



JACK GREENMAN

Transcript: Creative Partnerships Outside of Institutions and Academia

Sarah Greenman:

Hello, and welcome to Collaborative Alchemy. My name is Sarah Greenman and I'm a creative alchemist, artist, storyteller, writer, and facilitator. I believe that your creativity is a gift, meant to be wielded with great love and joy. It is a bone-deep tool for healing, justice, and revelatory collective liberation. Collaborative Alchemy is a series of conversations with artists, thought leaders, activists, farmers, educators, creatives, and other polymaths where we tell our stories, expand our histories, and hold space for new ways of being.

My guest today is actor, educator and voice coach Jack Greenman. In over 80 professional productions, spanning a 30 year career, Jack has performed with the New Swan Shakespeare Festival, the Utah Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Shakespeare Company, PCPA Theater Fest, Geva Theater Center, South Coast Repertory Theater, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Inside Out Theater Collective, the Strawberry Theater Workshop in Seattle, Center Point Theater Group in San Luis Obispo, and on and on.

As a voice text and dialect coach, Jack is certified as an associate teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework and has served as the voice and dialect coach for numerous nationally recognized regional theaters, including the Denver Theater Center, the Utah Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and the Round House Theater in Bethesda, Maryland. As an educator, Jack most recently served as the Head of Acting for the Division of Theater in Southern Methodist University's Art Program. And he taught voice and speech in the division for the BFA and the MFA Programs.

In his 30 year career as an educator, this includes not only the faculties of SMU, but Cornish College of the Arts, Freehold Studio in Seattle, Washington, and the Pacific Conservatory Theater in Santa Maria, California. But my favorite role Jack has ever played is as my life partner and the father to my two children. He and I have a long and illustrative creative career together. My favorite thing that he recently said was that he is now the Dean of the Pine Cottage School with enrollment of one, because he is homeschooling our son Walker. Please welcome Jack Greenman.

So I wanted to talk to you because you're my greatest creative collaborator. You and I are celebrating 20 years together right now, actually this month. And February is also a big month for us because that's when we secretly got married.

Jack Greenman:

Right. Are we going to tell everybody that story?

Sarah Greenman:

I don't know.

Jack Greenman:

We'll see. Stay tuned listeners.

Sarah Greenman:

I've grown up with you. I was 22 when we first got married or got together rather.

Jack Greenman:

We're now 42 and 55 for those keeping score.

Sarah Greenman:

So 20 years of creative conversations. As a creative collaborator, how do you see our marriage?

Jack Greenman:

Oh my goodness. Well, I think it's at the center of our marriage, of our union. I mean, I think of things that we've done together. I mean, the kids are the first thing that comes to mind, that's pretty creative.

Sarah Greenman:

That's really creative. A labor of love.

Jack Greenman:

And they've been pretty creative. But also working on *Leni* with you, being your sounding board, your editor, your inspirer, and then your admirer, in terms of *Leni*. But then also having you support me in my creative work at SMU for a decade and then flipping the script and coming out here to Oregon for now three years and going. Those are the big projects, certainly. And I know that when you and I are at our best, we're in a sort of creative cycle that one thing feeds on another and it just-

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah, it's really symbiotic.

Jack Greenman:

It just is very symbiotic, that's the word, yeah.

Sarah Greenman:

You had a 30 year career as an actor and as a professor and teacher, and you had a creative life that was woven into everything you did, whether you were teaching or whether you were vocal coaching for someone else's show or you were in the show. And in 2018, you walked, to come out here. And I think it's kind of easy to look at your early creative life and see where creativity landed for you. Clearly, you were in like a hundred professional shows, which is amazing. But how has creativity changed for you now that you are no longer a part of that conversation? And you're out here in rural Eastern Oregon, as you say, flipping the script. Where does creativity show up for you here?

Jack Greenman:

I think that creativity manifested basically until I left SMU. It manifested with an institutional focus, meaning that it was part of a greater whole, it was part of a training, it was part of an educational experience. It was part of a collaboration in terms of making something theatrical happen. And out here, it's become really open-ended. It really depends on the day actually, how it's showing up in terms of what is needed. I mean, the flipping the script part is basically me moving to family domestic support more often than actually creating something that, from the outside, would look like it's a creative act, like making a play or making a painting or writing something.

But also I dove headfirst into homeschool about a year and a half on out here, and that is a hugely creative thing. I'm deciding where we're heading on a daily basis, on a monthly basis, on a yearly basis and I'm trying to, trying, to enlist my 13 year old and collaborating with that project. And he sometimes does, and that's a beautiful thing when he does, and sometimes doesn't and that presents me with a lot of creative challenge. How do I get him interested in the things that I want him to be interested in? But even more importantly, how do I cultivate interest in that which is already interesting to him and use that to teach the concepts or concepts that I'm trying to get at. And it's a big open-ended question.

And that for me early on was super hard because my entire life had been institutionally based before. I went from high school to college to grad school with no break. And then from grad school to PCPA, where we met, and a 14 year career as a resonant artist in that particular situation. And so it started for me feeling like I was completely unmoored because I wasn't hooked up to an institution. Because I think that I know how to do that, I know how to sort of look at an institution and the people who were there and the mission and all that stuff and hook into it and find my niche.

But if your niche now is really everything else, is the whole world where do you put that? And so I think that there was an initial time where I was sort of anxious about what we had just done, the position I put myself into.

Sarah Greenman:

Which was leaving a job.

Jack Greenman:

Which was leaving a job, which was leaving a tenured faculty position, for those of you in the academic world, you'll know what that means. But I also was getting to a point, as we talked about, where I was feeling constrained by the institution. And I felt that even the institution of theater in general was not really working in a way that I wanted it to be working. So it was good to step away at that moment and take some new stock.

Sarah Greenman:

Tell me about the nature of creativity inside of an institutional framework, as opposed to creativity outside. You say everything is open, but tell me more about what you mean between those two kinds of creative impulses.

Jack Greenman:

Well, I think what I mean is that institutionally, you get hooked into a mission, but because that's outside, that intention is basically set before I arrive at an institution. I guess it's analogous to, are you writing the play or are you an actor in the play? I know how to be an actor in the play. The playwright has already said, "This is who the characters are, this is how they interact, these are the moments, these are the big moments, this is the climax of the story, and then the denouement."

And so I look at that and I immediately begin to have ideas because there is a framework, there is a template over it in which to fit your ideas. And because of that, I think I have immediate feedback and understand the thing that I'm doing, the thing that I'm working on, will serve the story in this way or will serve the educational institution in this way.

Sarah Greenman:

Right, or both.

Jack Greenman:

Being here, it's about writing, it's about writing your own story. And that's something interestingly that I started doing early on was I started writing in the mornings.

Sarah Greenman:

I remember, that became a practice of yours every day. As different from when we lived in Texas and you were working all the time.

Jack Greenman:

Exactly. And so that felt like a luxury because I was able to just write based on my own impulses.

Sarah Greenman:

Talk to me about that journal process, because as you know, this entire bundle for Imbolc [Creative Alchemy Cycle] is all about journal practice as sort of a launch point for creative inception. Tell me about your journal practice?

Jack Greenman:

Well, it's evolved. I can't say, like you, that I've been journaling consistently every day since I was 12 and I have volumes of journals that I can put on the bookshelf.

Sarah Greenman:

You sound like you have energy about that.

Jack Greenman:

No, not at all. But I started journaling really in earnest two or three years before I left SMU. And I was using a journal called the Full Focus Journal by a guy named Michael Hyatt. And it was super helpful for what I was doing because it's a goal centered journal where you rewrite your year goals, monthly goals, you have steps, you have trackers that are already built in, they're already printed in the journal and you have daily pages.

Sarah Greenman:

There's a framework.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, exactly. I'm sensing a theme here. But once I got out here, I really couldn't use that anymore because when you go from basically a full-time institutional focus my entire adult life in terms of my creative life, and then you go to no template at all, really you can make anything that you want. To use that same framework just wasn't working for me. So I stopped journaling for a while and I started to question what our goals really for, why do we have goals? And I started reading Richard Rohr, the book that you gave me about the sort of last half of your life.

And it really helped me start to understand what I think I started doing out here, which is, my life right now is less about my ambition professionally as it is about leaning into meaning. What is it for? Why are we doing this? What does it point to in terms of real meaning? So I stumbled, oh, maybe seven or eight months ago now on a bullet journaling. Now for those of you who know what bullet journaling is and have followed bullet journal or is on Pinterest and other places, you can get really crazy artistic with bullet journaling.

I've seen people who just have these unbelievable works of art that are their journals. And initially that was my aspiration. I thought, "Oh, that'd be really cool if I could have amazing drawings and then a to-do list and everything else in it." But the guy who started bullet journaling, whose name is Ryder, R-Y-D-E-R. That's his first name, but I can't remember his last name.

Sarah Greenman:

I'll find it.

Jack Greenman:

He started doing it because he was looking for a way to journal that he could organize his thoughts, but they wouldn't be all sort of sequentially embedded in the text so you can never find them again. So the idea he came up with is instead of writing the index in the back, right, the index in the front, as you start doing what he calls collections, which is basically the next thing that I write I go back to the front in the index, I write the page number and I tell myself what it is, so that when I want to find it again, I just go to the front of the journal, look at the index and go find it.

Sarah Greenman:

I love that.

Jack Greenman:

It's great because it means, "Okay, I can write whatever I want. I can be in the middle of a sequence of daily pages and have a couple of quotes that I want to write down and there's no other space for them.

So I just write them down on the next page, go back to the index, write the number and I gut it, and I still just keep moving forward.

Sarah Greenman:

I love that because as a journaler who's been, as you said, journaling for a really long time and I wasn't tracking any of it, I feel like I have to go back now and sort of notate where things are for myself. And so I've gotten better at that now that I'm using it for the purposes of writing stories and the purposes of creating content. But as a homeschooler, I'm sure that's wildly helpful.

Jack Greenman:

Oh absolutely. And I was just saying this to my son yesterday because we were talking about journaling. I said, "I can go back a month and see what we were doing on a given day." And many times I've done that and I've thought, "Oh, I guess we didn't do that much this week." But then I looked back over the week and I see what I've written down. And I realized, "Oh, well actually that's not accurate." And that's one of the things that's great about journaling too is it really helps you get real about how you remember what you did.

Sarah Greenman:

Well, I think too, you know how anti-productivity I am in terms of the capitalist system, that's pushing, pushing, pushing for us to always be producing something. And so we sort of hook into this idea that we haven't "produced" something. So I love that, that would be a way to go back and just sort of affirm for yourself like, "No, rocking it." Quietly. Quietly rocking it.

Jack Greenman:

Quietly rocking it. The other thing that bullet journaling does is you can build in lots of different trackers. So when I write my daily pages, I have six letters that I write down at the top with a bullet.

Sarah Greenman:

What are they?

Jack Greenman:

They're M, G, Z, P, W, and the S.

Sarah Greenman:

And?

Jack Greenman:

They stand for medication, because I take blood pressure medication. G is for gratitude, I write down two sentences of gratitude every single day. And what's great about that is when I start my new bullet journal, I'll leave several pages at the front to track, sleep, to track gratitude, to track blood pressure, to track...

Sarah Greenman:

I know you track groceries

Jack Greenman:
Groceries, exactly.

Sarah Greenman:
So what are the other ones? So that was M and G.

Jack Greenman:
M is medication. Gratitude is G. Z is Zazen. Zazen is sitting meditation.

Sarah Greenman:
I want to get back to that in a minute. Remind me.

Jack Greenman:
Absolutely. There's a lot to talk about in terms of Zazen. P is protein. I need to have protein in the morning. If I don't have protein in the morning, my day doesn't go so well.

Sarah Greenman:
You are a sad puppy.

Jack Greenman:
I'm a sad puppy. Sarah has seen it. W is walk and S is shower. Now mostly W and S, to be completely honest, go unchecked.

Sarah Greenman:
It's good to notice though, I'm not doing it.

Jack Greenman:
Yes, I notice that I'm not doing it, they're aspirational. And because they're aspirational, I put them down every day.

Sarah Greenman:
Yeah, that's good.

Jack Greenman:
So I've been kind of skipping the walk. And the shower, I'm a dirty dog, but I think-

Sarah Greenman:
We all are. Can we tell the story about us being in Dallas?

Jack Greenman:
Yeah, let's tell the story about us being in Dallas.

Sarah Greenman:

So we were in Texas and the city was congratulating people who were conserving water. And we got a congratulatory announcement from the city saying that we are one of the family is in town that we're using the least amount of water. And we realized, because we had small children, that it's because nobody in our home had been showering. We would go to two weeks between showers.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, a habit which has pretty much continued.

Sarah Greenman:

Oh God. So we were like, "Oh yay, we're amazing. Wait, no, we're just dirty."

Jack Greenman:

We're just dirty.

Sarah Greenman:

So talk to me about Zazen, because this is a huge part of your practice. And I think I want to know how it hooks into your creative life. As you know, we talked to [Yusef Seevers](#) last season during the Yule season, and Yusef talked about meditation a lot. That was sort of the core of that conversation. But talk to me about Zazen and your creative practice.

Jack Greenman:

Well, and it was wonderful to hear Yusef talk about that and the way that he did, because he of course was one of my grad students at SMU. And I'm amazed for where he's taken all this stuff and where he's gone. But meditation there's a lot to talk about. I really started doing it way back in the early '90s when I was a resident artist at PCPA. I was in my 20s and I realized that I am not a naturally extroverted outgoing person.

Sarah Greenman:

I learned that later.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah. As Mike Myers once said, "I'm a site-specific extrovert."

Sarah Greenman:

That's great.

Jack Greenman:

Meaning I really, in some contexts I can really bring it but my tendency is toward introversion. And so having an early career as an actor and with all of the challenges and highs and anxieties that come from being called upon over and over and over to perform, I needed a practice that would help me. And for a while, I thought I needed a psychological practice, but that was really just more for perspective. I needed something that was an ongoing thing. And so I started practicing meditation on my own following

whatever book I could find. And then at a certain point, a friend of mine who was a theater patron named Herb Kandel who was a-

Sarah Greenman:

Oh, he's an acupuncturist...

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, he's an acupuncturist. And he was a big patron of the theater and I got to know him. I called up Herb one day and I said, "I need to find somebody who I can have dialogues with but who isn't necessarily therapeutic. It's just sort of life journey kind of stuff." And he said, "Oh, I know you should talk to." And for lack of a better word, she's a meditator, she's a Buddhist, but she wasn't, as I came to find out, she would have said of herself that she was a Buddhist. But she was probably the most connected, grounded, enlightened human that I've ever encountered.

Sarah Greenman:

Is that Ligia Dantes?

Jack Greenman:

That's Ligia Dantes, sorry. I thought I said her name, but I think I just thought her name.

Sarah Greenman:

No, that's okay. So when you met Ligia and you started sitting and practicing with her. How did that work influence your creative?

Jack Greenman:

First of all, it really deepened my ability to work with ease and to really see what was going on in the moment. And I think it was really the place where I started to learn to know myself.

Sarah Greenman:

How to really the tenor of your acting?

Jack Greenman:

I think it made it more personal and more flexible. It just made the moments richer. And it changed my teaching, I think as well.

Sarah Greenman:

How?

Jack Greenman:

Well, a later mentor, Catherine Fitzmaurice, would always say, "Teach what is in front of you." And that is something that I learned from Ligia, which is be with the person be with the moment that is in front of you. Ligia's dialogues were not advice sessions at all. In fact, she eshewed giving advice and sometimes you would beg her for advice.

Sarah Greenman:

Just tell me.

Jack Greenman:

Just tell me what to do. And she would say, "I wouldn't presume." And I love that.

Sarah Greenman:

I love that too.

Jack Greenman:

Because it's-,

Sarah Greenman:

And you're kind of not, I mean, just because I know your students, you're known for teaching that way. They would say, "Jack wouldn't presume to sort of know what I need but rather is creating opportunities to just discover, discover, discover."

Jack Greenman:

Yeah. We were talking about this earlier at the kitchen table. I mean, I've been reading very lately, like in the last couple of days. I've been getting into the original text of a Zen Buddhist monk who was Japanese.

Sarah Greenman:

What's his name again?

Jack Greenman:

Dogen.

Sarah Greenman:

Dogen.

Jack Greenman:

D-O-G-E-N. And it's this idea, a lot of times what I've seen in theater education is particularly acting teachers, they have an idea of how this should go, and they have an idea of holding a standard and figuring out your intentions and your beats and doing all this stuff.

Sarah Greenman:

There's a very clear...

Jack Greenman:

There's a very clear bar that you're supposed to hit. And as a voice teacher, one of the things that was enjoyable as a voice teacher is I can sort of float in the creamy center of that and say, "Well yes, there is that, but you also have to bring yourself to it." And we all know that if you bring yourself willingly, if you are invested in something, your ability to do it just goes exponentially up. You don't have to worry about hitting all the points, the rules just sort of fall in place because, because you're connected to it. And so

my work was a lot about giving people connected to it such that they could then jump through the hoops and not feel like they were being manipulated because they were connected to it.

Sarah Greenman:

This is one of the reasons I love the work of the Creative Alchemy Cycle because it's about working with what's in front of me, right? You're saying teach what's in front of you and I'm also like create what's in front of you, co-arise with what's in front of you, co-create with what's in front of you. And I do that in terms of nature out here, you're doing that with your students in real time. That's such a beautiful way of arriving at the work.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, and that word arriving is really important. I remember in my Fitzmaurice Certification, Fitzmaurice is a voice modality that I'm trained in that's very connected to these ideas. In my training, we had to do a performance and it was very open-ended. She basically said, "You can do anything you want." Which for those of you who are actors, is probably the worst thing.

Sarah Greenman:

It's so horrible. You're like, "No."

Jack Greenman:

Because like, "No, just let me fit myself into something." And so it was great in that way because it really sort of challenged you like, what do you want to do?

Sarah Greenman:

Or say.

Jack Greenman:

What do you want to say?

Jack Greenman:

What is the mark you want to make? And right before what I did, I went outside the room and took a big sort of cleansing breath of relaxation. And that was one of the things that the teachers talked about. My friend Saul is one of the master teachers in that program said, "What would happen if you didn't do that?"

Sarah Greenman:

It's so funny. We always think like, "Oh, you have to prepare yourself and take a deep breath and visualize what you're going to do. Why did he bring that up for you?"

Jack Greenman:

Yeah. Well, I think what Saul's interested in is, how does the breath move? How are you ready now?

Sarah Greenman:

Well, if you let that breath out, maybe that was the energy I needed to come in with.

Jack Greenman:

Right. Maybe that was it. Now for me, I just thought I was getting ready to do this thing that I was really nervous about. But I think he also means what if nervousness comes in?

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah, don't deflate the energy of that, come to it, arrive with it.

Jack Greenman:

And what if that is you?

Sarah Greenman:

That's a kind of wonderful creative transparency too if you just show up as you are truly...

Jack Greenman:

As you are.

Sarah Greenman:

I love that note. It's a great note.

Jack Greenman:

It is. And it's profound. What happens if it's just who you are?

Sarah Greenman:

Well, and that you are enough, which is such a huge part of the work I'm doing too and I know that you're doing. Certainly, that's what we're delivering hopefully to our kids as we homeschool and raise them, is that they're enough as they are. They can do the work right now.

Jack Greenman:

But there's really nothing else in our society that reinforces that. And so it's very difficult to practice that. It's easy enough to say, "Well, just bring you. Just bring what you are with all your things."

Sarah Greenman:

What does that mean really, yeah.

Jack Greenman:

But what does that mean? And then there's also a further level of, "Well, some people naturally bring the aspect of themselves that is most positive to a moment." But what if your tendency is to bring that aspect of yourself that is most vulnerable. Or is most denied or is taboo. What if that shows up and people go, "Ugh," and they just react to that and they don't want to see that.

Sarah Greenman:

What happens then?

Jack Greenman:

What happens then?

Sarah Greenman:

Tell me more about that.

Jack Greenman:

Well, that is how I think acting was beneficial to me just because of who I am, my voice, as you hear it and who I present as physically, I had the opportunity to play a lot of people who were...

Sarah Greenman:

Bad dudes.

Jack Greenman:

Bad dudes. Villains. As Brad Carroll [a director at PCPA] once said, "Another in a long line of rural villains."

Sarah Greenman:

You're really good at them.

Jack Greenman:

So it was great because at that point, that's who you want to show up. You want all of your darkest impulses.

Sarah Greenman:

You want ugly.

Jack Greenman:

You want ugly, you want selfish, you want all of that to just show up. And it's a powerful outlet because then you get to express it all. It's all out of you. And then, it was just fiction, right?

Sarah Greenman:

I think that was such a beautiful point though, because I think art and the creative impulse to make art, whether it's to write a story or to paint a picture, or to act in a play, you can take your ugly to that place and it has a home there. And it's not in a state of rejection, it's in a state of inquiry. And that's, for me, not that it's therapy necessarily, but it is therapeutic. It is cathartic in that sort of old sense of art and theater being a place of catharsis. And so I love that, that the creative process says, "Yes, I actually do want the whole enchilada of you. I want the ugly, I want the selfish, I want the enlightened, I want the oxygenated and the suffocating parts of you to come forward. I love that.

Jack Greenman:

Well, and I think that dovetails back to meditation for me. Because all of those things can be acknowledged in the practice of Zazen, Zazen, which basically means sitting meditation. And it can be there with you on the cushion and you don't have to hook into it either.

Sarah Greenman:

You can just notice it?

Jack Greenman:

You can just notice it. In fact, that's sort of the project.

Sarah Greenman:

That's the whole thing.

Jack Greenman:

Is to just notice it and let it flow, let it just move away. You start to realize after a long time of practice, that you don't have to hook into everything that's dramatic and you also don't have to hook into everything that's positive either, you can just be with it. It's really foundational, became a foundational practice for me as an actor and also as an educator. I would teach it a little bit in voice simply because voice is so much about internal awareness that it's a great way to start figuring out internal awareness if you're not a person who's ever really paid attention to the sensation of your breath or whatever.

Sarah Greenman:

You and I are about ready to embark on a, well, we're in the middle, actually...

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, you started it.

Sarah Greenman:

... of embarking on this new creative project, which is the *Urban Rural Theater Project* that we're doing in collaboration with Eastern Oregon University. This is kind of a new thing for us and I wanted to talk a little bit about it here at the end, just about creative partnership. What are you looking forward to? Or actually just talk a little bit about the project so folks know what it is.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, so the project came about because you did a reading of your play *Leni* at a neighbor's house, and then another neighbor who sort of had this idea to create a theater piece around what he called the Urban Rural Divide, which we're still debating whether that divide actually exists or not...

Sarah Greenman:

I think it does.

Jack Greenman:

... or whether it's in our mind or I mean on any given day...

Sarah Greenman:

It's real.

Jack Greenman:

... we'll say, "Oh, it's real" and on another given day, we'll say, "Oh, it's just a construct." But I think that's one of the reasons it's a, boy, to really pull in the Zen moment here, it's a modern con, it's a modern question about how do we further integrate our society in this big project of the United States of America in terms of all it's a unity, but all its multiplicity, all the different ways in which it manifests.

Sarah Greenman:

I'm really excited about the conversations we're having. We're interviewing people all over the state and it's going to be a piece of verbatim theater. So we'll be using their exact words as source material for the script. So I'm excited to be working on this piece with you, but it's, as you said earlier, not the first creative endeavor that we've had together.

Jack Greenman:

No.

Sarah Greenman:

Since it's almost Valentine's day in Lupercalia, what's the most romantic creative endeavor you and I have ever done together in your estimation? It can't be the kids, the kids are done.

Jack Greenman:

Most romantic.

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah. Like the juiciest, most romantic creative endeavor.

Jack Greenman:

Well, the first thing that leaps to mind is just my proposal.

Sarah Greenman:

Which was really good.

Jack Greenman:

Which was romantic.

Sarah Greenman:

That was fun.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah. So it was Christmas of 2002.

Sarah Greenman:

It was 2002, because we got married just two years later, yes.

Jack Greenman:

Christmas of 2002. And we were both still living in California. We were, I think, both working at PCPA.

Sarah Greenman:

We sure were.

Jack Greenman:

I decided to propose and we were invited up to...

Sarah Greenman:

My mom's.

Jack Greenman:

... your mom's house on Christmas Eve. So it was Christmas Eve of 2002.

Sarah Greenman:

That's right.

Jack Greenman:

And I went out and I said, "Well, let's drive up the coast, maybe do a little Christmas shopping or whatever." So we drove up Highway 1 and I had roses hidden in the trunk of the car.

Sarah Greenman:

You had been hiding things in the back, but I think Christmas was like the perfect rouse, because I was like, "Oh, it's Christmas."

Jack Greenman:

Because I was like, "Oh, your Christmas presents are back here."

Sarah Greenman:

Totally, I can't look.

Jack Greenman:

So anyway, so we drove up. There's a pass on Highway 46 that goes from the coast over to Paso Robles where your mom was. And there's beautiful views of the Pacific ocean up from the top of that pass, which is probably 1500 feet, 2000 feet above the ocean.

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah, it's a favorite place.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah. So I said, "Hey, let's stop and look out at the ocean." And I had the ring and I had a dozen roses.

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah, it was amazing.

Jack Greenman:

And so I got her looking at the ocean and then she turned around and I hit my knee and asked her to marry me.

Sarah Greenman:

It was pretty awesome. It was a good project.

Jack Greenman:

And the other part of that story that we always tell is, at that moment, a short bus drove by.

Sarah Greenman:

That's right, it was filled kids who looked like they had Down Syndrome, I think, yeah.

Jack Greenman:

And then they honked because they could tell what was going on.

Sarah Greenman:

They could see us, they were like, "Yay!" And now we have Charlie.

Jack Greenman:

And now we have Charlie.

Sarah Greenman:

So it all kind of hooks up.

Jack Greenman:

So the rest is history. Yeah. I mean, I don't know if that's the most creative thing we've done together, but that was the first thing that leapt to mind.

Sarah Greenman:

I'm going to say, I wouldn't have said it early on because I didn't know, but I think the most romantic creative endeavor you and I ever actually created in the moment was before we were married and I had to step in and play Mama Rose. I was an understudy for a woman who was beautifully and brilliantly playing Mama Rose in the musical Gypsy and Jack was playing opposite her as Herbie. And I had to step in and play the role of Mama Rose. And there was this moment in a pickup rehearsal. Now it's a big thing, I have to say it like stepping in for Mama Rose, there's like 12 songs that she carries by herself. It was huge, I was so terrified, I was so scared. But I knew it so I was confident, but I was scared. And we

were doing a pick-up rehearsal and I remember the director, Mark Booher, walking us through the moment when I proposed to you. When Mama Rose proposes...

Jack Greenman:

Propose to Herbie.

Sarah Greenman:

She says, "Marry me Herbie." And Mark was like, "Sarah, you actually have to look right at Jack Greenman and you have to meme it you have to propose to him. I know you're young and you haven't done anything like this yet so you're going to have to really go there." And I remember looking at you in that pickup rehearsal and you were just so present with me and you were like, "I just want her to do well. And I want her to feel seen and like held in this." It was amazing. And I was not in love with you. You were not on my radar at all as a person whom I would ever even be with at that time. But I think that's actually... And then we knocked it out of the park as Herbie and Rose for like six shows.

Jack Greenman:

A week.

Sarah Greenman:

That was amazing. That's my favorite. Oh darling, thanks for talking with me today about creativity and meditation and your process in terms of teaching. This is an ongoing 20 year conversation.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, absolutely.

Sarah Greenman:

We'll have more like it.

Jack Greenman:

Which you've just heard like an hour of it.

Sarah Greenman:

A little snippet...

Jack Greenman:

A little window of our conversations.

Sarah Greenman:

Happy Valentine's Day.

Jack Greenman:

Happy Valentine's Day.

Sarah Greenman:

Happy Anniversary too. Maybe we should tell them. Since we brought it up at the beginning.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah, that's right we did. Okay. So I guess we'll tell it together. I'll start. So Sarah was married before and was long not in that marriage by the time we got together.

Sarah Greenman:

Four years that passed truly.

Jack Greenman:

And there was a very slow legal process that was happening.

Sarah Greenman:

My ex-husband, God bless him, was throwing all the wrenches in the works so that I would not be able to obtain this divorce. When we got engaged in 2002, I thought two years was plenty of time to pull this out.

Jack Greenman:

And as it happens, by the time of our wedding day, which is October 18th, 2004.

Sarah Greenman:

I still had not...

Jack Greenman:

... received divorce papers, which meant we couldn't actually legally get married.

Sarah Greenman:

Oh, it was the worst.

Jack Greenman:

And my friend, Kurt Zimmerman, who's an amazing Episcopal clergyman, had come down to California to do the wedding.

Sarah Greenman:

Oh my God, it was horrible.

Jack Greenman:

And there was this moment right before, the weekend of the wedding, where he was like, "This is a problem. What do I do about this?" And my brother who was a lawyer and was there actually helped suggest a slight change in the language of the vow that made it okay for Kurt to say what he said.

Sarah Greenman:

And still marry us.

Jack Greenman:

And still marry us. So in the sight of everyone there, we got married that day. And that's still the day that we celebrate is our anniversary. But how we actually legally got married is we had moved to Seattle and it was-

Sarah Greenman:

By the way, I got my divorce papers like two weeks later.

Jack Greenman:

Two weeks later. Come on. I mean, just ridiculous. So we had moved to Seattle and it was February-

Sarah Greenman:

26. February 26 of the next year.

Jack Greenman:

And Kurt was from Washington, so he came down and we had a license and we grab somebody from the hallway of my mom's apartment building.

Sarah Greenman:

To witness.

Jack Greenman:

To witness, so there's this random person on our legal witness paper.

Sarah Greenman:

I don't remember her.

Jack Greenman:

We were actually married in Washington on the 26th of February of 2005.

Sarah Greenman:

So that's like our secret...

Jack Greenman:

That's our legal anniversary. But our anniversary of the heart is October the 18th, 2004.

Sarah Greenman:

So many anniversaries of the heart.

Jack Greenman:

Yeah. Happy Valentine's Day, sweetie.

Sarah Greenman:

You too.

Jack Greenman:

I love you.

Sarah Greenman:

Love you.

Thank you so much for listening. Collaborative alchemy was made possible by micro donations from my community at www.patreon.com/SarahGreenman. You can also find more about my work www.sarahgreenman.com. And you can also find me on Instagram [@Sarah.Greenman.creative](https://www.instagram.com/Sarah.Greenman.creative).