

STEPPEWOLF HALF HOUR

Season 2, Ep: 2 – Amy Morton: “Never What You Think”

Air Date: 4/13/21

Featuring: Amy Morton and Karen Rodriguez. With Audrey Francis, James Vincent Meredith, Caroline Neff, and Christine D. Freeburg.

Amy Morton:

And I remember my first entrance, opening night—

Audrey Francis:

From Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago, Illinois...

Amy Morton:

And I just remember thinking, “Oh, I got this.”

Audrey Francis:

This is *Half Hour*.

Caroline Neff:

All right. Hey my friends. Welcome back.

Karen Rodriguez:

Woo! It's so good to be back, y'all.

James Vincent Meredith:

Yes. Here we go again. Yes.

Caroline Neff:

We're back at it already! We have another episode of *Half Hour*.

Karen Rodriguez:

I know, Episode Two.

Caroline Neff:

And this week, we've got me Caroline Neff—

James Vincent Meredith:

James Vincent Meredith—

Karen Rodriguez:

And Karen Rodriguez.

Caroline Neff:

Karen, so this week, we're listening to a conversation with you and the truly legendary Amy Morton.

Karen Rodriguez:

Uh-huh, yep. Well, obviously, it was amazing. She's so hilarious. A natural storyteller. Super engaging, I didn't want it to be over. I just really wanted to do justice to her like this portrait in time of her. I've been super curious about who we are as artists outside of the thing that we do, especially during the pandemic. I think it's so easy to marry our identity to our art. And I've just been really interested in who we are outside of the way that people may know us.

James Vincent Meredith:

What about, like your... You know, we're all ensemble members. But what about, you personally, your relationship with Amy?

Karen Rodriguez:

Well, it was a lot of like, "hi and byes" at the beginning because I just was always like, "It's Amy!" And I just didn't want to, like, make an ass out of myself because I'm prone to do that. [Laughter].

James Vincent Meredith:

What? Come on.

Karen Rodriguez:

No, but you know, I get nervous, like, I just get like tongue tied, you know, with her. The first time that I actually really talked to her, she was at Front Bar. I had just gotten an audition for *Selena*, the Netflix series. So, I was like—I mean, you know, I'm Mexican, y'all. Like I was like, "AH!" and I was so nervous. I was like, I'm gonna, I already was like, "I'm gonna bomb this," because I was so—I just had a lot of anxiety. And I said hi to her. She's like, "Sit down. How are you?" And I just couldn't help myself. I like word vomit. I was like, "I'm good. [Gibberish] So much anxiety!" And she literally sat down for an hour and a half. Just talking, shooting the shit, and talking about her own anxieties in front of the camera, how she overcame that, her tips and tricks. And just, like, in a real sisterhood way. And then my favorite part was that at one point—she actually was waiting for her husband, Rob. And my favorite part is that at one point, Rob called her, and she was like, "No, Rob, yeah, just—I'm hanging out with Karen. I'm, yeah, just hang out. It's okay." And I was like, "Amy you can go." She was like, "Oh, no, he's fine. Anyway, so then—" and she just, like, dived right in and, and just gave so much of herself. And I think that that's who she is. And you really get a sense of that person in this interview.

Caroline Neff:

Oh my God, that's amazing. She just has one of the best senses of humor I've ever seen. And it's so like, amazing to me to watch how incredibly serious and grounded—and then you meet her and she's just as total, as she said, a ham and a goofball. She's such a great, great, great sense of humor that's always wonderful and surprising. So, before we dive in, is there anything else we should know before we listen?

Karen Rodriguez:

Nope. Let's fucking do this. Strap in y'all. It's a good one.

Caroline Neff:

All right. Without any further ado, here's Karen Rodriguez and Amy Morton.

Stage Manager:

Good evening everyone. This is your half hour call. Half hour until top of show. Again, this is your half hour call. Thank you.

Karen Rodriguez:

You grew up in Oak Park, Illinois?

Amy Morton:

I did.

Karen Rodriguez:

Tell me what you were like as a kid.

Amy Morton:

Um, I was pretty goofy. I was the youngest of five. And I was kind of goofy. I... I had a big old fantasy life going on in my head. You know, by the time you get to the last one, you know, the last one... It's not that they don't get a ton of attention. There's no hovering over the last one. *[Laughter]* It's like somebody said the first one: when the baby—when you drop the baby's bottle, you sanitize it and you boil it. And by the last one, you just kind of kick it over and pick it up and stick it back in the baby's mouth. *[Laughter]* So, the last one kind of gets away with stuff and at the same time, yearns for a certain amount of attention. So, I had that, sort of, balancing act going on. So, I think I was a goofball. I really liked to make people laugh. But I also spent a lot of time by myself. Not in a bad way. I liked it.

Karen Rodriguez:

What was the first kind of itch or inkling where you were like... where storytelling started to manifest for you? And you were like, "I might be a storyteller." Or maybe it wasn't that articulated. But, yeah.

Amy Morton:

Yeah, it wasn't that articulated because I was six. *[Laughter]* But my mother, to get me out of the house one summer, enrolled me in a in a summer school drama class. And I don't know why, but I just took to it like a duck to water. And from that moment on, that's what I wanted to do.

Karen Rodriguez:

What did you play?

Amy Morton:

I played a really goofball, younger daughter—younger sister of a princess. Of the pretty princess. So, I got to do all the funny shit. You know what I mean?

Karen Rodriguez:

[Laughter] Yeah.

Amy Morton:

And it was—and I had so much fun. And I was a huge hambone. It was probably the only place as a kid that I actually felt 100% comfortable.

Karen Rodriguez:

Wow.

Amy Morton:

Don't ask me why. I just did.

Karen Rodriguez:

But you weren't shy, right? Like you—

Amy Morton:

I was pretty shy—

Karen Rodriguez:

Oh, so you were?

Amy Morton:

I was. I was. Yeah, I don't think I was ever an extrovert. I was pretty shy, especially around adults. Really tongue tied around adults and stuff.

Karen Rodriguez:

What do you think it was about you being in that imaginary world that allowed you to be someone else? That allowed you to not be that shy as a six year-old?

Amy Morton:

I think it's because—I think it's because the words were written for me. I didn't have to... I didn't have to come up with words. And I guess I sensed that there was something different between onstage and offstage, and that onstage was much safer than offstage. [Laughter] You know, I knew what was going to happen in the play barring something unforeseen happening. But I knew what the end was going to be. And I think I was—I think that's what made it really, really comfortable.

Karen Rodriguez:

So, I know you were involved with Remains Theatre. Tell me about that journey, and then (I'm skipping a lot ahead) but and then getting involved with Steppenwolf.

Amy Morton:

So, I... After high school, like right—actually, like my last semester of high school—I did an internship at St. Nicholas Theatre, which was the theater that was created by Steven Schachter, David Mamet and Patricia Cox. And Peter Schneider. And they taught all Meisner, all the time. And they did some great plays too—some really wonderful ones. And I had seen a production in high school at that theatre and I was like, “I gotta study there.” So then, it was through St. Nicholas that I got introduced to Steppenwolf. Steppenwolf was working out of the church basement in Highland Park, and they did *The Fifth of July* at St. Nicholas. Steven Schachter had seen them and went “Wow, these actors are insanely good. I'm gonna get them over, out of the burbs and at least do one show here at St. Nicholas.” So, they did *Fifth of July* and I was just blown away and I was like, “Oh my god. So *that's* Steppenwolf.” So, I was aware and into and in love with Steppenwolf from the time I was 17 or 18. And then friends of mine decided to get a company together. And it ended up being called Remains Theatre. And we—so we kind of grew in tandem with Steppenwolf. Steppenwolf was a little older in terms of how long they'd been established. So, we were all really familiar with each other and swapped actors all the time for each other's shows. So, it was great. I mean, it was wonderful. Remains was a much more... they, they used to pigeonhole us as *avant-garde*. And basically, that's because we couldn't get the rights to the really popular shows. So, we'd do like, we'd do like the Richard Foreman stuff, because you didn't have to pay that much in

residuals. [Laughter] So anyway, so it was two very different types of theatre companies, which was great. And so to be able to sort of bounce back and forth once in a while, it was really fun. And then when Remains folded, Steppenwolf was kind enough to take in an orphan.

Karen Rodriguez:

Whenever I hear you talk about acting, you often talk about truth. We are truth seekers. And I'm gonna quote you—something that I think about—

Amy Morton:

Uh-oh.

Karen Rodriguez:

This is a quote of yours [Laughter] (I'm sorry I'm doing this) that I often think about all the time in my own work. And you said, "The thing that I try to get across to students more than anything else is that a) you are enough. You sitting on stage, doing nothing is really interesting to watch as long as you're yourself. And if you're not yourself, we see right through it and you're really boring and we hate you." [Laughter]

Amy Morton:

That's about right. Yeah.

Karen Rodriguez:

It's fucking true. So, with that in mind, what has, for you, been a moment that was the most alive—thrilling—as an actor?

Amy Morton:

There have been a couple and they are really special and not often. There was a show at Remains called *Once in Doubt*. And it was a three hander. And it was myself, Billy Petersen, and Gerry Becker, may he rest in peace. And it was an extremely difficult play, technically, because you had to talk really fast and the lines were on top of each other. And we started rehearsing in the summer, just doing the lines, before we even went into official rehearsals, like in September, October. And the process was very difficult. And the preview process was difficult. It just was a very hard play. And I remember my first entrance, opening night: the entrance called for me walking in a fancy cocktail dress and heels, holding a tray with a tea service on it. And there needed to be a pause, right? Where I just stare at Billy. And I walked onstage, and I was staring at Billy. And I just remember thinking, "Oh, I got this."

Karen Rodriguez:

[Laughter] Yes!

Amy Morton:

And I think it's because we had worked so hard on it. There was something that was just like, "Oh. Oh, hey, y'all. You are going to have a great time, because I feel great. And completely at home." Now, I will also tell you the reverse of that.

Karen Rodriguez:

Yes, yes, yes.

Amy Morton:

Which was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in Chicago. That was a role that was very difficult for me, it wasn't particularly something, you know... characters that are chest forward, sex forward, are much more difficult for me, because that's not who I am. Right. So, I was having a really hard time with this role. And I was getting more and more nervous to the point where I was screwing up lines, which is unusual for me. And I didn't have full voice, which is incredibly unusual for me, because I don't usually have voice problems at all. And I was feeling so terrible during previews, and I felt that I was letting all the actors down. And it felt horrible. I hadn't felt that bad since I was like, 20. So it's a matinee; I'm sitting in the chair. Here comes Tracy, walking towards me, yelling at me as George. And I'm just like, "Fuck." And I'm watching him come at me, and something in my brain just went "Fuck it." And, I thought, "Oh, fuck the audience. Fuck everybody else on stage. Fuck worrying about how everything is and how bad I am, and—just fuck it." And I felt my shoulders go boom, down. And all of a sudden, I got full voice in a matter of one second. He's yelling at me and I just come back at him with all the force in me and I see him go "Whoa," you know? I see him go—because he hadn't seen me do that yet in that play. And I think it was... I think I got to the point where I was like, "I either have to like not care anymore and fuck it, or I gotta leave. Because this is too painful. This sucks. This is not what I signed up for." And I don't know the gods of theatre just went "Alright, we've been sitting on our head for too long. Get up." I don't know. [Laughter] I don't know. It was weird.

Karen Rodriguez:

And it all just clicked like it was all inside you but—

Amy Morton:

Yes. I will also say there was a moment on Broadway during *August: Osage County* where... It was one of those performances where I felt the most like a channel than I had ever felt. I had felt like I was completely in service. And the play was going through me and to the audience; there was no manipulation on my part. And I remember walking across the stage and feeling sort of that same feeling of unbelievable power. Because I had given over... I was also exhausted. There was something about, "Now I am just the channel." You know, and it's probably the hardest, absolutely, the hardest thing is to get out of your own way. In anything, really. You know, I was thinking about this the other day, I was watching something. And I thought what really interests me in performances—and this is going to sound like a dichotomy like, like opposites but—there's something about not being told everything in the performance. That there are certain things that, maybe, are left out. Or not fleshed out, so that you never feel you are being told what to think or feel. So that there is room for the audience to insert themselves into your performance right? When some... I've also seen performances where there has been so much research done, so much thinking about it done, that I feel there's no room for me watching it. That I'm just receiving it; I'm not participating. So, it's that really fine line of "You better know what the fuck you're doing up there," and at the same time, "Leave it open." And that's hard too. That's another task that is really hard.

Stage Manager:

This is your fifteen-minute call. Fifteen minutes until top of show. Thank you.

Karen Rodriguez:

So. You're a killer actor. You're also a killer director. I know I'm doing it to you, Amy. I'm sorry but you are.

Amy Morton:

Yeah, whatevs.

Karen Rodriguez:

[*Laughter*] You've directed shows like *Guards at the Taj* Off-Broadway and at Steppenwolf and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Alliance Theatre. What drew you to telling stories from that lens?

Amy Morton:

Well, I'm gonna... this is gonna make a lot of directors, particularly young directors, really mad, but it was kind of thrust upon me. I didn't—I had directed one show at Remains because we couldn't find a director. So, I did it. And I liked the process and I really liked talking to actors. But I hadn't done it in years, and we were doing a show in the Upstairs Theater. This was so long ago. And we lost the director, like, three weeks before rehearsals. He had gotten a movie or something. So, it was like, "Uh-oh." And Martha turned to me—Martha Lavey turned to me and said, "You do it." And I went, "Gulp, okay." And I did it. And I liked it. I liked it a lot. And so she said, "Okay, next season, do this one." So, it was all her fault, I will say. [*Laughter*] And I didn't have to ask for it. And I'm really, really lucky. I'm just really lucky, you know? But I found that I really—you know, it's funny, my husband who's a sound designer and a composer, so we have worked together quite a bit. After one day in tech or something, said to me, "Here's the thing with you being a director: you don't like—you don't necessarily like making all the decisions, but you want everything your way." And I said, "Exactly." [*Laughter*] But it is really, you know—acting and directing is really good crop rotation. It's just, one feeds the other really, really well. And it makes you appreciate the other job all the more.

Karen Rodriguez:

You've been nominated for a Tony Award, for your work in *August: Osage County* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* And as someone who... I think everybody probably has practiced their Tony Award-winning speech in the bathroom mirror. [*Laughter*] Can you just you tell me about that night? How was... Demystify that for us, Amy.

Amy Morton:

Well, it is... Look, I have very mixed feelings about it. And that is because I don't like awards. And it's... and I think they're... I think it's *oogie*. And I think to say a performance is better than another performance is ridiculous. And in the award season, you know, leading up to the Tonys is really a clusterfuck. It is—it is like you have to—there's *this* lunch and *that* lunch and then there's the *blah blah* awards and the *blah blah* awards and you are pressured to go to every single one of them. So, I found that exhausting, and horrid. If you're an extrovert, and if you're a party person, people have a blast. But I am not. And it just filled me with anxiety. That being said, by the time I made it to the actual Tonys, okay, I got my dress, I stopped stressing about that, blah, blah, blah. And I sit in my seat, and the show starts. It is fun!

Karen Rodriguez:

Oh, yay!

Amy Morton:

It is really fun. Everything before and a lot of everything after: can't stand it. But the actual event itself is just like, "Wow, look where I am!" And they're doing these huge numbers. And it's really fun. And they call somebody else's name, and you're like, "That's fine." In the moment. Now later, you kind of go, "Aw, man." But in that moment, you're just like, "I don't care. I'm here."

Karen Rodriguez:

Si.

Amy Morton:

So, it's very—it's a very electric night. But like I said, everything leading up to it, I'd rather peel the skin off my face.

Karen Rodriguez:

That's why I also I kind of wanted to know, too, I was curious about it. Because I feel like once— Everything is always different. Like once you get there, it's like you thought it was this thing, and then it's—

Amy Morton:

It's never what you think.

Karen Rodriguez:

It's never the thing that you think it's gonna be.

Amy Morton:

No. Ever. In life.

Karen Rodriguez:

[Laughter] Yeah in life. Totally. It's like—

Amy Morton:

It just, is never what you think it's gonna be.

Karen Rodriguez:

If you could go back to your child self, whichever—even that six-year-old that loved that... being onstage, or maybe as a 17-year-old, watching those Steppenwolf members work and you being at Remains—basically at the beginning of this chosen path, and you could say anything to that child, what would you say?

Amy Morton:

I don't think I'd say anything to the child because the child was having a blast. And didn't need anything. You know what I mean? It was just like, "Oh, good. I get to do another play." I would say to my young actor self... I guess it's probably... Professionally my biggest regret is to have spent too much time thinking that I should be somewhere else, and I should be at a different level than I am right now. Right? So, I'm comparing myself to other people. I'm comparing myself to "Well, she got a movie," or "She's on Broadway," or "She's working at the Goodman." I spent too much time thinking "I have to—I have to step—I have to—I should be somewhere else." And that's a pressure that is a waste of time, because things happened when they were supposed to happen. And it will never be in your timeline. It never is. I don't think it's in anybody's timeline. It's either too fast or too slow. It's never exactly like, "And I knew that at *this* point, I would be doing *this*." But it's hard to have faith in the fact that you're where you're supposed to be. But just know, if you don't have faith in that, you're spending too much time on something that you have no control over that is going to make you crazy. It'll just make you crazy. You know, I feel really lucky that *August: Osage County* happened in my late 40s. That I got a chance to do this unbelievable role *then*. Because then I was able to take everything else in stride. I wasn't 20 up for a

Tony, thinking, “Okay, it’s just going to go up from here.” I knew *August: Osage County* was the top and I was going to go down from there. And I was completely fine with it. [Laughter] And I do mean artistically, I don't mean like financially or anything like that. But I knew that, “I just don't know that it gets any better than this. What I am doing right now.” And I remember being grateful for every moment, even though there were at least four shows a week I didn't want to do. But I do remember being grateful and being old enough to be grateful.

Karen Rodriguez:

That was so healing. Okay, *aber*. What's the most valuable thing or lesson a loved one has taught you?

Amy Morton:

You know, my husband has this amazing ability to concentrate on what's important really quickly, and I don't. And whereas I'll panic about the emergency right in front of me, he will go, “That's not the important thing.” And that also bleeds over into directing a play. Or acting in a play. I'll be fretting about something and talking to him about it, and he'll go, “But wait, that's not the important thing. This is the important thing.” And I'll go, “Oh fuck, you're right.” So, I feel really grateful that I married the right person. [Laughter] It's so funny. [Laughter] Because, you know, we also drive each other crazy. It's COVID, what are you going to do? We've seen each other *so much*. [Laughter] But I have to say I learned from him very much.

Karen Rodriguez:

So, this podcast is called *Half Hour* because it honors—

Amy Morton:

“You only get a half hour.”

Karen Rodriguez:

You only get those 30 minutes. Unless you're like me two hours before—

Amy Morton:

I do too.

Karen Rodriguez:

So, what is your half hour process like?

Amy Morton:

Well, first of all, you know, the half hour is the entire day. It's not like you wake up and go, “You know what, I'm going to go sledding, snowshoeing, and then do the play tonight.” You don't do any of those things. I don't. I wake up and go, “Shit I have to do a show tonight.” And then the day is paced around that. Absolutely. Now it might have—I might have ignored it a little bit more when I was younger and had more energy, but it is something that is in—it is the primary focus of your day. And so, everything is informed by that, that you do. So, depending on the role, depending on the play, I mean, *August: Osage County* and *Virginia Woolf* that was, you know, you don't do anything during the day. Those took it out of you. And you had to make sure you were prepared for the next day, mentally and physically and all that stuff. So, you know, I lay low. I lay low all day, and then I get to the theater at least an hour before showtime—usually an hour and a half. Because I just gotta. And I get in there and I pour a cup of coffee. And I say hi to people that are around. I'm usually the first one there. And I sit at my little table and I start to, like, slowly put on makeup and you know, shit like that. I do it at a leisurely pace because I don't

like feeling rushed before I go on stage. It doesn't. It doesn't... I need to be there. I need to commune with myself in the theater.

Stage Manager:

Five minutes til top of show. This is your five-minute call. Five minutes, please. Five minutes.

Karen Rodriguez:

All right, Amy Morton. We're here at the lightning round.

Amy Morton:

Okay. Oh, there's a lightning round?

Karen Rodriguez:

There's a lightning round. And this is just like, off the top of your head.

Amy Morton:

Uh-oh.

Karen Rodriguez:

What was your welcome to Steppenwolf moment?

Amy Morton:

My welcome to Steppenwolf moment was Terry Kinney walking up to me during rehearsals of *Streetcar Named Desire*. I played Eunice. And him walking up to me going, "Do you want to be a member of the company? I think it would be a good idea." And I was like... like that. That was my welcome. That was kind of my welcome to—and I was just I seriously, I was just like, I was frozen the rest of the day. It kind of went like that. Yeah. Yeah.

Karen Rodriguez:

What job didn't you get that broke your heart?

Amy Morton:

So many. But they break my heart in the moment. Nothing that has scarred my heart, or that I still regret. I can't even... Oh, I completely blew the audition—the second audition—for... oh shit, what was the name of the... See? Look. I can't even remember... *Broadcast News*. I completely blew—like the first audition... First of all, when they fly you out for an audition, it's really not a good thing. Because it makes you... It makes you too nervous. And it makes you think it's more than an audition. And it's not. It's just that either the director or the casting director saw you in a play and was like, "Hey, she should be seen." Which is what this was. So, I got flown to California for the audition, and it went really well. And then I got the callback, like, three weeks later, come in again, and I blew the callback so fucking badly. I was so bad. And it's not so much that I didn't get the role. It's that I was so bad. And I knew I was so bad. And I could see it in the director's face. That he was just like, "Get her out of here." Yeah, that one hurt for a while. But clearly not so much anymore. Because I couldn't remember the name of the damn movie.

Karen Rodriguez:

[*Laughter*] What animal do you most identify with?

Amy Morton:

Well, dogs. I just I'm a dog freak. I don't have one. But I love them so much. Yeah.

Karen Rodriguez:

What's your most prized piece of play memorabilia? Or your favorite costume that you've ever worn?

Amy Morton:

All the costumes in *Royal Family* were a joy to wear. Oh, they were all custom made. They were all 1920s. Gorgeous. Just stunning. Those were absolutely... Those were my favorite costumes ever.

Karen Rodriguez:

Who is your actor crush or inspiration right now?

Amy Morton:

Olivia Colman. And—Well, one of my huge crushes has always been Forrest Whitaker. There is something about his acting that breaks my heart. And I don't know why. And it's something about his face. That I just... I don't know. I just think he's really, really good and undervalued. As an actor.

Karen Rodriguez:

What do you daydream about?

Amy Morton:

At this point? Going to a damn restaurant.

Karen Rodriguez:

Girl. Speak it. Yep.

Amy Morton:

There's a couple in my neighborhood that I just love, and I miss it. I miss hugging my family. So much. That's what I daydream about the most. Just being the actually able to see people face to face and touch them. And then go get some damn oysters. [*Laughter*] That's how I feel.

Karen Rodriguez:

Aber. If you had a superpower, what would it be?

Amy Morton:

Ooh. Well, I you know, who doesn't want to fly? But it's not very useful. It's just not useful enough.

Karen Rodriguez:

Wouldn't you be scared though? I'd be scared, Amy.

Amy Morton:

No. God, can you imagine being able to fly places? Jesus, first of all, it'd be so great not to ever have to step in an airport again [*Laughter*]. Or sit on a damn plane. Jesus. I think—you know what? The best superpower would be to heal. That's me being really altruistic and kind. But I think ultimately, I want to fly. [*Laughter*]

Karen Rodriguez:

You can have both. You can have both.

Amy Morton:

I'm a flying healer.

Karen Rodriguez:

"Just give me an hour, I'll be right there." What is one thing you do every day?

Amy Morton:

Well, you know, this is such an extreme time that it feels like I do the same thing every day. Do you know what I mean? I mean, I do the same damn thing *every day*. And I'm like, "Okay, now I'm going to read my book for a while. And now I'm going to do this jigsaw puzzle for a while." [Laughter] You know, this is the great—you know, this is what I feel really lucky about. Because you want to go out and help. I want to go out and help so bad. But I'm... I can't. I'm of an age and a predisposed condition that is like, you can't go near the people. But, during this whole thing, I think that's one of the hardest things is to feel un-useful. Do you know what I mean? The thing that we do really well, that that can help people, quite frankly, watching us, we can't really do in the way that is the most impactful. So, that sucks. And I think your question was "What do I do every day?" [Laughter] I think I get bummed out every fucking day.

Karen Rodriguez:

For real.

Amy Morton:

There you go.

Karen Rodriguez:

Favorite place—Maybe this is not the question for right now—but favorite place to unwind in Chicago. Maybe pre COVID?

Amy Morton:

There's a park near here called Horner Park, that they—over the last... it took them like four years to build up the banks of the river into like a nature park that you can walk along the banks and it's all indigenous plants and it's glorious. It's really beautiful. And you wouldn't know you're in the city when you're walking along the river. So that—I love to be there to unwind.

Karen Rodriguez:

If you were a character in a play, what would your character's description be?

Amy Morton:

Sitting down. One scene. I walk in. I say the funniest, most profound thing that anybody has ever heard. And then I walk off. Tada! And: I don't have to be at curtain call. [Laughter] There you go.

Stage Manager:

Places, everyone. This is your places call. Places, please, for the top of the show. This is your places call. Places, please. Thank you.

Caroline Neff:

Oh my gosh, Amy is just the best.

Karen Rodriguez:

She's the best. How hilarious is that last answer? Oh my gosh.

James Vincent Meredith:

Just killer. Killer. I have to say, it always heartens me and kind of builds me up to hear, like, people who I look at as, like, honestly, acting icons, talk about the times where things don't go so great. And when they have kind of—you know, all of us actors kind of have that kind of crisis of confidence at some point. And to hear her be so honest about it, you know, particularly as far as talking about *Virginia Woolf*. It really—it makes me feel like, "Okay, I go through that, and someone like her goes through that, too? Okay, I gotta just buck up and do what I gotta do." It's very inspiring.

Caroline Neff:

When she's talking about recognizing those moments when that thing that you wanted wasn't meant for you?

Karen Rodriguez:

Girl.

Caroline Neff:

It's such a good reminder. Because I think that just as human beings, we can get stuck in this, "why not me" or, "what about me" loop?

Karen Rodriguez:

Yes.

Caroline Neff:

And to just be reminded that when something is meant for you, it's going to find you.

Karen Rodriguez:

Yeah, that was my favorite part too. There was something very healing about that. I mean, I don't know, you know, it's very hard to put into practice, but to have faith that, like... This idea that the way you want your timeline to happen, is never gonna happen like that. So just sit down and enjoy the ride.

James Vincent Meredith:

So, Amy also sent us some pictures of her from those early days that we will share on social media. So be on the lookout for those.

Caroline Neff:

And I hate to say it, but that's our time for today. Thank you so much for listening to this episode of *Half Hour* brought to you by Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Karen Rodriguez:

And thanks again to our guest this week, Amy Morton.

James Vincent Meredith:

Today's episode was generously sponsored by Michele Kenner.

Caroline Neff:

Steppenwolf Now memberships are just \$75. And for a limited time, we're extending an exclusive deal just for Half Hour listeners; 25 bucks off when you use the code HALFHOUR at steppenwolf.org/slashnow.

James Vincent Meredith:

The theme music for *Half Hour* is by Michael Bodeen and Rob Milburn. Rob it's worth mentioning is Amy's very talented husband.

Caroline Neff:

The voice of this episode stage manager was Christine D. Freeburg.

Karen Rodriguez:

Special thanks to Erin Cook, Joel Moorman, Kara Henry, Christopher Huizar, Kerstin Adams, Madeline Long, Corinne Florentino—

James Vincent Meredith:

And all the folks at Steppenwolf.

Caroline Neff:

You can follow us on Twitter @Steppenwolfthtr or on Facebook and Instagram.

Karen Rodriguez:

And you can always get in touch by emailing halfhour@steppenwolf.org.

James Vincent Meredith:

We love, love, love, love email from our listeners. So, if you email us, we guarantee you, we will respond.

Caroline Neff:

And in just two short weeks, we're gonna be back with a conversation with ensemble member Rajiv Joseph.

James Vincent Meredith:

Till next time, this is James Vincent Meredith—

Caroline Neff:

Caroline Neff—

Karen Rodriguez:

And Karen Rodriguez. A lifetime to engage; half hour to places