

**On Another
Platform:
With One True Podcast,
Mark Cirino and Michael
von Cannon Introduce
Hemingway to the Audio
Streaming/Download Age**



Since its debut in June 2019, One True Podcast (with a logo designed by our favorite graphic designer, Julene Ewert) has posted fourteen episodes, which have been streamed and/or downloaded a cumulative total of 6,947 times, reaching an audience far outside the Hemingway Society.

If you're a podcast fan, you no doubt know the broad array of listening options out there, from instantly classic longform storytelling classics like *Serial* to compelling episodic investigative history shows like Jill LePore's *The Last Archive*. Nearly every genre of art has highly regarded examples of the form, from popular music (*Pod Dylan*) to Hollywood (*You Must Remember This*) to true crime (*Criminal*, etc.). In literary studies, the field is only slowly catching on, despite the popularity of shows like *The History of Literature*. That's why in mid-2019 Hemingway studies veterans Mark Cirino and Michael von Cannon decided the moment was ripe for a Papa podcast. Fourteen episodes later (as of this writing), they have established an entertaining, illuminating interview series with Ernest-affiliated scholars and performers—along with a few diplomats connected to important Hemingway sites. We asked Mark (MC) and Michael (MVC) to answer a few questions about the show.

Q: How did the idea of a podcast on Hemingway come about?

MC: I love podcasts and have learned a lot from them and have been entertained by them during long dog walks, so it wasn't a tremendous leap to imagine doing one for Hemingway. I think I mentioned it to Suzanne del Gizzo and she told me that at the same moment in Fort Myers, Florida, a kindred soul had simultaneously had the same idea...

MVC: Back in 2017, I had conducted an interview with Colin Field at the Ritz Paris's Bar Hemingway. We were sitting at a table in the hour before the bar opened, my phone was recording, and at one point I remember thinking what a shame it was that this



Producer Michael von Cannon (left) and host Mark Cirino (right), the creative engines behind the podcast.

interview was going to be converted to text rather than distributed in something like podcast form. I really wanted to capture his tone, our back-and-forth, the background noise—and a lot of that could be done in exciting ways in a podcast. At that point, though, I knew nothing about podcasting. Fast-forward to the Paris conference in 2018: I met up with Suzanne who graciously suggested I begin exploring the feasibility of a Hemingway podcast. Later, and I can't remember how long into the process (but I think I'd already attempted recording one episode), she relayed the good news about Mark's interest in podcasting, which was a game changer. He has a great voice for it.

Q: I have to admit as a connoisseur of puns that I felt a deep surge of envy when I saw the name *One True Podcast*. Who came up with that?

MC: I don't remember, but I'm sure it was Michael's idea. It had just the proper amount of bombast, and kind of defined our mission. I'm glad you like it. You don't want to know the ones we rejected.

MVC: Did I? We're normally at some stage of mind-meld, so we probably each came up with part of it. Yep, I threw in a few that were rejected, and for good reason. At one point, the pun-loving muse struck but in a misplaced way, and I came up with *Of Mics and Men*, a name for a Steinbeck podcast ... if anyone wants to run with that show. [ED. NOTE: OMG, please trademark that stat!]

Q: Take us through the production process. How do you put an episode together? What are some of the technical challenges? And how do you distribute a podcast?

MC: Ask him →

MVC: For a typical episode, we begin prepping a few weeks to a month prior to recording. We send proposed questions to guests, revise those questions if need be, read relevant books/articles, and obtain guests' bios and headshots for episode promotion. Not to tread too far into the technical side, we record the audio tracks using Zoom, then I use Audacity to polish up the audio, layer in music, and conduct other post-production. Cleaning up the audio can include anything from silencing buzzing, to decreasing overtalk, to leveling the tracks, to ensuring the final version meets loudness standards for podcasts. We distribute each podcast episode through Buzzsprout, which not only allows us to include a podcast player on the Hemingway Society website but also distributes the episode to major directories, such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, etc. During such post-production and release periods, Mark and I are also busy promoting the episode on social media, which includes disseminating soundbites and sometimes guest responses to our "One True Questionnaire."

Q: What's been the reaction to the podcast? Are you receiving feedback on episodes?

MC: While I am still able to walk the streets of Evansville in relative anonymity, it's always nice to hear compliments about the show.

MVC: Positive feedback, no doubt. We really appreciate hearing comments and questions, whether on social media, email, or even through the phone number we recently established for the podcast. In July we celebrate the one-year anniversary of the podcast, and—as of right now—we're closing in on 7,000 total listens.

Q: I love the range and variety of your interviewees. I think my favorite episode has been on the Yousuf Karsh portrait. Tell us how you generate ideas and who would your dream guest be?

MC: The guest list is governed by our curiosity, so it's anyone we'd like to talk to for forty-five minutes or an hour. We've made it Hemingway's "world," which cuts a wide—perhaps even an infinite—swath. We're open to anyone that will make us smarter about Hemingway, his work, his world, or literature or art or history in general. So it's broadly construed.

MVC: Exactly! We're talking about Hemingway's life, work, and world. That tripartite structure is really important to us, and it guides our line-up in a general way. Some episodes are biographical. Some are deep dives into a particular story. Some aren't even really about Hemingway but about places important to him—like the Cuba episodes with Julia Sweig and Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis. In terms of variety, we're also intentional about not

just having literary scholars on as guests. We also wanted journalists, actors, artists, politicians, and so on.

MC: I thought the Karsh folks were great, too, Jerry Fielder and Anne E. Havinga. They really wanted to collaborate on a great conversation, so they were extremely generous. I'm really fond of that experience.

MVC: That's one of my favorite episodes too; gave me a new perspective on the Hemingway photo(s) as well as the Churchill one. And it's the first episode we've attempted with two guests. It was blast, and we want to do more like it in the future.

MC: My dream guest would be Bob Dylan, the only living American Nobel laureate for literature. Cormac McCarthy, too.

MVC: To go along with the musician theme, my dream guest would be Lars Ulrich, the drummer for the rock band Metallica who also played Joris Ivens in the film *Hemingway & Gellhorn*. Now that would be a fun interview.

Q: How did you land Stacy Keach? That strikes me as a major "get"! (More major than Your Correspondent, anyway).

MC: I've loved Stacy Keach forever and I thought his portrayal of Hemingway was fascinating. I also listened incessantly to his recordings of Hemingway's short stories. He was a lot easier to book than, say, Alex Vernon, who proved to be way more of a diva. Keach was totally classy.

MVC: Don't even get us started on Vernon ... or Curnutt. Simply put, we asked Keach and he enthusiastically agreed. These folks have been so generous with their time. That's been one of the great pleasures of the project—the "gets" haven't felt like that at all.

Q: What do you think the podcast format offers that my 12,000-word article on the symbolism of the tablecloth in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" can't?

MC: Besides the obvious?

MVC: First off, like Seinfeld might say, "Not that there's anything wrong with" that kind of article. There's a lot going on in it that can't be reproduced in a relatively short podcast. That's kind of the point, though: these episodes are much shorter and can be played, maybe not digested, but at least consumed in a rather short period of time. It's an enjoyable challenge to distill the most important topics of interest (in

any given episode) for an audience that includes not only Hemingway scholars and enthusiasts but general listeners. So, that might be part of the obvious answer.

For me, the less obvious one is that so much humanities work is done in relative isolation: *my* dissertation, *my* article, *my* book. In contrast, I was excited about the collaborative nature of this podcast, how Mark and I work to bring out the best episode we can and how we get to interact with so many people to put a project together.

Q: What kind of research do you have to do for each episode? Do you script out the show or wing it?

MC: We're always going to know less than the guests, so if we know enough to get the guest going, that's the idea. Each show has a blueprint, which is usually obliterated with the first answer. All the guests are so smart and such experts that they take over. As they should. The guests are the stars.

MVC: Both. We prep by outlining the list and order of questions (and potential follow-ups) beforehand, but there's something really rewarding when things go off track, when the conversation becomes free-flowing and spontaneous.

Q: You've done two excellent episodes on Cuba with folks who aren't Hemingway scholars. What's the benefit of interviewing folks who aren't familiar faces to Hemingway Society members?

MC: Part of the idea is to show how wide the reach is of Hemingway and his work. So even someone like Ambassador DeLaurentis, who is only tangentially related to Hemingway, might broaden our understanding of Cuba and its current political climate. In fact, who would know more than that man?

So we're trying to strike a balance, between deep dives into Hemingway's work and broader considerations of a theme or historical context, like the Italian front in World War I. As the podcast accumulates episodes and guests, we should have a satisfying range of topics. I love debating "was it a semi colon or was it a comma?" as much as the next person, so I look forward to those shows, too.

MVC: I come back to one of Emily Dickinson's lines: "Tell all the truth but tell it slant." Early on, we decided to include episodes where Hemingway only factors minimally, maybe not even at all—such as the Cuba ones you're talking

about. There will be more shows like it in the line-up. If we only created episodes where Hemingway shows up front-and-center, we'd miss something, and the podcast would be poorer for it. We need different angles on him, even angles at such a slant that we barely see him. With all these perspectives taken as a whole, then hopefully we can provide a more comprehensive look at him and his world.

Q: If we could contact the spirit world, who is the one contemporary of Hemingway's, be it family member, friend, foe (or some combination of all three!) you would love to interview.... And what would your first question be?

MC: Buck Lanham. I would ask him, "What happened?" and just turn my microphone off.

MVC: I would probably choose Ford Madox Ford. I've always been curious about the Ford-Hemingway relationship. There's so much to discuss, but for the first question, I'd begin with Ford's book tour in the U.S., where he decided to stop off at Hemingway's family home in Oak Park. In a letter to Pound (dated 23 August 1927), Hemingway writes, "He's seen my people I.E. [circled] my family. That's more than I'd do!"

Why did you visit them, Ford—especially after Hemingway sought to undermine your *transatlantic review* and caricatured you in *The Sun Also Rises*? Was it a power move, to show that you could get to him, or that—at the moment—you were more successful than him? Were you there to advocate for him and his art (as you later did in the introduction to *A Farewell to Arms*)? Did he know ahead of time that you were going? What did he say when you returned? What was memorable about that visit?

OK, so that's more than one question ... and that's why Mark gets to ask the questions.

MC: Thanks to everybody for being so supportive of One True Podcast. Follow us on Twitter and send us emails with ideas and suggestions. See you in Wyoming!

One True Podcast is available on the Hemingway Society website (www.hemingwaysociety.org) or via any of the major podcast platforms (Apple, Spotify, etc.). ■