

11 December 2010

I am currently undertaking a PhD in Drama at Exeter University exploring the approaches and the processes used to adapt Shakespeare's plays for casts of nine or less.

I started my research in February 2009 and am expecting to complete it in February 2012. During that time I will be conducting research into the work of theatre practitioners engaged in creating small, touring interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Britain

As part of this research, I am conducting interviews with theatre practitioners to inform my understanding of the development process of the adaptations I am studying and the factors that affected it.

The interviews will be recorded on audio tape. Material from the audio recording may be used in publications directly associated with the PhD. This may include quotations within the thesis itself, a transcription of the interview included in the appendix of the thesis, and use of quotations in conference papers, articles submitted to academic journals and any future publication of the thesis in book form which would be available to the general public.

I will make every effort to inform those who have contributed interviews of any publication details. I am bound by the code of ethics for researchers established by the University, and overseen by its Ethics Committee.

By signing this form, you will confirm your understanding of the research as explained above, and your willingness to participate in the interview process and to assign copyright over interview materials to myself only for the purposes laid out above.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for your contribution.

Sarah McCourt
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Supervisor: Professor Mick Mangan

- I confirm that I wish to participate in the interview process for the research as explained above.
- I assign copyright over the audio recording of the interview to Sarah McCourt for the purposes laid out above.

Signed: J.A.A.

Date: 11/12/10

Name: Jamie Rocha Alkin (please print)

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SM **Okay that should be fine.**

JRA Yeah so is it good to start with what I was going to start with?

SM **Yes.**

JRA So basically I trained as an actor originally and did three years at drama school, went to Central School of Speech and Drama but I did the drama education course there, and came out, which is sort of like actor training with conscience, do you know what I mean so when we got there the basic idea of it was that if theatre is supposed to be a kind of cathartic experience then what responsibility do you have to that as an artist essentially so for an 18 year old that was a pretty kind of major sort of question. So it's been a while, so I kind of finished that and then ran my own company touring stuff around schools and colleges for about three years and then did the masters at Birkbeck, they do like an MFA, like a Master in Fine Arts in theatre directing, so I did that and then while I was right near the end of the course is when I worked with Frantic Assembly on Othello. So that was really interesting but I'd basically done it in the gap between finishing my placement which was the Lyric in Hammersmith so I was there for a year and was like the resident assistant director and it was the gap between finishing that and my final kind of...it's sort of an oral dissertation really so it's kind of a summing up of the three years and how you feel you've developed as a director and kind of what you've learnt. So coming off the back of working with the boys on Othello it was really interesting to kind of look back over the last two years and

try and sort of summarise what the experience had been about really. So yeah and as you probably know I kind of kept a diary for every day of the rehearsals which was really interesting actually and I think almost just as interesting for Scott and then Steven because I think part of what they wanted was also somebody who was able to kind of offer them almost like an outside eye on the outside eye, do you know what I mean? So the outside eye for the show and then it was someone to kind of chronicle and process and like really humbling, like comment as well on how they sort of work as well. So I know they sort of read the first couple of drafts of it and were a little bit like, "Oh did we really do..." and I was like, "Yes, that's exactly what happened," and they were like, "Really?" and I was like, "Yeah, yeah." And so I think they found it really interesting also kind of looking at their own process via this sort of very rough diary and I'm more of a practical person than an academic so it's written in quite a relaxed way, do you know what I mean? I've got no interest in sort of trying to be clever I just sort of wrote down what I saw really because that's kind of what the process was about and what they wanted was a genuine kind of record of what that time was like.

SM I have to go through some of my questions. I have read your diary in detail.

JRA Oh good I hope it's been useful.

SM It has. What I'm looking at is the process of adaptation and I've chosen companies that tend to have a very distinctive style, tend to have done their own devising . . .

JRA Yes it's about making it in the room.

SM Yes.

JRA Yeah well I mean it was very much that and it was interesting kind of watching the boys at work and what they list in the programme and on the website as their influences and why they varied and then often sort of contain references to popular culture, like the one that kind of got commented on a lot on the website, I don't know if you've been on the...

SM Yeah, yeah.

JRA ...there's like all the discussion boards from the website that were really interesting and the one that everyone always talks about is when they said that...because people think they're taking the piss when they say that like they're influenced by Jurassic Park, do you know what I mean but it's that thing about when you're in the room that actually the reason why it's pop culture is because it's popular, and people understand what it was and that's what it was, there's the moment where Iago stabs Roderigo and we couldn't sort of quite find the way to do it and I mean I don't even remember who said it but it was perfect, they were like, "Oh it's like in Jurassic Park," where the guy is hunting the raptors and he sees the one in the front and he

knows, because he's like hunted, I think he's like the big game hunter and he knows there's another two there and it's just that moment when he realises that they're about to jump out and he's just like, "Clever girl," and then they sort of...and that was the moment and it was exactly that. It was like so when the walls open there was like the car park at the end and it was like right near the end when Iago went to go and stab Roderigo when Roderigo realised that not only that he was about to die but also...and I think what Richard played really well was that he just...you saw everything, so you saw the last hour, do you know what I mean, everything that had gone on between them kind of like flashing through his eyes and then you suddenly like realise but that was the best way to kind of explain that moment. So yeah it was a really funny process and when the boys started they made trailers for the internet and what was fascinating is that I think kind diehard Shakespeare fans were like, "Well why are a physical theatre company doing Shakespeare?" do you know what I mean and although I'm not sure the boys really liked physical...because the strange thing about physical theatre as a term, I think, is that like what theatre isn't physical? Unless you're standing stock still, like walking across the stage is physical, so I think they often talk about having a heightened physical language or like placing equal emphasis on movement as on text and on sort of sonic, you know, life of the play as well but yes they made two trailers that were about text to appease their kind of movement fans and then one of the rehearsal, the sort of R & D period of that movement, to appease their sort of

Shakespeare...so that everybody knew the Shakespeare fans saw that yes they can handle the text and the Frantic Assembly fans were like, "Oh okay there is the kind of..." even if it's dance-- I suppose it's technically dance isn't it but I mean in the cast we had Eddy Kay is a dancer and also like a brilliant actor although he doesn't kind of think he is but he's amazing and then the guy who plays...what is he called, the one who they get drunk?

SM **Cassio.**

JRA Cassio Jamie had had some sort of physical background but that was kind of it really. Like Jamie's done some circus so he'd just come off doing Monkey but apart from that they weren't really physical performers so the level that they got all those people to I thought was amazing. But what's quite nice is it's like *Complicité* when you go and watch it and you think, 'Oh that's like *My Fat Greek Uncle*,' do you know what I mean when there's a guy on stage who doesn't look...but it's not about being particularly kind of like fit, actually quite the opposite and there's something, it's like, you know, being about I always think it's always kind of all the old people in it, there's something nice about seeing qualities that you don't expect to be involved in movement, in movement and although everybody was kind of quite fit on *Othello* because you had to be, it was the kind of basic level of fitness that you find with most professional actors, do you know what I mean, it wasn't anything kind of excessive and they were really like whipped into shape quite quickly. They work with

Eddie quite a lot because they think he's a brilliant person to have in the room and he almost acts as, I suppose if they were a musical, as like a kind of dance captain, do you know what I mean, he often keeps an eye and offers bits of advice to other people so he was kind of...Eddie almost works as their sort of assistant movement director really. Yeah it was a really like fascinating process to watch.

SM In your rehearsal diary I noticed week two was really quite a busy time because you were preparing the final version of the script. I was wondering if you could talk me through the process from when they first brought the script into the rehearsal room to the end of week two and what happened, what changes occurred etc?

JRA We read the script a lot and I think what people weren't expecting to happen, which happened was a lot of basically sitting around the table work and I wasn't sure, I don't think they were quite prepared for that. So often what we were doing is we were basically doing physical stuff in the morning and then the afternoon was spent kind of working on the text. So it was really a process of kind of like preening and sort of paring the text right down to the kind of bare bones. So what we were talking about really is like what do we need to tell the story because actually because a lot of people when it was first performed were going out and buying oranges and chatting and chatting and whatever like in Shakespeare you've got a lot of last week on Othello and when you get a bit of spiel about what you've just seen or people talk about

what they're going to do and then you sort of see them do it and it's kind of like you need like either tell me about it or show me you're doing it, like I don't need to see both. So I think some of it was, well there were kind of two things that worked really, there was the awareness of the length of time, so knowing that it had to kind of be cut down and then there was looking for what...well three things I suppose, then there was like looking for what actually needed to be said because there was a scene that ended up being a dumb show in it which is where...yes so Desdemona is talking to Cassio and kind of placating him and then Iago is speaking to his wife and they were basically... they were similar things, it was a similar scene happening and actually it worked incredibly well. So we worked the scene and then the directors were just like, "Okay so now try it and we'll just play this music over it. So talk to each other but don't go worrying about being heard." And actually you got everything that you needed really through that and then the third thing was finding the bits of it that fitted the world as well because obviously in the world that it's set the rules of war, although specific, are street rules, do you know what I mean it's like this rough hub where the enemy are the kind of Asian rude boys from like the other kind of estate. So like actually it was also about finding what fitted the world of the play as well and I think that kind of came into how the script was cut and actually Charlie who played Iago was a real kind of strong Shakespeare kind of lover so he talked some bits back in because actually, you know, if you look at what the boys did, like they did English at Swansea and then did

some work with Volcano and that's how they got into it so they're not actors, they're not even dancers really. They're all kind of two boys who also had an interest in the theatre and in the world of it but were studying English when they got into it so I think it's quite an unorthodox approach to making work and I think they brought that to the Othello really. So it's that thing that people talk about, about kind of treating new works as classics and classics as new works and not being afraid to kind of cut stuff. So I think those are the three main bits was sort of tying and figuring out whether or not you actually needed to hear it, was it better to see it. And the third one I think is finding what fitted the world and I don't think those things were conscious. I think they just sort of...because you know that those things are sort of present they kind of feed into decisions but yeah and we did what you would find kind of around any sort of table which is just discussion about it, what we like, what we don't like, what moves the story forwards. So in a weird way it was sort of strangely familiar, you know, I kind of expected it to be because of the way they work as in what the end product as being so highly physicalised I sort of expected...I don't know what I expected but I certainly didn't expect kind of a week or two sat around the table, you know, talking about text stuff. Not that I don't mean that I didn't think that they wouldn't respect the text but I thought that maybe a lot of that work would have been done already because some things were incredibly firm and set before we started. So the pool table was already there. The dance with the pool cues because they knew that the walls were going to be able to kind of

undulate, like the thing about Cassio getting drunk, 'the mock baroque' as it became called, which was the dance in it and so then lots of bits were already set but yeah and everyone was kind of open to chipping in stuff and so we all kind of put our ten cents in and I think actually that's when it worked really well because you sort of forget whose idea it was to do a certain thing and actually I think that's a sign of true collaboration where you don't feel like the director's done all the work, nor do you feel like you've done all the work and then they've stole the glory, which can sometimes happen, which as you know some directors like actors to be collaborative and then pass it off as their own but I think people felt like it was their show and although Scott and Steven were very much in charge, because some of them had a better grasp on Shakespeare than they did really. So yeah is that...

SM Yeah, yeah. One thing I wanted to ask about those moments that are not referred to at all in the stage directions. Do you know why they didn't put some things in the stage directions?

JRA I think to be honest with you I think part of it is that by the time we'd published the things that people were saying we hadn't finished yet so we were still making discoveries. I think because it then had to go through the thing of sort of being proof read, I mean I've never had anything published I don't know but I think I can only assume that then there's a certain amount of time which you then have to have everything ready, proof read, edited, you know, put together, agreed

on the layout before you can then print them in the volumes they needed to, to sell them. So actually the script, what was published as the text, I mean there were minor changes in terms of like textual stuff but that's it, it's because a lot of them hadn't been discovered yet really, like hadn't been kind of...were moments that we hadn't rehearsed or hadn't kind of figured out yet and they were very good at just sort of letting things take the time that they needed to take, so some things we took ages on and although they worked quite quickly in the creation of the physicality like they really allowed the actors to play with stuff and I think some of the actors were probably a bit overzealous in cutting stuff or really wanted to keep things to then only discover later on that actually they didn't need it so yeah. So I wish there was kind of a more eloquent answer but that's it really it's that we hadn't finished so it was interesting...

SM **Once that had been set up at the end of week two, were there any changes?**

JRA There were minor changes and I think that was basically only because we had put the work in prior, rather than saying, "Let's stick to this..." because I think if there were like major things that didn't work and that they needed to cut they would of. I think they'd rather have discrepancies between what people took home and what they saw rather than like change...or keep something the same for the sake of it, you know, so it was very...they were really kind of committed to the text and making sure that the play was what it kind

of needed to be. So there wasn't, but not out of a need to kind of stick to what was written really just because we'd worked hard and long in getting it sort of where we wanted. So I think there's only like a couple of lines and nothing that you would notice really. I mean you'd have to sit there with the text and watch the video to notice it but no nothing major, no.

SM The other thing I picked up on was the sections that you noted in the diary where there's a real sense of when you were doing the work at the beginning it became very clear when things should be physical narrative and where things were better done as dialogue . Can you give me an example of what makes a good physical narrative moment and then what doesn't?

JRA Yeah I mean it was a process of kind of just trying stuff out and I think because of how they work the boys are very much about get it up on its feet and let's see. So we just tried stuff out. We kind of tried and tried and tried and I think two kind of good examples really is the opening, so getting people up to speed with what has happened in the pub because also it's a bit of a slightly false...not a false environment but it's slightly different to the original text because obviously in the text part of it is how much older he is than Desdemona as well, whereas I think in this, although you could probably guess that Jimmy was older, he was still kind of part of their generation. So the idea is that Brabantio's lot sat in the main part of the pub and were the older kind of people, who are the generals in the original, and that then kind

of like the Muppet baby version, then like Cassio and Desdemona and Iago and whatnot are kind of the young ones, or the children, or the ones that are sort of coming up and we decided that like the snooker room was like their bit. So the bit of the stage that you saw was like the backroom of this pub, was like the games room because also we had a fruit machine as well. So it was like that was the games room and the toilet and that's where the young ones hung out. So there was the beginning bit kind of getting everybody up to speed because obviously and the context that we're in is different to the original and the bit that they've got, that Desdemona and Othello have got on the pool table together that leads into, "If I were now to die..." section and like that again was a bit where so much about that kind of initial thing of love is the things that aren't spoken about, it's that thing about kind of...you know we talked a lot about sort of love and what's important and it's good that in bits it's funny because what I found out just doing Romeo and Juliet and the same with this is that you have to have stuff to lose but if you play the end of the show at the beginning there's nothing but tragedy and actually really until they start to kind of murder people and attack people there's not a huge amount of tragedy, there's the potential for tragedy but nothing really happens. It's like in Romeo and Juliet, actually the first tragic thing to happen is Tybalt and Mercutio dying which happens at least an hour into the show. So before that there's kind of joy and happiness and I think what we talked up was kind of setting that up so there was a lot to lose and then the other thing that kind of ended up as a dumb show

yeah again was the conversation between Iago and his wife and Desdemona and Cassio and it was just trying it out really and it was a fine thing how you read, so figuring out what the scene needed and then trying both versions and just seeing which one read better really and it's one of those weird things that is about kind of instinct and gut and it's like when you just know from watching it and it's really hard to put into words which is why it's good to just get up and do it. It's about reading the physical conversation and in that section you could really well. You saw exactly what was going on and what it meant was that you could play both scenes at the same time and you saw a couple talking and one that ends really well and one that doesn't end well and that there was a kiss at the same...do you know what I mean so basically you can play mirrors physically by watching stuff on stage and you can play echoes which you can't really with text because you wouldn't be able to...and what's really interesting is you can read the two things at the same time visually and you can't necessarily do that sort of auditory and you can't kind of take the information in, in the same way. So yeah it was basically about what was the quickest and most efficient way to put the information across and I think for them, you know, they talk on their website about giving the music, the text and the movement equal weight and I think that was part of it as well was kind of saying, "Well yes," and I mean look there's a million different ways to do stuff and did we lose out on some small like delicate moments of stuff? Probably yeah but you gained it in other

areas so I think it's impossible to do something that has it all. You're constantly making compromises.

SM So with that scene, was that cut in the first rehearsal draft or did it have a question mark over it?

JRA The dumb show? As far as I can remember I think it was always in and I think right from the beginning they'd had an instinct about playing it as a dumb show but what they did was worked the scene anyway and then played it and got them to kind of play it normally and then played it with the piece of music over it and just said, "Talk in a whisper and let's have a look," and we all sat back and were just like, "Yeah that works much better."

SM So was there an element of just checking that...

JRA That the instinct's right for it, yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely, definitely and I think there was that the whole way through really. There were kind of elements of that and it's nice because it leads to kind of being able to sort of ad lib because some people's favourite bit and the bit that some people hate is when Brabantio goes into the toilets and all you hear from offstage is, "Oh fuck it's my dad," and they all come kind of running out, you know, Othello's sort of doing up his flies and I think some people kind of find it a bit sort of slightly coarse or whatever but I don't know I just think that, you know, like Shakespeare didn't do Julius Caesar in togas, he did it in doublet and hose, why? Because that's what people were wearing and I think the thing about it...and yes of course it's an easy argument to make because he's not

around to refute it but from what we know he was trying to make things that were bang up to date and I think often that's the justification I think for doing stuff is to try and make it relevant and to put it into a context that makes sense for a modern audience and also, you know, Frantic know, for whatever reason, that they've got a massive student following and actually we had lots of kind of large school groups in and I think they wanted to make a Shakespeare for an age now like they talk about it, I don't know if it's in there, there was that, I can't remember what the TV programme was called ...

SM Was it Six Sins...

JRA Yeah that's the one. Brilliant, absolutely brilliant so we watched that because obviously the thing is when you lay something like this over it there's an accent thing but there's also a kind of finding the physicality of that place and that video played a large sort of part in that, although it was kind of...I think the bloke was from Essex it was that kind of rough, mainly white, working class environment that they were kind of playing to as well and yeah so I think some of it had sort of been kind of preconceived and other things we sort of discovered as we went along because obviously I think before the end of the first two weeks they didn't know what was going to become I think that was their deadline for the text so the idea was like, "Look let's work as hard as we can on it, get to a place where we're happy, we'll send that off and then if we need to make cuts we need to make cuts, that's just the nature of the beast," do you know what I mean so there were little

things but yeah on the whole I think quite a lot was you sort of need enough set so that you don't feel completely adrift but then still have room for experimentation but I think like most directors I think they had moments that they knew about and actually until they played the scene, until they put Clare Louise on the table and got Jimmy to like push straight back they wouldn't even know if it worked, do you know what I mean? It's something that they'd experimented with and someone had gone, "Oh that's quite a nice shape," but that was kind of it, you know, and that's what we did when we first got down to Plymouth. We were at TR2 which is the most incredible space and we had a play around with the set but you never know until you run it in situ and so you get the actors in and also until you've had the scene beforehand because it's no good just plonking her on the table and him pushing it back it has to be at the end with him murdering her. So yeah.

SM **That makes a lot of sense. One thing you brought up was the music.**

JRA Yeah.

SM **And I was wondering to what extent had they already chosen the music for each scene?**

JRA Basically Frantic's kind of part of their mode of work is that they choose a singer, a band, a group to provide the music for the show. So what's really interesting about it is that there is like one person or one kind of group of people who provide everything for the show and

the guys who did the music for Frantic were I think they're based in Swansea and they're a kind of a dance music...I think they're a duo who the guys came across when they were at university and had always sort of known about them and the thing about the music that was fascinating is that the guys described themselves as like making epic music for your bedroom which is really interesting and that's sort of what it was because you listen to the stuff and you just sort of think to yourself, 'God actually there's this sense of kind of build and crescendo and whatever but still in quite a kind of rough sort of urban way,' and actually that's exactly what the play's about, or this version of it is this kind of epic love story essentially, love's Othello's downfall really but played in this really rough setting. So the kind of Hybrid soundtrack was incredibly useful for that and we had Gareth Fry who they've worked with before and who was incredible, who was in the room who was kind of tweaking and tuning and stuff but I think most of it had been chosen already because if memory serves me correctly most of the big set pieces, the opening, the music on the pool table, what Cassio got drunk to, the fight, had all been decided before. So what they were doing that was playing on a loop really as the actors were kind of devising. So you see you're kind of saturated by osmosis, the music seeps into your head and for a couple of months after I couldn't get it and I still use the soundtrack a lot myself actually when I'm working. I use the opening song quite a lot because it's got such an incredible build to it and that's what they needed. They needed something that encompassed the scope of the play while still

fitting the world and I think the Hybrid soundtrack does that incredibly well but yeah I found the thing about only working with one group really fascinating that they pick a really specific sound but more specific than a sound it's like a person or a duo or a band or whatever to kind of do it so it's even more specific than just genre, for example, because they could have said, "Right okay we're going to use dance music," and you could have had lots of varied things but it was like really, you know, and I think a couple of the edits...and the band were great they were just like, "Yeah do what you want with it." So they were tweaked slightly but not massively. I think some bits were slightly moved around or openings were made longer or shorter but actually that was a really interesting...because it just focused it right down, I mean such a variety of sounds as well. It's not like everything sounds the same but I think what's really interesting if you watch it, because you don't know any better, you just think it's been devised for that moment because it fits so perfectly that you do just think to yourself well the sound designer must have just made that for that, that they've made that piece of music for that piece of movement where no I think the genius of the boys in their brains was seeing what was needed.

SM **That's interesting because like you said at the beginning you've got text, you've got the visual now and you've got the music...**

JRA Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SM ...the three elements and yet they're not mentioned at all in the stage directions...

JRA Yeah I think that's sort of the point of the book really isn't about being this isn't an exact record or replica of the show, I mean it sort of is what it says which is that it's the text, like this is a cut and I suppose it's just interesting for people to kind of read the bits that they've sort of left in or as a kind of aide memoire or also I suppose the thing is it's actually a very good simple cut and I think for them like actually because their process is about doing it I think that what they'd be really excited about would be somebody to just kind of have this as the sort of skeleton of it and then be able to sort of play on from that, to kind of have this as a sort of basis because what you've got actually is a really clear, succinct bit of text but you're never going to capture it because what does it mean putting whatever, bu-bu-bu, track by Hybrid plays now because you haven't got the music there so even, you know, like a lot of it is like actually I think you almost do it a disservice by trying to explain it I think, like, you know, he pushes the walls back into a V what does that mean to you when you read it? Nothing, but if you've seen it when you get to that bit you'll remember it anyway. And I think it is what it says it is which is a text and actually possibly, I don't know, knowing that they've got lots of school groups coming in, maybe if you're an A level group this is just a good place to start, it's a good place to have a beginning of, this is the version that we used, this is a cut of it rather than trying to sort of...because I think you can overcomplicate text and actually text is just that it's never

going to be a record of the performance, the point of theatre is that it's ephemeral, it's there and then it's gone and you experience it with all the senses and you're never going to capture that so why try. So I think for them what was interesting was being able to offer the text but actually marking the distinction between the text and the play because it is sort of what it says it is. But yeah I think you're right I think people were then kind of flicking through to see and then were like, "Oh where's the...oh that bit's not in the..." but I wonder what good it would do you if it was there, I don't know but I'm not sure it can ever do the...but would you gain anything by having it in I don't know. I don't mean that...I'm not being sort of...a genuine question I don't know what you would gain, you might do I don't know.

SM For me it holds the fascination because I'm dealing with the murky line between what is a literary adaptation and what is a performative adaptation...

JRA Sure.

SM and I've actually asked everybody this, where for you is the line between theatrical interpretation and theatrical adaptation?

JRA I think they sort of...I don't know I think you almost decide on it before you go in because actually what is this? I mean the interesting thing about it is adapted by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, like yes it was but it's also Frantic Assembly's Othello, do you know what I mean it's also like their presentation of the play and so I think it's kind of a bit of both, adaptation we tend to think of as being about text, so

you're talking about generally it's somebody who's taken...like has moved something from one drama to another and actually inside a sort of theatrical framework they sort of have because I'm not really sure there's been an Othello, I mean I'm sure there's been an Othello set in other places but I think what makes it the adaptation is that it's theirs, you know, and that it's very much the Frantic Assembly's Othello and that's just part of everything, that's the setting, that's the costume, that's the movement, you know, that's the cut of the text and I think it is murky because actually I think these words mean different things to different people and they're mercurial and they're kind of slippy, do you know what I mean and on one day you feel like you're working on an adaptation and on another day you feel like you're just working on a production, you know, well I mean how many Macbeth's have there been in sort of combat fatigue and you think, 'Well it's boring,' do you know what I mean if I see another combat Macbeth I think I'm going to shoot myself it doesn't add anything to it. So yeah I think it is interesting. I'm not sure that anybody has kind of really got an answer. I think you sort of set out to make the play yours and I think the change of location and the change of like removing some of the text from the box is actually the true adaptation because all that is, is a cut, anyone can...well I say anyone can cut, you know, there's editors around the country like but no of course not everyone can do it and it's incredibly, well I think sometimes in Shakespeare it is quite easy because we cut out a lot of characters as well so we decided like the lovely characters that we wanted and so I think actually the text

that's just a cut and like I said I think what they did with it is the true adaptation, they're kind of physical adaptations and that's what I mean. I think actually the cutting of the text is just that, it's a length thing, it's nothing more. I don't know you could do it in like traditional dress and it would still be...and it's just, you know, if you cut it it's still the performance of the show so I think yeah actually I think it's the physical elements, it's the choice to present physically what is often presented with kind of ((0:47:56.0?)) that I think makes it the adaptation really and it's the massive shift of location, for some people the fact that he's older than her is part of the thing, the fact that he's a general, you know, whereas in our one he's the only black guy in the place, he's a bouncer, do you know what I mean and like...so it's a vastly different world and which I'm sure some people criticised and said that you'd missed the original point of the... but I don't know.... I don't think they set out to make this kind of incredibly like clever cut and adaptation I think they were just like, well what works? And I think that like limitation and necessity breeds creativity, you know, the fact that they knew that they wanted it to be a certain length so that it kept this kind of punch which is what you need, you need attack on a show like this, you know, you want it to just fucking grab you by the throat and like throw you around for an hour and then just drop you on the floor and you're just left going, "What just happened to me?" because it's part of that world is that it needs to be this kind of visual assault and I think given that another part of their work is trying to get, I mean they wouldn't put it like this but trying to get kind of

quite rough boys into physical theatre, kind of into dance, I think that sense of like über-masculinity and actually an exploration of masculinity in itself is something that interests them and I think it's a valid point, you know, in an age of sort of metrosexuality and kind of disappearing of kind of traditional gender roles in one sense I think men have been left slightly adrift in terms of what their sort of place is in the world and I think actually, not that this kind of puts it right but people who were sort of struggling with that, because the whole way through that's what it's about isn't it? Iago thinks that he's been cuckolded, Roderigo sort of is desperate to get with Amelia but kind of can't...no sorry with Desdemona and there's all these things kind of about it. Othello feels like he's been sort of cheated on and actually all anybody wants to do is also to be with Othello. Like I think the way that Charlie played it beautifully in his interpretation of Iago isn't this kind of über-conniving, skiving person, it's that if he wasn't passed over by Cassio none of it would have happened. If he didn't feel that he'd been hard done by in the appointment of who, you know, Othello's right hand man was, none of that would have happened and there's that beautiful moment in it where we were talking about weapons and I remember kind of one day taking off the top of the pool cue because we also had the pool table which was brilliant, because you could just play pool in the breaks and whatever and I took like the end of the pool cue off and I was like, oh this is quite a nice weapon and then Othello's pool cue became like his sceptre or his sword, you know,

and there's a brilliant bit where he hands it to Iago and Iago just takes it and I think the line is, he just says, "I am yours," you know and actually what was so heartbreaking to watch was that all he wanted was to kind of be close to him but there's that thing about men not knowing how to relate, you know, the reason why boys kind of punch each other and put each other in head locks is they want to kind of have physical contact with their friends but they can't hug because that's now what you do or if you do it's like squeeze the life out of him do you know what I mean and kind of thump their back with your fist and whatever. So it's never about any kind of tenderness and I think because that's the sort of things they're interested in I think that plays quite heavily in sort of teasing that out because actually because they're older and they're sort of generals in the original some of the basic elements are there but it's not quite as strong as what you'd have with like young men and how young men in this situation connect to each other. The distance in the original is much more to do with kind of military protocol than it is about people not really knowing how...I mean I'm sure it's there but it's laid slightly deeper under lots of other layers whereas here being kind of stripped back I think those things are brought to the fore really which is an interesting aspect of it as well I think and again I think that's part of the adaptation it's what you choose...I mean this is the other thing isn't it it's about...I think part of adaptation is also the part of the play that you choose to focus on. I mean if you think about I don't know like studying a poem at school I used to think to myself, 'If the poet meant every thing that

we've come up with you'd only write four poems in your life," do you know what I mean because it would take you like three years to do one if you meant every little thing and I think that's the same thing about kind of text, it's not that the issues aren't there but they may be not as strong for the writer as they were for the person reading it because obviously, you know you never read anything blank you always bring your own, not baggage is a bit of a strong word but kind of preconceived ideas about some things, connections and connotations to ideas, to kind of processes of sort of human interaction, there are bits that kind of hit you harder for whatever reason. So yeah I think that's sort of...

SM Just running into the characters because you said obviously there are characters that get cut out and there's only one doubling in there. I was wondering why there was only one doubling and how were the links made between the two characters?

JRA Yeah well because essentially like what Marshall played was we needed...well you sort of need the scene with Brabantio at the beginning but actually because they sort of belong to the world of the pub that isn't this room and isn't this kind of youth group you only need to see him kind of a little bit at the beginning. So then what we decided is that because everybody else had been cast, actually I think the way that they worked it was lovely is that then the fact that her cousin was the same actor that was playing her dad I think was quite

a nice link. So you not only had the thing about the generations coming through but he then plays a very similar role of like trying to look out for her and trying to protect her. So you've also got the visual element about the same person representing her family so you connect kind of all of her family to this one sort of character and also I just think it just keeps it tight and it's about this little group and actually I think because here the world is the pub you don't want to see too much of the outside and you never really do what do you see? You only ever see the car park and that's it. So you never leave that little square area which I think in a sense is, I don't know whether they meant it or not, you know, sometimes, but I think it's a reflection also of the characters' mentalities that nothing exists outside of this place so in a sense neither does anyone else. So part of keeping the thing so tightly kind of bound is that you focus on one generation which I think helps to push the idea of it and I think having Brabantio in the one scene I think is quite nice right at the beginning and then he leaves and that's the thing and we decided there's that moment where she basically says, "The same love and respect that you showed my mum..." like I'm showing him because we're married now, you know, and he's like, "Okay fine," and we decided that when he turns and goes that that's it that they kind of leave the young ones to their group, do you know what I mean to their kind of space and we never see the older ones again, you know, and I think part of it is how do you explain who they are because now that we're not in an army and they're not generals it's then tricky whereas I think the rest of the

relationships are really easy actually to kind of map out whereas I think sometimes with the older generals and whatever it would be slightly tricky. Like her dad is fine but then after that where do you go and so I think that's why there was that was that you needed somebody to be that and Marshall was, I think, the oldest member of the company but also had the right kind of physicality to play both and he didn't question it when he comes back as the cousin and I like it for it's the same actor as well that there's almost like a kind of generational thing happening through the process of that. But yeah I've never really thought about it before but kind of thinking back I think it just helped to draw the world in and it just helped to focus it that you had this little group that you concentrated on and that was it and it was as if nothing...because all you ever see is like the Bangra music coming from the car as the car pulls up and the brick coming through the window and then even when they fight what was lovely was I think what they created with that thing about where it was one person against one and then so sometimes you were watching one of their lot against the Asian group and then it had kind of shifted and so it was really like...so the fact that the fight was contained inside the group as well I thought worked really well because in those situations who are you fighting but yourself and again I don't know if anyone meant that but this is like the kind of mildly clever things that you can come up with in reflection.

SM **Is there a practicality as well?**

JRA Of course there is. All theatre's about practicality versus the art. I mean that's why I think stuff like this works really well is because theatres and the performance of theatre is inherently unnatural, do you know what I mean, so embrace it because the fact that we're trying to play a scene where I'm being interviewed in the pub and whatever when there's 300 cheap seats at the back and I can't turn my back to the audience, like it's not a natural setting so embracing that and embracing actually how far an audience will go with you, like did it matter that there was one person fighting and then they joined the group and another person came out? No, do you know what I mean you didn't need to see a realistic representation of the fight you just needed to get the frenetic energy, that's what was interesting. And did it matter that the same people that had been being beaten up were suddenly back as their character celebrating in the pub? No of course it didn't because no one asked you to believe that this was a realistic thing, no one asked you to believe that. So it's like the characters at the beginning who Othello beats up, there's like the two ruffians that come in and start making trouble and whatever and start trying to touch up the girls and it all gets violent at the beginning, like who are they? It doesn't matter. Do you know what I mean like no one needed a fucking map, like we didn't have to do like 70 questions about your character and what you had for lunch that day, it doesn't matter like you're a device and sometimes, personally I think like a lot of the problem is we've lost the thing of storytelling and I don't mean in the kind of like, you know, wide eyed children's way but I mean the

skill of multi role-ing and the skill of just telling stories on stage and I think what was great about that is it's like yeah two people come in do you know what I mean yes you need the different physicalities that the audience aren't confused but we don't care who you are, do you know what I mean, we don't care who the people in the hoodies are outside, of course we don't why would we? And I think actually that thing about the person coming out and then being brought back in and then someone else being stuck back out or left behind and then they're the one that was fighting, worked incredibly well and then when you kind of watch it back and do sort of think to yourself, 'Oh God actually that was a really lovely little bit,' but you never know, you never know. It was a massive success, rave reviews, everybody loved it, didn't have a scooby doo if anybody was going to like it when we were making it, of course you don't, who does? You've got no idea. You just get your head down and make the work and hope the people see the work that's gone into it.

SM **Were there any constraints that you were aware of that really had an impact on the way the production turned out?**

JRA I think time was the main one, was like how do you put it all in and I think that forces you to then think about an either or situation because actually if you had all the time in the world why not just do the whole show with a bit of dancing in it? Do you know what I mean like why not just do that. So I think the time was kind of a big one and it was also, I mean, yeah I think what we were talking about earlier on about

kind of limitations or kind of breeding creativity and I think that's true and I think, I don't know constraints and limitations feel like they're things that kind of hold you back and I think it's about the specifics of where you are, so I think the fact that it was set in a pub, for example, you know, it's the setting that they've gone for, this pub in West Yorkshire, they decided it was in Leeds, so you kind of need sort of the accent, you need the attitude of that and what does that mean? It means that there are certain things that you can't play. Desdemona can never be a demure wallflower for example and that's not to say I think the bit where...one of the scenes that I loved was between sort of Amelia and Desdemona is when they swing the girls' toilets around, and they're talking about these men, these men, you know, like I don't understand like all I do is try and sort of love him, and Amelia is saying, "Well it's their fault they do this, this and this," and actually the thing about it is I think it fits much better in their mouths than sometimes when you go and see stuff, I mean it's like, only because it's in my head, when I finished doing Romeo and Juliet, it's like in that, like when you see her played as like this delicate wallflower and actually none of it is in the text, none of it's in the text, you know, Romeo pulls a knife on him-- you know, the whole...Romeo and Juliet more than like any of the other plays that I've worked on is so full of the same scene played twice, I mean it's absolutely rammed full of it, you know, Romeo pulls a knife on himself, the friar doesn't take him seriously, Juliet does it and he's like, "Whoa okay, if you're willing to do that maybe you'll try this," you know. He drinks poison, she stabs

herself to death, right? Who's the more hardcore out of the two of them do you know what I mean? And I think it was the same in this that suddenly this actually very modern speech that Amelia has which, you know, she played beautifully, of, "Well what do they do when they cheat on us?" do you know what I mean when they pour their treasures into foreign laps, like what do they do, you know, well we've got feelings like them, we've got this, we've got this, we've got this exactly like them like why shouldn't we do the same thing as they do, let them know that they're the ones that kind of drive us to it an almost kind of ladette view of like, "Well fuck it well if they do it why don't we?" do you know what I mean or, "Well if it's all right for them to do it then it's all right for us..." so and actually I think the text fitted incredibly well into that. So I think the text fitted incredibly well into that. So I think yes there was kind of time constraints just in terms of like how much time you've got to make it but also how long want the thing to be, more so really because we have, I mean sort of a six week, seven week rehearsal period, so much longer than normal and then the setting I think was kind of the other one and making sure that stuff fitted and I think for them it was about being true to their mission statement about giving equal weight to text, you know, movement and the kind of sonic world of the play and I think actually you get something that's a constraint but it's kind of one that you choose rather than like what was difficult about working on it, you know, and I think it's given the other connotation sometimes that's what we can view constraints as and I think it's the set of specifics that you're

working within, the constructs really I think is probably a sort of an easier way to kind of process it I think that kind of constraints but yeah I think those were the main things but I think that's what's at work on any text isn't it really? I think there's always those kind of things. That was probably the main one I think was like yeah the kind of setting and the time and the placing of equal weight on the three elements.

SM Were there many changes made during the tour?

JRA I mean just sort of little staging things really like, you know, when we went to the Royal & Derngate, a beautiful theatre but tiny, you know, compared to what we had been playing on, the Theatre Royal in Plymouth is a gorgeous space and big and was made for that space as well. So not really in terms of...just practical things like where they had to put stuff, how far the pool table could track on and off, losing bits of it, you know, and so there was just things, the constraints of the set really, I mean not really in terms of the work and I think the space when you're touring is always the big thing isn't it like the only constant that you've got is the show when you turn up and it's like a brand new space and obviously like touring on that scale is different to kind of smaller scale touring but still there were things that came up that had to kind of be worked on, even when you're doing major things, you know, I worked on a production where you turned up somewhere where there was a bit of rake that someone had sort of forgotten to mention which meant that lots of kind of aerial stuff in the show and the actor was like, "This is really a bit dodgy," luckily he was

crazy and didn't care but...sort of still went for it but some really hairy moments but yeah so only things to do with the set really I think it fitted quite nicely into each space. I saw it in the Royal & Derngate, Plymouth I saw the performance in Plymouth and then at the Lyric in Hammersmith as well.

SM And were the audiences similar?

JRA Yeah fairly similar I mean lots of kind of school groups and college groups and it's particularly the kind of university students I think who find Frantic Assembly quite sort of cool. I don't know they're kind of a sort of new Complicite, they're like a new, young, exciting company to get into, do you know what I mean and to sort of follow and I think Filter are very similar as well because I've worked with Filter as well and they're an interesting group and like talking to them about things they've done, Twelfth Night and...I think Ferdy's Malvolio is the best I've ever seen, playing it in that kind of sort of Iggy Pop fashion and when they get into the party and then when you get, "My masters are you mad?" and everyone was like, "Eeek," in the audience. Brilliant I mean like scrappy as fuck in some places but brilliant, I mean absolutely brilliant I think, you know, and yeah like... but anyway that's another story now that's not Othello it's just they're kind of good friends and I sort of really admire their work but yeah so I mean the audiences were interesting and the way that it's received and the Plymouth audience was fantastic and I think they've got an incredibly good...you know they were co-producers in it and Simon came down

a lot to sort of have a look at the show in London and came to the rehearsals and stuff and it was exciting because I think it really... I think this show for Frantic Assembly marked a big step up for them. It's a big space because like people like Told by an Idiot they're used to playing the Drum in Plymouth... So yeah it's a big step up and I think they felt it as well. I think we all did like I mean lots of their people they've worked with before, you know, it's the first time I've ever worked with them on a Frantic show but we all felt it actually getting down there, walk in and then just being like big, it is big because when there's nothing on it, theatre or stages are beasts and luckily this kind of brought it forwards and kind of penned it in which was right but yeah like in terms of who they're playing to and making the show and I think they really felt the pressure and that's probably like a constraint as well was sort of the pressure of making something on that scale because it's massive for them, you know. And it worked as well, you know, I watched it from... because you do because you just sort of wander around and you get sent up to the shit seats to see what it looks like and, you know, as is the assistant's job and you sort of get sent all over the place and like... so I saw it from everywhere and actually like it was a great show. It was a really good show and actually because the boys are so skilled in painting stage pictures, being higher up actually you saw stuff you didn't see close down when they were doing the mock baroque, kind of being upstairs and watching it, it was a really lovely... and there were bits of it that were beautiful, absolutely beautiful and you need... when Jimmy pushes all

the walls back you need a bit of height to really get stuff and that's when it looks cinematic. And that's the other thing I think is, you know, for most of those, because you can afford to you see more cinema than you do theatre and you work your way through it. So often my kind of references to stuff are kind of cinematic, you know, I was working on something recently and I was sort of saying, "It's like in the films where one person stands still and it's like the traffic and the world are like whizzing," and everyone's, "Oh okay," you know. I did a sort of all female Medea, kind of 20 women in Medea and that was quite...part of the thing was getting this sort of rushing, so you know that's very filmic, that thing of the kind of the thing stretching out behind at that moment, you know, is an incredibly like cinematic moment because how do you do it? Well you have undulating walls that's what you have, you know, but you sort of think to yourself, 'That's the effect that you want,' and sometimes you can achieve it and sometimes you can't but... it's just little doors opening and stuff like that. Like there's the brilliant bit where he's just kind of planted the seeds of the idea and Iago goes to the back and he just kicks the wall and just this little panel opens and Jimmy's just standing there in the dark, you know, and he just kind of goes in and joins him and whatever and it's like, "Where are they?" do you know what I mean? Because that's outside but of course they're not outside it's just they're in a different space and I think...because you set that up from the beginning it allows you to use all the kind of theatrical stagings and kind of little sort of clever bits of setting and stuff and again it's

practical isn't it? It's you want to have them looking at the girls when they're having the scene but because it's the pub, on a stage, if a stage is empty brilliant it's a no man's land, you can have someone over here, stage right, or someone on stage left, just kind of looking and commenting, you can't if you're in a set of a pub because I mean you could do but it's nicer that it was kind of this shady land that it had kind of got a bit darker because that right near the end when he's like, "She must die," you know and it's sort of...yeah... it's just bringing it to the fore isn't it? It's just showing the workings, you know, the kind of machinations of the brain like physically. It's a practical...so it's the same thing it's just that you see it rather than kind of interpreting it through what the actor's doing, you know.

SM One thing I picked up on the...for example like the looks between Roderigo and Iago you mention in your diary, the sort of realisation that there's levels of storytelling going on there. Can you tell me about how that developed?

JRA I think it was a mixture of things. I think it was...because some of the scenes kind of came sort of pre-cut so it was like, you know, if thingy gives somebody a look, you know, it would be written and they'd obviously gone, "Okay well you can do that in a..." you know it's the way in which we use language. We don't use language in the same way that a Shakespearean audience would, you know, something I don't know like sort of three or four times as many words or, you know, in kind of daily...and it's just, it's a ridiculous...so actually that's

what they wanted to see whereas we do read things kind of much more filmically and we can read looks and kind of...and yet I think some of it was sort of pre-written and some things were discovered that like what you would have is that it was like the first time you do it they would do the line and the look and then the second time the line would kind of be slightly whispered and you'd just get the look and then another time it would just be the look and you're like, "That's brilliant, that is brilliant, like that works really well so keep that." So there is a lot of, you know, like the boys were really good at kind of letting people play and experiment and then kind of taking from that but I think as a director what you can do is the framework within which you get people to play yields the results that you want, you know, so it's like when they're making the physical stuff it's...they give them a set of orders or points that you need to complete but it's like, "What we want is we want this, this and this and this, how you get there is up to you," do you know what I mean? So the things that you want are all in there but the specifics are then kind of up to the individual performers. So often it was an amalgamation. So often what would happen is that they'd be sent away in groups to work, come back, present it, we'd film it, watch it back and then they might get one group to teach it to everybody so then they would all do that and then they're like, "Okay then let's bring in like a bit of..." so you know it was like the bricks of it were offered up by the actors and then like Scott and Steven kind of built it, you know, using that so it was like... so yeah so some of it was kind of in it already, the little kind of looks

between them and stuff and there's loads between... and some stuff is stuff they came up with themselves like my favourite bit was always at the beginning when, you know, Roderigo goes to kind of basically goad Brabantio, you know, and there was a lovely little bit of business where he kind of went over and it was like, "Oh I can't do it..." and everyone was like, "Oh no go on, go on," and okay Brabantio and he's in a thing about his voice going, Brabantio and so that was like...it was just...I mean like most of it some of it was kind of there already. I think as a director you do, you have moments, you have pictures, and not all of them work, you know, like so for example one thing that you won't find and I don't know I might have put it in there was the thing about the mirror I don't know if I talk about the mirror but there was an idea at one point that when Amelia is looking in the mirror when she's delivering her speech about, you know, "What do men do when they bo-bo-boom..." that she would see a face in the mirror that we'd kind of had a thing where suddenly, you know, you could light it in a certain way that you'd get...but then it was like, "Who would she see? Does she see Iago? Does she see Othello in the mirror?" and because we couldn't decide we basically ended up going for no one so actually you get the kind of sense that she's...because we'd never figured out whether or not she'd actually had anything happen between her and Othello because it's certainly not happening now but, you know, the past is kind of like up for grabs isn't it really in terms of like what actually had happened and whatever. So that's the thing was like who was she thinking about and that was then the lovely bit where she

gets the handkerchief and she starts wearing it like Desdemona wears it because who doesn't want to be Othello's girl? Who wouldn't want to have that position? And so there was all those other little kind of bits to it as well and I think that only comes out of playing and trusting actors but then I think the actors, you know, I remember that people talk about the director's job is about creating a safe space for dangerous things to happen and I think that's really true although it can be a bit overused by people and sound a bit wanky but I think the heart of it is true that you kind of make actors feel free to sort of experiment but unless you've explained the work properly they can't. This is the thing it's like you need to give them tools with which to experiment and you can't just say, "Well do anything," because it's like, "What?" you know if I say to you, "Well you can have anything in the world," there's a lot of things to choose from, so like you can't just say to people, "Well do what you want," you know you have to sort of be...you have to set up the constructs of what it is, you know, they need to know what, as people, you know, I need to know what zero and ten is before I figure out where I live on a scale, do you know what I mean, unless I have an idea of kind of universals of sort of definite points of things, you know, I don't know what I'm working with so I think watching that kind of Seven Sins of Britain or whatever it was called and just sort of talking about the world and whatever and just talking about kind of these pubs and what they're like and everyone, even if you never dared drink in there we all know where was the rough pub where we were brought up, do you know what I

mean? Whether it was a long way away, nowhere near where you lived, nobody that you knew that went there but you knew there were pubs in the town, city, village, whatever that you grew up where you weren't supposed to go drinking, maybe you did, maybe you didn't, you know, maybe it was full of people that you never, ever socialised with, maybe it was full of your friends, whatever but so it was about the mystery that those places hold and I think actually that was really important for them was that this place be home and what was brilliant was when we went down to TR2 they'd built the set there, so for the last two weeks we had the set so we ate lunch, we kind of socialised, we did notes, all on the set. So what you started to see and I think you really saw it when it then transferred was that they were totally at home there, do you know what I mean we'd sit, eat, talk, play pool, drink, like on some of the nights we'd kind of stay there and sort of hang out and like we lived...all it needed was a bar and we would have been...do you know what I mean that would have been us but like we sort of lived on that set for a couple of weeks and I think it really shows that how comfortable they are and actually references to the place it's a home to kind of the specific thing, to the thing that you're looking after is only kind of heightened by the fact that people look...I mean there's nothing worse than seeing people who are supposed to be at home and look entirely uncomfortable on the set.

SM Can I deviate - I was fascinated about your work with Filter, can you tell me about that?

JRA Yeah I did yeah I worked with Filter on Water which was the show that they did at the Lyric and then I saw the Caucasian Chalk Circle and I've seen Twelfth Night three times now I think? So yeah it was a really...I think it was then what's really interesting is having the artistic directors in the shows and Water which is coming back because it's going to be on at the Tricycle in the new year, has got all three of them in it. So there's Ferdie, Ollie and Tim, like the three artistic directors. So yeah like they're a fascinating lot to work with because...and especially as a direct-- well you're not really a director you're kind of sort of co-collaborator because you have to be because...and working with them and I think they're now working on another show for the RSC again with David Farr so they've done lots of stuff with David Farr, lots of stuff with Sean Holmes so David directed Water. That was one of the shows that I kind of took out on tour when I was at the Lyric as well and the thing about working with them that was fascinating was about where does the power lie? Is it with the director or is it with the artistic director of the company? And what's really interesting is that in that devising process is how much do you give up or, you know, as a performer but yeah so I think the reason why they work well with David and Sean as their co-collaborators is that they're chosen because they understand the style that Filter work with and yeah so I think from them, you know, like the Twelfth Night in particular was brilliant, I mean considering that it was kind of a sort of youth thing as well and so a really fascinating thing to watch and just lovely interaction with the audience and really I think, I

mean the one criticism that people have levelled at it, both people that I know who have seen it and kind of in the press is that actually you would need to know Twelfth Night quite well to understand what's going on.

SM **Yeah. Whereas with Othello you can understand what's going on without having that...**

JRA Well this is a kind of a beginner's guide to it which is what I often think sometimes the adapted kind of Shakespeares are I mean it was like I don't know if you saw the Comedy of Errors that the RSC are doing at the moment directed by Paul Hunter and so it's like a collaboration with Told by an Idiot but really interesting but incredibly clear whereas I think in sort of traditional Filter style you have to work really hard and yeah that's the thing is like what do you make it for? I think you do sort of need to know Twelfth Night quite well. The fact that the twins are played by the same person doesn't help.

SM **Well it's fascinating because both processes have elements of collaboration**

JRA Oh God yeah, yeah, yeah. Filter's slightly more kind of anarchic in its work but I think really I think part of that is the fact that they're in it, do you know what I mean and the thing is so that like yes there's stuff that they can think through beforehand but it's almost like they don't want to go through too much because that's the director's job whereas I think for Scott and Steven that probably why they've ended up in the position that they are is that actually you need an outside eye. And I

think what these companies kind of show really clearly is, I mean if not director but the necessity to have that person playing the audience present, you know, and that's really interesting because I don't think you can do it without somebody. It's like directing a thing that you're in, bad idea, bad idea, you can't be both present and in the moment and be the outside eye, you know, but yeah so I think that's kind of why really and I think you're right, I think because, you know, yes they're not trained dancers but I think the nature of the work means that you need that level of specificity to it whereas I think the highest compliment that you can pay Filter is it was like going to a gig, bit of a shambles but bits of it were like...but you know but then there are...that's the thing but I think it's kind of deceptively anarchic, Filter, because actually in Water there's a bit in it that's about a dive and the way in which they create the dive is very specific and if they fuck up one bit of it it's completely ruined. So there is a high level of kind of...because otherwise it wouldn't be good on a really basic level, like if it was too shambolic it wouldn't be very good, you know but I think the process of making it because it's difficult to talk because I wasn't involved in any of their sort of major adaptations, like there's a couple of...there's a book, I can't remember what it's called, that is about water and about how water is a kind of a sociable molecule and how it kind of connects to the rest of the thing around it and actually the basic premise of the book is that we've become incredibly isolated and that we need to be more like water to kind of connect with others is essentially the sort of thing of it and there's the story of that and the

other story about a deep sea diver who dies because he kind of keeps on pushing and pushing and pushing to get further and further down. So they've taken these two things and essentially the main part of the play is the adaptation of this book about water, I think it's just called H₂O, I think or, and is the kind of thing about this book. So yes there was elements of adaptation but not as strongly and as specifically like on Shakespeare do you know what I mean but yeah knowing them quite well sort of just as people it's a really interesting kind of process and I think as actors, because they're in it, there's a little bit of like, "Well we'll figure that out when we get there," or, "...that's for the director to think about," which is right I think, you know, you need to kind of be...and it's not about a director being in charge it's just about understanding the role that you play and so I think that's why sometimes it can feel like the Frantic one is slightly more organised. And then, you know, because there's a sort of regimentedness that you need for the fitness regime, you know, so they would do like an hour and a half warm ups that were like exhausting, you know, I've tried a couple of times and they're like gruelling, it's like being on a sort of training camp but you need that level of fitness to sustain the performance and to get people kind of like battle ready, you know, to do it so I think that's probably why the Frantic stuff seems much more kind of organised because I think there's a couple of things, it's the fact that it's the nature of the physicality of the work and I think also the fact that the two artistic directors are directing as opposed to being in it, you know. Yeah, yeah, yeah whereas I think, you know,

that's the thing because actually in a sense I think they probably make quite similar work it's just that I think for Frantic obviously there's not...no for Filter there's not the thing about the movement, the kind of almost dance elements but actually the specificity and the level of the detail paid to the kind of the sonic sound of it is intense and just so clever, so clever and the little thing they stick on the radio in Twelfth Night to do like the shipping forecast and then talks to Viola when she first arrives is just beautiful, it's an absolutely like beautiful moment and you need to do that again and again and again and again to get it right and the moments in it and the songs and all the rest of it, and the instruments of who comes in when, like it is but I think it's much more...so I think for Frantic actually if you were to be kind of a bit more sort of didactic about it I think that like Frantic are sort of much more like dancers and Filter are a band, do you know what I mean like if you were to put it into kind of really sort of basic things, that's what it was. Now of course I think they probably wouldn't be too happy with me, either of them, but I think that's what it is because what you have, what I mean by that is that there's a level of attention to detail on physicality and a regime with Frantic that is...but you need to do the show properly, do you know what I mean, you need to be that fit to do the show properly whereas Ollie's stumbling around drinking cans of Special Brew and doing shots of Tequila and like you need a different training for that, that comes afterwards in the pub, like that's the sort of training that you need to do the show I think for them but there's that thing of, you know, musicians who say stuff to you like

I said to a musician about I'm learning the harmonica and he went, "The best way to learn it is to not learn it just like play it," and I was like, "Okay," and he went, "Well what key is it in?" and I went, "Well I don't know," so there's like a level of like assumed knowledge with musicians about tuning, about kind of pitch, about sort of key, that is inherent to them that actually is a really specific set of kind of...you know it's like classically trained pianists who then decide to kind of play in sort of rock bands or whatever it is and I think that's the thing about Filter is that there's that high level of skill but kind of passed off.

SM **That's great thank you.**

JRA Good, good, good. No you're welcome.