to confirm.

[laughter]

**Becca:** All right, listeners, thank you so much for joining us for this very special episode of Pod and Prejudice. We will return to our 2008 *Sense and Sensibility* next week. But until then, stay proper--

**Molly:** And listen to *Gay Pride and Prejudice*.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Zackary:** Yay.

**Molly:** Yay.

**Molly:** Pod and Prejudice is edited by Molly Burdick and audio produced by Graham Cook. Our show art is designed by Torrance Browne. Our show is transcribed by SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription. For transcripts and to learn more about our team, check out our website at [podandprejudice.com](http://podandprejudice.com). To keep up with the show, you can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @[podandprejudice](https://www.instagram.com/podandprejudice). If you love what you hear, check out our Patreon at [patreon.com/podandprejudice](https://www.patreon.com/podandprejudice) to see how you can support us or just drop us a rating and a review wherever you listen to podcasts. Thanks for listening.