**Q: Hello, and welcome to *Why This?* a Nexus Arts podcast. I'm Aaron Schuppan, the media manager here at Nexus Arts, an Intercultural Arts Organisation in Adelaide, South Australia. In my role here at Nexus Arts, I get to have conversations with artists from all different backgrounds, and this podcast is my way of including you, the audience, in some of those conversations. Now, over this year, I've spoken to visual artists, musicians, theatre makers, writers. Today we're going to do something a little different. Today I'm speaking with Hjalmar Marteinsson, who is also known as Einar The Strange. And we are taking a deep dive into the wild and woolly world of the Adelaide pro wrestling scene. Pro wrestling is a very interesting medium, often relegated to the realm of the low brow. It's actually a fascinating collision of theatre, acting, and high intense athletics. So I invite you to open your mind, get ready to cheer, or get ready to boo. And I hope you enjoy my conversation with Hjalmar Marteinsson. Hello everyone. I'm sitting here in the Nexus Arts venue on a nice sunny Monday morning. Can you introduce yourself ‑ ‑ ‑**

P: Yeah, sure.

**Q: - - - to everyone and tell us a bit about what you do.**

P: Yeah, my name's Hjalmar Marteinsson, and I am a professional wrestler in Adelaide and also and an actor from time to time as well.

**Q: So a professional wrestler?**

P: Yeah.

**Q: I think a lot of the people listening, it's going to be outside the box of their world of experience. Can you tell us a bit about what professional wrestling is and then specifically what it is in Adelaide?**

P: Yeah, sure. Well, I mean, professional wrestling is like performance art and it's physical theatre. I always tell – I always say that to people I went to acting school and stuff with, and they're like, don't know anything about professional wrestling; I'm like, we did physical theatre together, it's just that to the extreme, kind of thing. And it's all performance just like theatre, everything like that. It's just to put on a show for a crowd and put on a show for people that love wrestling and yeah, we just cater to those people. And we love it ourselves because it's a physically intense and demanding and we all dig on that.

**Q: To me, it seems like this awesome collision, like you said, of theatre, but also athletics. You guys train like athletes and you put your bodies through things.**

P: Yeah, absolutely.

**Q: Even the most physical of regular theatre doesn't, doesn't put people through. We'll get into some of those details. So let's talk about the – I guess, the theatre side of it first. There's a lot of storytelling involved in this. Can you sort of get into a bit about – and forgive me if I'm using the terminology wrong. I know there's still meant to be an element of mystique around the characters and the theatre and stuff like that. But as much as you can, like a magician talking about his tricks, explain to us the storytelling and the importance of that in the wrestling.**

P: I think the storytelling in wrestling is the most important part because a lot of people don't get wrestling. They don't understand it. They're like, oh, it's not real and all that. I can tell you right now, it's very real. But there's obviously performance behind it. When you watch Game of Thrones or you watch a Marvel movie or something, you don't sit there going, “This isn't real,” kind of thing. You know what I mean? So the storytelling is super important because while good wrestling is great to watch, you got to have some story there, like anything. And to me that's – yeah, that's basically the most important part. That's why I fell in love with the wrestling in the first place and what hooked me in because of the great stories that were being told. And I was just like, this is so cool.

**Q: It's like serialized theatre. It carries on to the next round, right? Sort of like episodes.**

P: Yeah. Oh, absolutely. And you take – you look at a program like Monday Night Raw WWE, that has been running every Monday night for like 30 years or something like that. It's a long time. So that's kind of like how Neighbours and Home It Away, or Coronation Street or whatever is continually running and new stories, new characters, but it just keeps going and going. And there's no – they always say there's no real off season in wrestling, because every sport has it's off season, but wrestling just keeps going. Just keeps going.

**Q: Talk to me about the Adelaide wrestling scene because when I told people I would be bringing you up, they went like, “Wait, what? There's wrestling in Adelaide?” Yes, there very much is wrestling in Adelaide. Can you tell us about the Adelaide wrestling scene? And if you want to then elaborate on what your specific role is within that?**

P: Yeah, for sure.

**Q: So how does it – yeah, okay. Let's go. How does it work in Adelaide? How does this pro wrestling scene work in Adelaide?**

P: There are – there's a number of different companies. I think there's two real main companies in Adelaide. Lucky enough to have wrestled for both of them. There's Wrestle Rampage who I started with and Riot City Wrestling, who I'm currently with. And it's – the wrestling scene in Adelaide's, even in Australia, is super funny because it's so small. Because in Adelaide with the film industry and everything, we still basically – it feels really small and we feel like we all know each other or know someone.

**Q: Somehow three - - -**

P: We're all connected somehow.

**Q: Yeah, three steps of removal at best.**

P: Yeah. Well, wrestling's even tinier than that because it's just this obscure thing that only some people like. And in the film industry, it's like, oh, six degrees from Kevin Bacon kind of thing. In wrestling, you're basically two steps from Vince McMahon who's like the owner of world Wrestling Entertainment and the godfather of wrestling basically, which is crazy. But yeah, there's, I think currently five promotions in Adelaide currently. So there's Wrestle Rampage, Riot City Wrestling, ACW, Power Slam, and PWSA.

**Q: These are all different companies, or these are just the different story strands that are there?**

P: No, different companies.

**Q: Different companies?**

P: Yeah. And a lot of wrestlers from Riot City feature on ACW and PWSA and Power Slam as well. Because we've got a lot of great wrestlers at Riot City and we like to – and people that just love wrestling and like to wrestle as much as they can. So if one of these other companies wants to book them, they can contact them and see if they want to wrestle there. That's great for everyone because that means there's a lot of really great working performers, safe working performers going to these, say, smaller companies and making sure that they're putting out a half decent product kind of thing.

**Q: That's something I want to get to. That's really interesting. Can you just tell us the basics of someone out there that maybe this is – I hope this is peaking your interest, listener. They want to go to the wrestling, what can they expect?**

P: Theatrics, basically; you'll see a lot of weird dudes and kick ass women just going at it. You know what I mean?

**Q: Where are we setting up? Where are these venues? Who is allowing you to come in and do this?**

P: Well, funnily enough, I've done a bunch of shows right next door at Lion Arts, which is a super cool venue to wrestle in because it's very intimate and everyone's standing around the ring and it's – that's a really cool venue. Currently with Riot City where we run shows out of where we train, which is our headquarters in Kilkenny. And that's a really cool venue we only recently moved into. And it allows us there to get a couple hundred people to what's essentially called a house show, which is one where we don't go to a big venue or whatever. And if we can just run shows out of there for once we upgrade the place a little bit, 250, 300 people sometimes, that's - - -

**Q: That's a good fun-sized crowd.**

P: Yeah. And that's going to leave a lot of money in Riot City's pocket.

**Q: So you mentioned a lot of gnarly dudes, but a lot of kick ass women wrestling as well. Talk to me a bit about the people who wrestle. It sounds like it's not perhaps the male dominated arena that maybe it once was, or that people might expect.**

P: Women's wrestling now is on fire, especially overseas. And I think it's because we've broken a really negative stigma that came along with women's wrestling as particularly in the mid-2000s kind of thing, which was known as, in the WWE, as the divas era kind of thing.

**Q: I remember hearing about that.**

P: Yeah. And that probably would've gone up until like 2014-ish or something like that.

**Q: What was the stigma around that?**

P: There was a lot of coming out of the attitude era, there was a lot of – it was just like, oh, we'll put the – they started calling the women – the female wrestlers or the women wrestlers the divas. And, oh, they're going to compete in a bra and panties match and all that kind of stuff.

**Q: I figured it was going in that direction.**

P: Yeah. And eventually, as expected, women were like, “We want to wrestle. We want to be taken as seriously as the men,” and they had to work their asses off to do that. And now we're in this great era of wrestling where women's wrestling is the main event, and it's just awesome to watch. And they get in the same treatment as far as storylines go. And the same time, and that's an important one, because it was at a time where you'd have a three-hour show Monday Night Raw, and the there'd be one or two women's match and they'd get three minutes.

**Q: Yeah, sure. Tack it on sort of thing.**

P: Yeah. And no one wants to just – I don't even want to see two guys wrestle for three minutes. You want to go out there, you want to see people doing what they love and doing it well.

**Q: So you keep coming back to seeing people do what they love, and I love to hear that. Let's talk about the physicality side of things. Because I've seen videos of you. There's a video that you shared recently where two other wrestlers had you pinned down and then one of them hammered a handful of wooden skewers directly into your scalp. And then the skewers were sticking out at your scalp. My question to you is this, why?**

P: Why not? Mick Foley always used to say, you want to give fans their money's worth kind of thing. And that match we were doing was called a horror show match. I named it as – because it made sense with the storyline and everything like that, and I wanted to give them some horror, you know what I mean? And if we just went out there and hit each other with chairs a few times and put each other a few – through a few tables and stuff – people have seen that all before. But I think that was the first time that – because I've actually done the skewer thing before. I've did it for about 60 people earlier this year - - -

**Q: Right.**

P: - - - and didn't quite get the same reaction. It was like, oh. But that was a very small event and there was one person in the audience that was ruining the night for everyone by calling out dumb stuff and people just sitting there going, “Oh, can this guy shut up,” kind of thing and bought everyone down. So didn't get – I had skewers sticking out of my head and people were like, oh, yeah.

**Q: We see you standing there like, come on, people. Come on.**

P: Yeah. So when – it was like, oh, I'm going to do a horror show match and it's going to be for a couple hundred people, I'm going to make it worth it this time and throw this in there again, get the reaction I deserve. And I don't think this crowd had seen anything like that before because people were horrified by it. I got a message on my Instagram page yesterday because I posted that video again, tagging one of the other promotions in Melbourne called Death Match Down Under. And I'm like, hey, check it out. And I got a response for it and they're like, that still makes me want to vomit. I'm like, awesome. That's great.

**Q: It sounds like the audience participation and the audience reaction is – I mean, it always is with art, I suppose, right? I mean, in theory all art is about making a connection with the audience, but sometimes you want the audience to sit there very politely and not speak during the performance or to quietly ponder the artwork. But it sounds like that interaction is such a big part of wrestling. Is that - - -**

P: Huge. Because they would say, the worst reaction is no reaction. Even if the crowd is booing the hell out of you, that's great. Because you're getting a reaction. You're doing what you're supposed to be doing. Well, if you're a bad guy. If you're a good guy and you're getting booed, something's not quite right and maybe you should be turned into a bad guy, you know what I mean?

**Q: Yeah, yeah.**

P: But you want a reaction. You always got to get that reaction from people. And I think if you focus on the storytelling, and that should come – the crowd will be invested naturally into it and therefore react to it. When I debuted for Riot City coming over from Wrestle Rampage, I was really well known at Rampage and everyone that comes to the shows knew what I was about and everything. When I went to Riot City, I wasn't sure if it was the same crowd or not, because we say that the wrestling industry in Adelaide's very small. I'm sure there's people that go to both events. I was like, some people will know me, but this Riot City crowd, most of them might not go to Rampage. They might be loyal to Riot City. So I was really nervous to debut there because I wasn't sure how – what sort of reaction I was going to get. And again, you go out there and you just want a reaction. You want some sort of reaction. And whenever I'd talk on the microphone at Rampage, people would shut up and they'd listen to me. And I was like, that's great, because some people get on the mic and talk and people in the audience are like, “Oh, my God, you suck. This is boring.” And you don't want that. And I was like, what if Riot City fans are like this? I don't know. So I debuted. My debut was like out of darkness kind of thing. The lights went out and my music played, and then I just appeared in the ring. I was wearing like this black hood and I took the hood off to reveal myself kind of thing. And I heard a lot of just silence. And some people were like, “Ooh,” and I heard, I think one person be like, “Oh him.”

**Q: Oh, that's cool.**

P: I was like, oh, I don't think this crowd knows me at all. So this is - - -

**Q: Was it a good silence? I just got some weird feels right there.**

P: People were a bit, yeah, though they weren't sure, which is fine. And then I had what's called a mic spot after that where I cut a promo in the ring with a microphone. And I was really worried that people were just going to be like, just talking, yelling out. And there was one person, but it was a really - - -

**Q: Oh, that same guy from the last one.**

P: Well, I don't think it was, but there was – he was being a pain all night and all the – he thinks he's part of the show and apparently he was like looking up on his – he was Googling insults and stuff. Anyway yeah, my first few lines, he kept yelling stuff out and people turned around and went, would you – I don't know if I'm allowed to swear.

**Q: Yeah, you can swear.**

P: They're like, “Would you shut the fuck up?” Kind of thing. And I was like, yeah, they got my back. And then I kept talking, kept talking, and I could tell people were silent. They were invested and everything like that. So these people that didn't know who I was by the end of it, they listened to what I had to say. They invested in the story. And by the end of it, I walked out of there going, everyone knows who I am now.

**Q: God. That's - - -**

P: And I was so relieved.

**Q: I bet. Gosh, what a – yeah, that's so fascinating. That's such a mix of everything. It's theatre, but it's – and it's kind of scripted, but kind of improv, but yeah, it's still sports. Sports players need to – they want to get the audience – the crowd on side because it helps with the performance, there's so much going on there. That's huge. Seeing as we are on the subject, talk to us about Einar The Strange.**

P: Einar The Strange.

**Q: Einar The Strange, I'm rewinding. I thought I'd take a crack. These Icelandic names man. Einar The Strange. Tell us about him.**

P: Einar The Strange is the, I guess culmination or the coming together of my two previous gimmicks, as they're called, in wrestling. And it's all flowed quiet naturally for me. Anyway, getting to this point of being Einar The Strange, and it all makes sense to me, it all works for me. I can click into that character in a half a second. You know what I mean? It's just it feels so right to me. So my original – when I debuted at Wrestle Rampage, I was Einar Ironside. And I was just like the silent Viking warrior dude. And I was talking with my partner the other day about how – I don't think at any stage I've actually referred to myself as a Viking. I just think that comes across, you know what I mean? So that was the gimmick and they kind of were like, we're going to keep you all mysterious. And I never spoke or anything like that. And then I went away to Iceland in 2018. And as far as I was concerned, I was done. After two years of wrestling, I was like, oh, I'm going to move to Iceland and there's no wrestling in Iceland, so that might be it for me. And while I was in Iceland, I started getting the itch again. And I was watching all my friends at Rampage just putting on great shows and just being like, damn I need to, I need to go back and do that again.

**Q: Wow. Wow. Came back for the wrestling.**

P: Well, Yeah. I originally was living in Iceland in 2015, and that's when I realized that I had to come back to wrestle. So it happened again, you know what I mean?

**Q: Wow. Yeah.**

P: Because when you're in a country that has no wrestling and basically no one watches wrestling or cares about wrestling, gets a bit lonely.

**Q: Yeah, sure.**

P: So I came back in 2018 and I went, I'm going to start talking because I'm an actor. And you got to use your strengths, I guess. And so I started making little video promos and talking and everything like that. And with my little accent that I put on, it all worked and everything like that. And then from – for that year, I went through the year almost undefeated. And I was making talking promos, everything. Everything's going well, but I just didn't have any direction with the character or anything. And I was getting a bit over it. And then yeah, there was a match that I was supposed to win that I didn't end up winning, and which would've probably given me a title shot. That didn't end up happening and I got this big chip on my shoulder and I was like, I'm going to put that into the character. So I started doing promos where I was this really bitter Ironside. And all the sorts of stuff that bad guys would do, but I was still a good guy because people just, they like a guy who kicks a lot of ass, even if he's a bad guy, you know what I mean? So I was like, I'm just going to keep doing this, do my own thing. And through doing that, I was giving the company stuff to work with and direction to go in. And then at the end of that year, I ended up going overseas for Christmas and that. And then the plan was, when I come back from overseas, I'm going to be completely a new Ironside and a really bad guy, evil Ironside kind of thing. And came back and COVID happened and everything got shut down. And I was like, okay, well, here's my chance to completely revamp my character. And I made a scrapbook kind of thing.

**Q: Oh, wow.**

P: And I did the mental deterioration of Ironside into the point where I was no longer Ironside but I still was, you know what I mean?

**Q: Sure, sure. Tell us what was in this scrapbook? This actually sounds like it must be a really healthy way to process stuff. To have an alter ego through which you can vent so much, or explore a whole other side of your personality. See, I know you're in real life and you're a lovely guy, but then to be able to play that villain that must be so satisfying to be able to exorcise that.**

P: Well, I just was writing down, again, all the stuff I was bitter about in real life with wrestling and everything like that. Because I was kind of not loving it as much as I used to. And it just broke down and I was writing all this – I was drawing pictures, and I think I drew like a tombstone that said rest in peace Ironside or something like that. And then out of it was this character was created called The Unwanted Stranger. And I was just referred to as Stranger, but I called myself The Unwanted because that's how I felt - - -

**Q: Wow.**

P: - - - in the company and everything like that. And I'm not saying that they didn't want me there, that's how I just personally felt.

**Q: Yeah, sure, sure, sure. Yeah, I understand.**

P: And out of that came yeah, just a movie villain, which is what I wanted to be. And I wasn't playing a Viking anymore. I was – yeah. To me – other people just saw it from face value and like, oh, he just had a gimmick change. He's a new character. But for me, I wasn't. I was just this deteriorated version or whatever of that previous character. And yeah, I think I said it in my first – when I first appeared as The Unwanted Stranger at Lion Arts again, it was one of those things where you were kind of like, oh God, like are they going to – is the crowd going to hate this? Because they loved Ironside.

**Q: Sure.**

P: And I walked out there with this with a black tank top on and suspenders, Tom Hardy Bronson kind of look. But I had like a black sack on my head. And I came out there to this creepy horror sea shanty drunken sailor song, which was – I loved it. And I'm standing in the middle of the ring and I could tell people couldn't tell it was me. And I took the hood off and everyone fucking cheered. And I was like, oh, this is great. But hopefully by the end they're not cheering me, because I want to be a bad guy. And I cut this promo. I was kind of like, “Oh, I know who you guys are, but I want to introduce you – introduce myself.” And then one of the wrestlers went, “I know who you are. You are Ironside.” And I just looked at him and went, “I'm sorry, Ironside can't come to the phone right now? He went to Europe and he didn't come back,” kind of thing. And that was my justification from it, that I went overseas and went mad basically. And yeah, by the end of that, I beat up a bunch of good guys and the crowd was still cheering for me.

**Q: Too charismatic.**

P: So we – obviously from that point, I went into storyline with a few people and really established myself as a villain. And that was really cool. Again, Wrestle Rampage, they trusted me on the mic, which is a great thing. Because oh, I basically said to them, I'm an actor, let me go out there and act. You know what I mean?

**Q: Yeah, yeah.**

P: And I thought I was out there cutting pretty cool promos and everything, and making good stories. And that all culminated in this cool storyline with Bones Malone and ended up having this hardcore match. We had this storyline where we had a match and I was like, oh, come and join me, be on my side. Let's cause havoc kind of thing. And he flipped me off. So we had the match and I beat him and I put him over my shoulder and walked out of the building with him. And the plan was, you know, just next show, who knows what happened with that.

**Q: Sure.**

P: But it'd just come back next show. Bones would obviously be like, what happened to Bones? He's like different now kind of thing. Or he is – he's afraid of Stranger or whatever. What did Stranger do to him? And then COVID happened again. And I ended up – basically, we were backed into a corner where it was a storyline where I had him kidnapped for four months or something. So when we came back, I walked into the building with him tied up like he was cattle or something like that, taking him to the ring and then had brainwashed him kind of thing. And it was good storytelling. The crowd was invested. They were like, “Let Bones go,” kind of thing. And at the end of the match we had teamed up because it was like, oh, Bones he's got Stockholm Syndrome or whatever. And we had the match and we won the match. And after the match we were celebrating and then I just levelled him and went to tie him up again and take him out. And he went – he was like, “No,” and he was – like, hit me with a move. And then he was like, “Oh, I'm free,” and ran away. So that was really great because the crowd was so invested in it. And Bones, who I think at that time was struggling to get over, like people weren't sure if he was a good guy, if he was a bad guy or whatever.

**Q: Sure.**

P: But by the end of the feud with him, he was over and he was a good guy and it was – he performed so well. And it was – I was really proud of what we did with that. And that whole feud was – that was my last match with Rampage. And after that, I was still quite frustrated in the company and there was some time off and I was like, I think I think this is my time to move to Riot City. And I did that. And it was tough because I've been with Rampage for five years. And yeah, switching, I guess, to a rival company somewhat, which – and Adelaide is a weird thing to me. It's like we're – we're tight part of this tiny industry. We should all be working together. But it was if – I kind of felt like I was betraying them, but at the same time, I need to do what was best for me.

**Q: Sounds like you're pretty good at following your intuition, whether that be big moves across countries or company to company or even just the improvisational nature of the storytelling that's involved. It's a lot of following your gut. Am I right there or?**

P: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the first time when I decided I wanted to be a wrestler, it was kind of that moment of – because I was in Iceland and I was – I didn't know what the future held for me in Iceland. I'd been living there for about five months, I think. And I was living in a small village of like 200 people. Not a lot to do at all. I was just working in the fish factory and just working day to day and I was getting a bit bored with it all. I mean, it's a beautiful place to live and it's amazing and people were incredible. But I was just watching wrestling, wrestling, wrestling in my downtime. And then I was like – it got to the point where I'm like, if I don't at least try to do this, then I'm going to regret it forever. And at that point, I think I was 32 or something like that years old, which is a late start. I had looked into wrestling previously. I tried to – I had looked into it when I had first turned 18 and got out of school. But I was a dumb little 18-year-old that was like, “I don't want to train for six months, I want to be in the ring now.”

**Q: Sure, sure, sure. Yeah.**

P: Which is impossible.

**Q: A common story. Give me the success now.**

P: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

**Q: Absolutely.**

P: And then when I started acting school, Wrestle Rampage were actually based on the same square, on Light Square.

**Q: You were – you went to AC Arts?**

P: Yeah, I went to AC Arts and they were based in City Gym, which was just, what? A hundred meters down the road or something. So I was like, oh, I can do both. And then I think I went in there to check it out and I quickly realized in acting school, there's no way I can do both.

**Q: Sure.**

P: So I was committed to acting and that's my big love. Did that and then I just went, okay, that's it. I'm never – I'll probably never wrestle. That's fine. But it got to that point in 2015 where I was like, yeah, I have to do this. Because I'm always going to regret it. Even if I wrestled with just one match, at least I could say I did it. Because I'm big at crossing off bucket list items. I really believe in that. If you've got stuff that you want to do, just go and do it. I came back and I hassled both companies for a tryout and Rampage were first. They were like – and I went there and basically got accepted at the tryout. And so yeah, I do have my moments where I'm like, I need to follow trust, that intuition and follow that gut instinct and go with it. And I think has – it hasn't always been great, but I don't regret always following my dreams. Because I think life would be super boring if you didn't.

**Q: You get to the end of it all and you’re lying in that hospice somewhere and “Oh, man, what if I did try?” I'd rather try and fail rather than not try, right?**

P: Yeah. Absolutely.

**Q: Let's talk about Iceland. Looking at a sleeve full of tattoos here and it's obviously a big part of Einar. Tell us a bit about it.**

P: Yeah, absolutely. Well, I was, I born in Australia. My dad and mum met in Iceland because she randomly – she was working in like Scotland or something I think, or London. And she and her friends saw this thing. Were like, hey, come and work in Iceland. They went, yeah, let's do that. Ended up in this tiny remote village in the west fields of Iceland and met dad and only really came back because it was a family emergency. So Mum came back and then Dad followed her a couple years later. And so I've lived basically my whole life in Australia.

**Q: Sure.**

P: But I found out in 2014 or 2015 that I've literally been an Icelandic citizen the whole time. Because you just get it at birth. Now I knew that, but there was also a thing that was like, oh, by the time you turn 23, you have to sign off on it or something like that. And I didn't know that. So I was like, I must have lost it. So I went through this whole process of applying for citizenship and like, you got to live here for two years. And then one day I got this letter from Iceland and just in Icelandic, it just had written, “We are just confirming that you are Icelandic citizen and here is your kennitala,” which is a like social security number. And I was like, Oh my God. So I moved over there within like two months or something like that.

**Q: Right. Yeah. Do you speak?**

P: I speak a very small basic amount. Conversation is very, very difficult for me. There's 14 different ways of saying cat in Iceland. So you got to get your head around how to – the context of every word.

**Q: Yeah, sure.**

P: It's really super tough. I think it's one of the toughest languages in the world to learn.

**Q: Right.**

P: I'd been to Iceland once for Christmas when I was 12 and I loved it there and always had that connection. And then I didn't go back to Iceland until I was like 30. And again, I just – I fell in love with it on the spot. And I was like, I need to live here. I need to be here. So again, I just followed my gut and I moved over there in 2015 and yeah. It’s just a magical place. And I'm so lucky that - - -

**Q: I've never been, but the closest – I guess the majority of my heritage is German. And while I've never been, when I see images of those places or – and I don't know how much it is just because I was very close with my oma who was the sort of the matriarch of my family. But I do feel this just this urge, I suppose for that place. I'm not sure how much of that is just through association because it's what I was exposed to or if it's something deeper.**

P: I think it is. I think it's in your blood.

**Q: Yeah. Right.**

P: It's just this calling.

**Q: And a lot of the artists and people I interact with, particularly here at Nexus because we're intercultural arts org, and people talk about that connection to country or to the homeland is just something deeper than logic.**

P: It's just, it's in you and you can't really explain it.

**Q: It's such a thing we don't talk about enough. But that feeling of just like, oh, I feel – yeah. I feel at home immediately even though I've never been before. We'll start – maybe wrapping up a little bit, but I really want to get back to the wrestling for a second. We've talked a lot about acting and character and the drama, but let's talk about the athletic side of this. I mean, you can bench press more weight than I've ever tried. You guys put yourself – you're jumping off stuff, you're landing on things, you’re throwing punches. Is that a big part of the appeal for you? And just talk to us about the training regime, because the big thing about why this, this podcast is talking about the work involved in art and entertainment.**

P: I mean, like any show, you need to rehearse. You know what I mean? Now we don't necessarily rehearse the matches, but we learn how to do everything so that we can put on those matches.

**Q: Actually, yes. Pause there. So you say you don't rehearse the matches?**

P: Not in a full-on sense; we walk through them, talk about them and everything like that.

**Q: Sure. So you know what each other is going to do, just like a dance.**

P: Choreograph, I guess. If there's a spot, we call certain parts of a match. We break it down into spots. I'm going to hit the ropes and then you're going to throw a clothes line, I'm going to duck under that. That's a spot. And if there's a spot that say you haven't tried before or don't know if it will necessarily work, you might go in and practice that and make sure that it will work, but half the time, especially for the veterans, you just go there and you go, okay, so we'll do this, this, and this. And then – and you just go out there and do it. But yeah, obviously you have to have to train. Wrestling's a massive commitment. So Riot City, they have training four nights a week. So they have a sort of more technical wrestling type training on a Monday. A real basic training for beginners on Tuesday. The advanced class on Wednesdays. And then on Friday nights, we have a more – I don't want to say fun. I mean it is fun, but more flippy, I guess, type of training where you learn to do those like sort of high risky, more high risk sort of moves and everything like that. The other night we were running and jumping from inside the ring to the outside of the ring, or we're climbing up to the top rope and jumping onto the mats on the outside of the ring kind of thing, which can be - - -

**Q: Four nights a week?**

P: Four nights a week. Obviously everyone has their own life outside of wrestling. So you go to what trainings you can. But it's a really good mix of training, different trainers. Every training has its cardio aspect because you have to have good cardio and wrestling. If you are wrestling – if you're booked for like a 20-minute match, you need to – the most important basically part of the match is the finish. If you're 20 minutes into a match and you're so gassed that you can't lift up your opponent, A, it's going to look terrible; the end of the match is going to be crap. But also it's unsafe. You don't want to be trying to pick up – it's all about – obviously you train to protect – learn to protect yourself, but you learn – you train to protect the other wrestler as well.

**Q: Of course.**

P: Because if something goes wrong and you're unsafe, you can literally kill someone. I think when I first started wrestling, I had to sign a contract at Rampage and it was the first contract I've ever signed that had the phrase, “I understand that I could die doing this,” basically. There's that element of risk. Every wrestler has been really hurt at some point.

**Q: What's your worst?**

P: My worst would be, probably, I tore my MCL in my knee with about five minutes to go in a match. I didn't realize I'd done that at the time because you're just out there, adrenaline's pumping. That's probably the worst. I was out for about six months after that, but I've – I'm never not hurting. Always. And you get to a point where you're like, I'm never ever going to be able to turn my neck properly again. Or like it's just constant pain. I wrestled a match in London in 2018 and for three weeks after that match I couldn't get out of bed without having to support my own head. That was really bad too, and I still have sort of like a bit of crick in my neck because of that.

**Q: What did you – did you land wrong? Were you hit?**

P: I don't know. I don't know. I've watched the match back a few times. I'm like, maybe I just got kicked a bit hard or - - -

**Q: Yeah, sure.**

P: - - - maybe I just didn't take that bump as well as I should have, but yeah. Every wrestler gets hurt. And that's why we train so much because we want to minimize all of that and make it safe for everyone. But that's all – it's all part of it. You're willing – it's such a weird thing. You're willingly - - -

**Q: You said it. Not me.**

P: - - - willingly just going out there and hurting ourselves for other people's entertainment.

**Q: It's the most literal expression of what I've been talking to everybody about. Everyone I've talked to here and everyone I talk to in my profession is like, “Man, we put ourselves through hell all to get a rise out of a crowd.” You are literally going out there and smashing skewers into your head.**

P: Yeah. I mean, it's no real way to. It's like what you said.

**Q: You're still not going to fake that, right?**

P: The way you asked me, like why? My boss, he doesn't – he's fascinated by wrestling, but he doesn't understand why someone would willingly let another person put skewers in their head. And I can't even explain that. I was just like, ah, I don't know. I just – I guess for the crowd. It's so weird.

**Q: I mean, I'm taking the position of interviewer here, but I mean, I get it because that's awesome. Ladies and gentlemen, it's awesome, literally putting yourself through pain for your art.**

P: A lot of the time at tryouts, if a person's body's breaking down, then we look for the person's heart. And if their body's breaking down, but they're pushing through it and going through it, we're like, we can work with that. You know what I mean?

**Q: Oh, yeah. Yeah. That's a great way to end this. The body's given up, look for the heart. I like that. Well, thanks so much for joining us.**

P: Thanks for having me.

**Q: Super fun and I hope everybody learns something about the crazy world of Pro Wrestling in Adelaide.**

P: Thanks for having me on for my first podcast.

**Q: You did well. First one.**

P: Thank you.

**Q: Well, there you go. Thank you, Hjalmar for a really insightful chat into a really fascinating pocket of the arts industry. Thanks for listening this year. I've really enjoyed putting out the podcast and really hope to do more in 2022. For up-to-date information on everything that's happening at Nexus Arts, please visit www.nexusarts.org.au. Thanks to Art South Australia's Recovery Fund, we are once again presenting our visual arts exhibitions online in 2021. Head to nexusartsgallery.com to experience the work of all our amazing artists. We're also thrilled to be partnering with Sparkke Brewery and Rose Kentish Wines this year. Come in and taste their wares at Nexus Arts venue and be sure to seek out these amazing local, socially responsible labels wherever you choose to have a drink. I'll talk to you next time.**

**END OF RECORDING: (44.43)**