



Such Stuff podcast
Season 4, Episode 3: International Women's Day

[Music plays]

Imogen Greenberg: Hello and welcome to Such Stuff, the podcast from Shakespeare's Globe.

This International Women's Day, we'll be journeying around the building to catch up with women on and off our stages, exploring the work that they're doing to champion and tell stories that centre on the lives and experiences of women.

We'll be asking: how do we tell stories in a way that puts women's experiences front and centre? How do we speak to audiences to enable more women to tell their stories too? And how do we encourage the next generation and ensure that we move the conversation forward, building on our successes?

We speak to Lorien Haynes, the writer and performer behind *Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men* about building a movement out of the impulse to pass wisdom on to her daughter.

We chat to Amy Hodge and Thalissa Teixeira from the *Women Beware Women* company about how the three women in a play, which is hundreds of years old, have so much to say about women's experiences today.

And we chat to women around the building about their wishes for the year ahead, and they take a moment to reflect on personal pledges for the year, on how to keep having important conversations sparked by International Women's Day.

[Music plays]

IG: First up, Lorien Haynes. When she sat down to write something for her daughter about everything she'd learnt about men from her



life, she didn't realise it would become first a play, then a film and then an entire movement. Lorien joined us here at Shakespeare's Globe for a fundraiser in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, a one-off event in which the play was performed to raise money for the brilliant causes championed by her movement. I chatted to Lorien about Tell My Daughter, what she's learnt and what she'd like to pass along.

IG: Can you tell me a little bit about Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men as a broader project and how it came about?

Lorien Haynes: Yes. I actually sat down [laughs] and decided to write everything I ever wanted to tell my daughter about men, literally, and it was like a strange two-week splurge of... What I wanted to do was crystallise ideas about relationships, relationships I'd had, relationships that other people had had into vignettes. And to do this series of scenes that went backwards through a woman's relationship history to her childhood basically. In that context, I wanted to cover all the relationship universals I'd experienced like teenage pregnancy and STDs and infidelity and alcoholism and all the dark places that we go or have experienced.

[Extract from Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men]

LH:

If I hadn't got pregnant in the first place, we'd never have made it. And I knew, I fucking knew it was going on and you let me think that I was going mad? Was it all of them?

That actress who made you the origami wall hanging with our child's name on it, and gave it you just after I'd given birth?
The actress who ignored me when I went to the cast and crew screening heavily pregnant?



D'you know what, to start with I'm not sure it did matter. I loved you so much, I wanted you to be successful. I felt it was all somehow part of the job. But you go, you buy a house together, you raise another woman's child, you have your own.

And then? And then suddenly, it does matter. It really fucking matters. Because you've lost your freedom and you've lost your body and you feel like a single parent and you're so lonely and disappointed because you wanted to be the family that you didn't have.

But I knew the minute she was born that we were not a family. I knew the minute I got pregnant again that I had no faith you'd be there for me. That I'd be left alone with two children when I couldn't cope with one.

We have failed. We have failed. And I really hate you for that.

LH: So it started out as this play with fifteen men and one woman and I did a reading of it in LA. And five women came up to me after the reading and said: 'Oooh can we direct a scene as a short film?' Which I'd never even considered. And I was like 'Yeah of course, you know, yeah of course'. Then more people sort of came out of the woodwork and I suddenly realised that I could start this project where each scene in the play was directed as a short film by a different female director. And then we would put all the scenes together to make a feature film which would essentially be directed by 24 women. And I got really excited about that, particularly because it was all going to be a non-profit exercise and it was all to raise awareness and create support for survivors of abuse and assault. And so now, eighteen months later, we actually have a film [laughs], that's 129 minutes long which has been directed by 24 female directors and made for \$60,000 because about 350 people have volunteered their time and energy for nothing. All to support survivors. So what started as this tiny, tiny... basically love letter to my daughter has turned into a movement, really.



[Music plays]

The opportunity to do it at the Globe in London and to do it as a fundraiser for Rise which is an NPO that advocates for survivors and The Circle which is Annie Lennox's Women Empowering Women charity, with English actors as opposed to American actors just felt almost impossibly fantastic.

I think it's very hard to create safe spaces for survivors and this is not a project about female survivors, it's about men, women and children. It's not about celebrity survivors, it's about people in the street. And it's about I think the fact we have a culture where we don't talk about it. And what I wanted to do in writing about it, was to talk to my daughter about it. And only then do I feel, or have I felt, would she be safe and protected if I did actually express concerns and educate her and create an awareness. Obviously, sensitively when she was young but with more clarity and candour as she grew up. Because we can't protect our children unless we are aware of the issues.

And the statistics are so horrific. I think it's one in three or one in four people have experienced some form of abuse or an assault. So that is the majority if you think about an auditorium full of people. And it's again, it's still I think quite taboo.

IG: So the play itself, as you say it's these vignettes and it goes backwards and it's one woman and fifteen men. Why is important and I guess what's it like for you as an actor, to play out a narrative that revolves around one woman and her experiences, with fifteen men sort of around her?

LH: It isn't one woman, it's every woman. And I felt it was a really exciting challenge as an actress so go backwards. To be the woman in her 40s, to be the woman in her 30s. I think for me, there are actually different ways you can play the play. You could do it with one man and one woman. You could do it with one woman and a man for each act of her life. For each decade. But there's a power in the fact that I think we as people often choose the same partner



over and over again. They look different, they smell different, you think they're different. And then three months into the relationship, you realise you've basically picked the same person. And it isn't until you start to recognise that pattern, which took me a very long time, that you can do anything about it. And it's often a pattern sourced in your experiences either with your family or as a child. There is a dynamic that you've grown into, not necessarily your fault, maybe a result of some form of trauma or PTSD, but until you process it and understand why, you can't break the pattern.

[Extract from Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men]

LH:

D'you know what? You're lovely. But you're an alcoholic and an abuse survivor. And I promised myself that I would try to say 'no' sooner. I mean I might not be able to say no straight away, that's expecting far too much of myself.

I love alcoholics. You are so much freer with your emotions on the whole. And able to compartmentalise because you're so hammered. Creative. Dynamic. Addicted to chaos. Not boring. But you might be addicted to oblivion, which isn't quite as much fun for me.

And it's great, it's great that you can talk about your abuser. I am honoured that you have confided in me. Really. You should talk about it as much as you can. Perhaps with your parents?

But I have just been through this with someone else and... because of his history of abuse I was frightened to leave my daughter alone with him. He was the kindest, most gentle man. Best sex I've ever had. I'm sorry. But there was this 1% chance, this 1% chance that he might... and it's taken me two years to get over it.

So you know how you don't have to get it right the next time? Just do one better?



[Music plays]

IG: How can people still engage with the project after the one off event?

LH: The project is ongoing. So we have a website, which is tellmydaughter.com which has all the information about the charities involved, every helpline that you might need as a survivor, it has information about the film project. It has a PSA which we've shot alongside the film project where every member of the cast and crew has done a piece to camera saying 'I hear you, I believe her, I believe him, I believe you, I'm a survivor, me too'. So that's a kind of ongoing project. And you can donate to survivor's through the portal. So our plan is to just keep doing these fundraisers internationally, we just want to keep going because we find that, particularly with Rise coming on board, it's all about building to safe spaces. And Rise are taking the Survivor's Bill of Rights to the UN in October. So this is a very, very ongoing raising of consciousness and I think it's absolutely crucial. As I said this is not a play, it's become a movement and become beyond my wildest expectations. But I think there's a real need for it.

Part of it's been wanting to encourage women to direct and engage in the industry in that way. But the reason I wrote the piece was to be honest about the repercussions of child abuse. And I think it's very, very, very important that that becomes more integrated into our culture.

IG: There's something so, so beautiful at the heart of this which is this address from mother to daughter. And for International Women's Day, if I was to force your hand and say if there was one piece of advice or one hopeful thing that you were to pass on to your daughter or to anyone's daughter, what would it be?

LH: I think it's to recognise and value kindness in other humans. It's not weakness, it will lead to more positive relationships for you with men or women. I think it's... we're taught in some senses to eschew

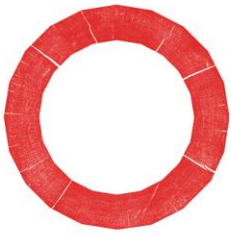


it, I don't know why and it's not sexy, I don't know why. And I wish you didn't have to reach your 40s to understand that actually that is a healthy relationship.

And the other piece of advise I give my daughter is that she needs to go with her gut. Because your gut instinct is a survival instinct. Sometimes it is fear related. But your instincts about people are usually right within the first fifteen seconds of meeting them. And you... especially women I think and young girls I think need to listen and get in tune with their self care, how to feel safe, how to trust every instinct that they have and to build a sense of personal safety. Whether you learn self defence, whether you create a community amongst your girlfriends where you check that they've got home safely. There are a million and one things you can do and should do in order to create community rather than isolation.

IG: Lastly, more broadly on International Women's Day, what do you think are the key questions that we should be talking about now?

LH: I think Me Too, Times Up, has been an extraordinary step forward. I worry that it isolates the person in the street. I worry that the high profile nature of what it's become, court cases, celebrities speaking out, actresses speaking out, means that people feel 'I'm not important enough for my story to resonate' and that is so not the case. So I think we have to get past the point where it's associated with any form of fame or celebrity and we support each other. And I think there's also something about reclaiming sexuality because what the Me Too movement has done in a sense has often been about fear and attack and women, you know, withdrawing from their sexuality and protecting themselves and I think there's also something to be said in seeing your sexuality as a powerful, positive thing, not a negative thing. And I think we have to reinvent that somehow, so I think there's work to be done there [laughs]. And I mean there's work to be done. There's not equality, there's not equality in pay, we are not there yet, nowhere near unfortunately and it's just a question of keeping at it, keeping trying, we've got



years and years of patriarchy to erode and it's going to take time to do that.

[Music plays].

IG: Next up, we went behind the scenes with the company of *Women Beware Women*. Thomas Middleton's play isn't very well known... but unusually for a Jacobean play, there are three women at the heart of the story. We chatted to director Amy Hodge and Thalissa Teixeira who plays Bianca, one of the three women at the centre of the play. I asked them... how is the play still so relevant today?

[Music plays]

Amy Hodge: Hi, I'm Amy Hodge and I'm the director of *Women Beware Women*.

The play is looking at how women operate in a male-dominated world. There are three narratives tracking three different women. One is about an older widow, one is about a young girl who is being made to get married to a man she doesn't want to. And one is about a young sixteen year old who has fallen madly in love with a guy called Leantio and she's got married and they run away together and then she falls into the hands of a predatory older man. It charts their downfall in a way, through the play. It's a massive plot twister. So it's a real... I think of the things that's so exciting about doing the production is that it's not like coming to see a *Macbeth* or a known Shakespeare where everyone's thinking 'how are they going to do this moment'. A lot of people don't know the story, so there's a thriller element to it as it unravels very quickly and the plot takes endless twists and turns as all these characters are navigating survival and trying to get the thing that they want the most and chase that to its ultimate ends.

[Music plays]



Thalissa Teixeira: I'm Thalissa Teixeira and I'm playing Bianca in *Women in Beware Women*. So it begins with... almost as if Romeo and Juliet had managed to escape, two young lovers who have got together for the sake of love against the will of their parents. And follows through in a dramatic end that would be how Romeo and Juliet ends anyway!

But I think it's about greed, it's about lust, pride, vengeance. But it mostly follows three plot lines, through lines of these three women: Isabella, Bianca and Livia. Who are three women who have all, are all being taken apart by various people in their lives [laughs].

It's funny because Amy Hodge, the director, and I were trying to figure out why she would leave her family. She's from Venice, the play's set in Florence and she's constantly talked about as being a stranger in the play. They keep mentioning that she's a stranger and that there's something about escapism for her that I think there's been a lot, must have been a lot taken away from her before the play begins. And for her I think there's a lot to do with looking for peace, she mentions the word peace a lot. And she goes through the play trying to find a way up and out and I think she starts with true love and actually feels betrayed by it because I guess, she's sixteen, she's a teenager, and he didn't stay even a day after they got married because he's got to go to work and live his life. So I think reality hits her quite soon. And she... I think this probably isn't a spoiler, but she gets raped by the Duke of Florence and that is a betrayal that she feels, it's a betrayal of love and honesty. From Leantio almost, because in her teenage brain if he'd stayed it probably wouldn't have happened. And because of that she then seeks a way of survival through the Duke and wealth and being in the spotlight is a better way to hide than in the suffering of probably something that people wouldn't believe her or would blame her for.

[Music plays]

AH: I think one of the things that drew me to it is the fact that Middleton has written the emotional range of the female experience incredibly well very much by comparison to other plays that were



written in 1620, around that time. But it is incredibly rare for plays of that period to have such strong female leads. And that's amazing. When I first read it, one of the things that I was so struck by is the relevance it held in a not very comfortable way but to many of the issues we're facing today. You know, there's this whole scene of upskirting in it. It really speaks to the Me Too era, set in a time prior to Me Too, I guess, where female agency is being really dictated to by men. And you get this massive plot turn where one of the characters is raped by a predatory man and that changes her trajectory forever more and how she navigates that.

So when I first read it I was surprised it's not done more. Having gone through rehearsal process, I can sort of see why it's not done more because it's really hard. [Laughs] But I do feel despite it's not... it doesn't sit morally comfortably in it's ultimate gesture and so what we're doing in the production is allowing the questions to be posed? Rather than offering a didactic to these things. But the themes are unbelievably relevant to where we're at today. The play is written at a time when the most powerful, you know the reason the widow is powerful, Livia, the character played by Tara Fitzgerald, is because the only time you would ever be powerful as a woman is if your husband had died and then you've got all their estate. And then you're only powerful until you're married again. So every woman in the play is completely defined by their relationship to a man, whether it's as a wife or as a daughter.

So it's very different now, we've moved miles on, of course. But we're still in a world where equality is not a given. We're still in a world where we have to... I feel as a mum of three and you know, we're fighting for work life balance in a way that isn't appropriate. We're still in a world where the majority of FTSE 100s are run by men. The majority of theatre directors are run by men, there's very few female actresses who've got a lot of children who are keeping on going, it's a bloody hard business. So I think within the micro of the theatre industry through to the macro of society you know, we're way off being equal. The play is looking at female agency and how females can navigate a very male dominated world. And I think those questions still exist because we still live in a male dominated



world and our access to agency has changed and has got better but we're still... well, I still feel, even in my own working environment, that you're still fighting a male construct.

TT: It's something actually that upsets me a lot about doing these plays, Jacobean stories. And I've been on this stage three times before, and they're all so relevant to now, I mean that's why the Globe is still here I guess [laughs]. But it's relevant because, I mean, yes a lot has changed for women obviously, I mean look at the creative team even working on this project. That's a huge difference but I think unfortunately I can relate to Bianca's storyline so presently. And it's something actually that in... in performing it I worry that we're doing it and who is actually still listening? Often you know, you're telling these stories to people who do understand, so sometimes it feels like you're just you know preaching to people who know. But it's so vital that we continue telling these stories.

I often go to people, friends or family, to have conversations about things to try and understand characters in a more 3D sense and you just start asking questions that you probably wouldn't ask on a normal coffee meet up with your best mates, you know? And unfortunately, a lot more people have gone through rape and sexual abuse than we are open to talk about. It's not been a shock, because sadly I think we're all aware that it happens so frequently but there's just a real sense of wanting to do the character justice because actually it's telling quite personal stories to a lot of us. I think that's why I get so nervous actually [laughs], it's not to do with like a good performance or not. But it's whether audiences who come who haven't gone through things like that or if awfully they have, then they can release in it rather than feel like I'm trapping them in it. I think that's really important. But I think this play does that. Because it turns into a sort of manic Cassavetes kind of ending, where everyone turns a bit crazed, and with that there's a bit of release, vengeance is actually quite a useful energy sometimes. But yeah I think Bianca goes through something horrific and she just uses vengeance and a sort of evil craze to get through which has pain underneath but I think is quite a useful outlet.



[Music plays]

IG: Finally, I chatted to some of the brilliant women working around the Globe building. I asked them... if they had one wish by next International Women's Day, what would they wish for? And if they could make one personal pledge for the year, what would that be? Here's what they said...

[Different people from around the Globe talking]

...My one year hope is that the gender pay gap is reduced...

...By next International Women's Day it would be great to see more women CEO's...

...My hope for the next International Women's Day is that we live in a world that is a bit kinder to women and doesn't make it seem like we're constantly having to like push ourselves forwards or do more to just be seen...

...I hope that by this time next year, that women will be able to feel far more confident in sharing their thoughts and opinions and their voice and empowering each other. Because there's so much in the world at the moment that's bringing people down and getting people negative and I feel like we should be helping each other by telling stories and being less ashamed of ourselves...

...Maybe I hope and wish that more women's stories can continue to be championed and can allow women to feel that there's space for them to express all facets of their personality, rather than just ones in response to misogyny, you know? [Laughs] More freedom! That's what I'd like...

...I mean I think a sense of community regardless of sex I think, and yes International Women's Day is for women but I think it's so vital that it's for men also...



...I wish there was a more realistic consideration within our working environment about what it is to be a parent and a mother and how you manage the balance between work and childcare. I guess I pledge to talk about it more, to be someone who says 'I've got three kids and it's quite hard to be a theatre director and have three kids' [laughs]. And I'd love to be part of making it easier for the generation that comes behind us to navigate the complexities of this business and parenting because they're both wonderful things...

...I pledge to be more inclusive and credit women where credit is due...

...And a personal pledge, as a woman myself, is that I will embrace the body that I'm in without having to feel like I need to change it...

...And my personal pledge is to have more confidence in myself and to inspire that confidence in other people...

...Something that I want to pledge is to use the skills that I currently have in order to share more stories in hopes that other people will feel more inspired to share their stories and help other people to feel a lot more confident within themselves...

...I think maybe investigating the feminine role? And the women's role. And how that can trap you. What I think my roles are with work, family, relationships, everything and how to make sure that they are supporting a good cause and good sort of narrative and not one that upholds or supports things that I don't agree with. I think it's quite easy to blame your own internal narrative on why you can or can't do anything. And I've personally been thinking a lot about my role in different situations and how I can maybe adjust that...

...Personal pledge. I think just be a bit easier on myself. I think we can often feel like we need to keep fighting all the time and it's very important and we do. But I think that there's something about not exhausting yourself in it which I think I can sometimes get quite riled up by things and that's not actually very forward-moving so maybe more of a peaceful approach and patient approach to change rather than feeling like I have to rally troops all the time...



[Music plays]

IG: You can catch *Women Beware Women* in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse until 18 April. Tickets are available on line or through our box office.

To find out more about *Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men*, visit their website at tellmydaughter.com

And happy International Women's Day!

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