



Interview Transcript

Debbie Chazen

Ryo Tabusa: Thank you very much for joining us today. If we could just have you start by you introducing yourself and who you're playing.

Debbie Chazen: I am Debbie Chazen. I am playing the Nurse and Lady Montague.

RT: And what has been your history with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre?

DC: I have been to see many plays at the Globe and have never worked there yet, so I'm incredibly excited. And I loved it so much, I even did a backstage tour because I was so interested in it.

RT: Oh right!

DC: Yes, it's sort of magical. The first time I went to see something there I cried, because it was so awesomely magical to be in that situation and think that it was in the same spot where it all happened so long ago. And it's so authentic, you just feel, "Wow, it's incredible!"

RT: That's wonderful and so wonderful that you get to perform on it now.

DC: I know!

RT: Tell us a little bit about your past with Shakespeare, from studying it in school to performing it now.

DC: So at school I did lots of Shakespeare for exams and stuff and I'm sure your listeners will agree with me that you know at school, it's not the best. But when we got to perform it, then it suddenly came alive and I thought, "Oh, this is more fun". And I wanted to be an actress from a very early age and always when we were studying plays or poems or whatever, I always enjoyed studying them more when we could do it out loud or put it on its feet. So I kind of loved Shakespeare, but hated the exams...got through it!

And then I've only ever performed in one Shakespeare before, and it was possibly the second professional acting job I ever did which A Midsummer Night's Dream. And Dawn French was playing Bottom, because it was an all-female Mechanicals...

RT: Right.

DC: Those group of people that surround Bottom. So I played Snout the Wall, and I also understudied Dawn. And it was great fun: it was set in the 1940's, so it was a really, really good, fun production. But from then to now, 20 plus years later I haven't done any Shakespeare at all, so I was delighted.

RT: So how are you feeling getting to know Romeo and Juliet, particularly from the perspective of your characters?



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DC: Romeo and Juliet is one of the plays that I do know quite well, because we did it at school, I've seen many film and play versions. So it's a play that I know and love, unlike you know Coriolanus or something like that, which I don't really know at all!

RT: Right!

DC: So I already had a fondness for it going into it. And the Nurse is a part that I've always seen or read and thought, "I'd like to do that part, that's a me kind of part". So I'm really enjoying being able to explore it and play with it and not feel too scared by it, because as I say I sort of knew it already; it wasn't as if I had to completely discover it (thank you Baz Luhrmann!)

RT: So what have you been doing in rehearsals so far then?

DC: We spent a week as you do with all plays really, but especially with something like Shakespeare, you spend about a week sitting round a table just talking about it which can sometimes feel like you're back at school. But also, it's really interesting and fascinating. And Michael Oakley our director is so intelligent and so brilliant at explaining things and he's so well-researched. He can literally eat Shakespeare and throw it back out at you. So we literally discuss every line and what does it mean, because if we don't know what we're talking about, then we're not going to be able to let the audience what we're talking about. So there's been a lot of discussing.

And then Week 2 which we are now coming to the end of, we've put it on its feet, we've been doing each scene chronologically and exploring it and blocking it so putting the moves in: where we're going to come in on stage and go off. So that's where we're at now. And then next week, we go off book which means having to learn all the lines, it's a busy weekend! And then once we've learned the lines, that makes the whole process much quicker and easier because it's then in your body and you don't have to think about it and you're much freer without having to look at the script all the time. So you can really play with it. So I'm looking forward to next week very much.

RT: And do you have any specific highlights of things you've done so far? Or specific things you are most looking forward to?

DC: We haven't quite finished the whole play yet the first time round. So...this sounds so pretentious, but you "Go on a journey as an actor in a play"...oh my God, I can't believe I just said that. But I need to "Complete my journey"!

RT: I love it!



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DC: I mean I know what happens in the end, but I need to sort of experience it. So that's what I'm looking forward to, just having the complete story arc (there's another pretentious term for you) of how the play begins, carries on and ends. So I'm looking forward to that completing.

But I mean my character's really great because she has a bit of comedy and a bit of tragedy and she's really a quite well-rounded character to play.

RT: The Nurse is quite unique in that she doesn't get too invested in the feud itself.

DC: Her sole focus really is her ward Juliet, because she's Juliet's Nurse, she's brought her up. In those days, Lady Capulet, Juliet's mother would have handed over the child rearing duties to the Nurse. So in effect, Juliet is her daughter. So her focus is entirely Juliet and she doesn't get involved in all the feud as you say, she just leaves all that to them. But sadly can't help but get involved in it when things go wrong in the middle of the play. So it's a nice way of exploring a character: from having nothing to do with anything to suddenly being dumped right in the middle of stuff.

RT: Great, well we look forward to catching up with you once you've done the rest of the play and see how the Nurse progresses.

DC: Thank you very much.