

Transcript of PlayCrush podcast Series 3, Episode 3 | Bronagh Gallagher, August: Osage County

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JOE MURPHY:

Hi everyone and welcome to PlayCrush, it's Joe Murphy here. Our guest this week is one of my favourite actors and human beings, the incomparable Bronagh Gallagher.

Bronagh started her extraordinary career collaborating with Michael Winterbottom on the small screen in his two dramas *Flash McVeigh* for the BBC, and *Ireland of Strangers* for Thames TV. Bronagh then broke through onto the big screen in an unforgettable performance as Bernie in Alan Parker's *The Commitments*. Bronagh has gone on to work with other film luminaries such as Quentin Tarantino in *Pulp Fiction* Stephen Frears in *Mary Reilly*, George Lucas in *Star Wars the Phantom Menace*. Recent film credits include *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society*, *Tristan + Isolde*, *Middletown*, *Faint Heart*, *Last Chance Harvey*, *The Big I Am*, *Malice in Wonderland*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Tamara Drewe*, *Albert Nobbs*, *Grabbers* and most recently Armando Iannucci's *The Personal History of David Copperfield*. She's most recently on TV been in *Brassic* series one and two for Sky and Julian Fellowes' new period drama, *Belgravia* for ITV. Other recent TV work includes *Genius: Picasso*, *Count Arthur Strong*, *You, Me and the Apocalypse*, *Moone Boy*, *The Vatican* directed by Ridley Scott, *Shameless* and *Holy Cross* for which she won Best Actress at the Biarritz International Festival, 2004. Other credits include *Poirot*, *The Peter Serafinowicz Show*, the BAFTA award-winning series *The Street*, *Accused: Helen's Story*, *Field of Blood*, *Pramface*, *The Life and the Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, all for BBC.

On stage Bronagh has worked at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the Royal Court in London and extensively with Simon McBurney for Theatre Complicité. Bronagh also appeared at the National Theatre London in the revival of the critically acclaimed *War Horse* directed by Marianne Elliott and in Tom Stoppard's *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* directed by Tom Morris and Felix Barrett. Most recently, Bronagh's Mrs Burke in Conor McPherson's *Girl from the North Country* at The Old Vic and then the Noel Coward Theatre. Bronagh is a phenomenal talent and a wonderful, funny and refreshingly open person, so it was a complete joy to get the chance to chat about life and theatre, and everything else in between with her. Bronagh's PlayCrush was *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts. *August: Osage County* is a towering achievement of the American well-made play. It was the recipient of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the play premiered at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago on June 28th 2007, and its Broadway debut was at the Imperial Theatre on the December 4th 2007, and

then the production transferred to the Music Box Theatre on April 29th 2008. When their patriarch, vanishes the Weston family must return to the three-story family home in rural Kansas to care for their afflicted mother. With rich insight and brilliant humour, Letts paints a vivid portrait of a family faced with a troubled past and an uncertain future. It's absolutely wonderful to listen to Bronagh pull this play apart and express what it means to her, so personally. So I hope you all enjoy. Thanks so much for tuning in, and here without further ado is Bronagh Gallagher –

BRONAGH GALLAGHER:

– with my play crush *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts.

JM:

Hi Bronagh, how's it going?

BG:

I'm very well Joe, how are you?

JM:

Yes, not bad thanks, not bad. Enjoying the weather getting a little bit better here so that's made me more happy than being stuck indoors behind sheets of pouring rain...

BG:

Yes, and the sun is coming out more and more, and the evenings are longer which I think always gives us a bit of an exhale, yep it's very nice.

JM:

Absolutely... I'm not looking too forward to the fact I'm about to lose an hour's sleep at the weekend but you know I'll do it for longer evenings, for sure.

BG:

Get into the bed earlier Joe that's what Coco Chanel used to say, you need it for the beauty sleep. An hour in the bed is worth a fortune in the in the Selfridges... that's what I always say.

JM:

I mean I'm upset you think I need beauty sleep but okay, no that's fine, that's fine.

BG:

You'll feel better, yeah you'll look better and you'll feel better, Joe.

JM:

Yeah I mean God, I need to, so yeah it's a good idea, I'll take that prescription. And you're back in Ireland now, is that right, back in the home country?

BG:

Yes I'm back in Dublin, I've just been in Manchester for the last sort of five months on and off... got a little break at Christmas... I was over there doing a comedy series for Sky, *Brassic*, which was a kind of a miracle really to be working during Covid and, you know, we didn't take a day for granted as regards the community that we had there and the paramedics testing us twice a week and you know it was kind of a very welcome, blessed kind of experience to be honest, Joe, because otherwise we all know the isolation and the sort of monotony is what's really challenging people and then obviously just trying to stay healthy and keep everybody safe... so, yeah it was a great experience.

JM:

I mean that's amazing, five months. So you sort of really worked through the second big lockdown I suppose? What was it like on the inside?

BG:

Well you know they were looked after us very well. I mean the first few months I found that very challenging because I was just in an apartment on my own in Manchester, and you know you're saying all those things, so lucky to be working, so lucky to be working during this, but I think for a lot of people you know the term of the of the last few years that we all are using a lot more frequently, the mental health side of things and thankfully people are much more confident and capable of talking about it but the isolation is what was really challenging because you're terrified of becoming in contact with Covid or being the person that stops the shoot, which it did on two occasions, we downed tools because somebody was positive and tragically we actually lost someone during the second units' shoot, we lost a lovely unit driver. Yeah and so you know the reality is obviously very real when that happens. So being on your own was tough. So I think the second time around we ended up, we were a lot more sort of prepared for what was in store you know, you get up, you go to work, you get your test, if you're clear that day you go into work the next day, then you go home and you know what was expected of you from the production was to stay inside your room, essential shops that was it, and just stay safe, which is what we just learned to do you know. So you know, it was tough but as I say you know I didn't take it for granted for a second, that I was I was bloody lucky to be there working.

JM:

So where did this like start for you Bronagh like this obviously you're kind of filming *Brassic* for Sky, just you know refreshing myself on your credits and CV before we started the podcast, it's an extraordinary journey, an absolutely incredible career that's just kind of jam-packed with highlights that in anyone else's career just one of them would be a highlight, but you're sort of they're just scattered across your CV. Where did that start, like how did you get into this, what is this career been about for you and where did it start - and where's it taking you?

BG:

It started in my primary school I'd say. And you know I was about five, I think and I was doing the junior... Christmas, maybe it was a Christmas show... I'm not really sure if it was a Christmas show, but the local school that we were all at, my sister Louise and my brother Paul and I, and there was a great love and a great community of music and singing and arts in Derry where I'm from, and people found great comfort in music and arts and classical music and show bands as well. So I think I just came from a family that loved music and my grandfather loved music and sort of amateur dramatics when he was growing up in Derry he would have been involved in that and you know I remember a very vivid moment when we were doing the school play I was about five, I was the gingerbread queen, I was in my sister's first Communion dress and a homemade crown. My mother made all the gingerbread costumes, I was kind of gutted because I wanted to be the toy soldier boy who had the red patent shoes and the red hat and the blue trousers and the black coat with the gold buttons, that was the look. But I was in my sister's first Communion dress singing 'One day in the palace of the queen, the chef did a marvellous thing', right? I remember the song. And my friend was the gingerbread boy, my mother made all the costumes, bar the first Communion dress, and I remember standing on the stage and I had to sing my song and I remember going 'this is amazing! Everyone's looking at me everyone's looking at me! Oh I could get used to this', so I had about five-year-old Gloria Swanson moment and then boom that was that you know. So like that to me has never dissipated, that moment of magic, it was like a gas you know bunsen burner that will never go out until I'm six feet under, it was magic it was just pure magic, and that moment has never left me, of theatre and going into the theatre, watching theatre, watching great theatre... which I've been lucky enough to watch a lot of you know and thank you for everybody that have worked we've been part of you know some beautiful magical productions, so it started there and from that that was my sort of you know, chase the car at the end until I was about 15 and when it came to actually the crunch, which was actually knuckling down and doing some proper academia, which I never really gave much thought to... I was always into music and arts and drawing and singing and whatever, but come around 15, 16 after being involved in a lot of local dance stuff in Derry, and the fish and Tony O'Donnell and Susan McMillan, these wonderful local drama and dance teachers that I was involved in the shows, I auditioned for about six drama schools in England, I didn't get under any, and so from that moment...

JM:

No! I don't believe that.

BG:

Yeah I didn't get into any, I know, they're all crying now, Joe, I hope they're all listening! What a waste!

[They laugh]

In fairness, I don't think they could understand me! I really don't, when I think back now and listen to my accent, I mean obviously my accent's not changed a whole lot, but you know, I just don't think they really thought no one's going to understand that child... so anyway, everybody's journey is different, that's the way I look at it, but I do say that I do say that loudly and proudly in a lot of the British theatres that I have worked in! Yeah I dine out on that now actually.

JM:

I mean at the time, did it like hurt at the time, like did you have this kind of great kind of bold robust philosophical kind of version, or did it sting a bit at the time like how did how did 15, 16 year old Bronagh feel about that?

BG:

Like I was devastated you know, I was. But then, but then darling! It didn't take me didn't take me long too, I moved swiftly along! No, but then I got a place actually in the National Youth Theatre and this gorgeous man Nick Hedges gave me a place in the National Youth Theatre, and I was all set to go that summer, literally the bag was packed, and I got a call from my friend in Derry, Margot Harkin, who was making a film called *Hushaby Baby*, about teenage pregnancies in Derry city, and a character from that, and through Margot, who I babysat for she told me that a young British director called Michael Winterbottom was coming to Derry and he wanted to meet local Derry girls, Donegal girls and boys to make his first film coming out of drama school, or sorry film school, so I auditioned for Michael and I got a part and that was the summer of '89, and from that didn't go, I was like no 'Michael Winterbottom, I can't do your film, I am going to the National Youth Theatre in London!'. Well you know and I mean I had nobody back then to sort of speak about it or ask about stuff for advice you know my mum and dad, didn't know what to do, but luckily Nick Hedges was so brilliant and he sort of acted, and gave me the advice that a good agent would, and he said look you can come back next year, this is a great opportunity, so why don't you do the movie? So I did the film and I you know had a wonderful time on it, we worked in Donegal for a few weeks and it was a beautiful drama, a four piece sort of drama for I think it was like for ITV educational school programmes. It was a really beautiful wee piece about tribalism and Derry and Donegal and rival kids ganging up on each other and you know not understanding kids from different backgrounds, it was really lovely, supposed to educate kids at school about acceptance and stuff, of other you know different kids. And then I got a part in a film sort of directly after that, I got an agent in Dublin Dara O'Malley, and then I got a part in a film about the Guilford Four, and Giuseppe Conlon, and I met the wonderful Barry McGovern and Stella McCosker and I worked with them and then I did the another little job with Michael I think, and then I did *The Commitments*.

JM:

Ye, the commitments though that very little known movie... I mean was that, from the outside *The Commitments* looked like a sort of sea change moment, in a way. Is that what it felt like at the time or is that just what it looks like externally?

BG:

It did very much I mean you know, I was only talking to a lovely young academic recently, he's writing a book about *The Commitments* actually, in Irish film at the time and you know, I didn't know this but just after *The Commitments* to the impact that it had in Ireland. Number one, not just obviously opening the floodgates for what we know you have as a thriving film industry and you know, thankfully it's still been able to function during the pandemic, but after *The Commitments* the Irish film board was reinstated, because it had gone. So that's the impact of *The Commitments*, that's how big it was obviously and you know there was a few producers got together and went to the Irish film board, whoever you know the sort of a state of it or whatever was left behind, and said you know we need to get this up and running again so you know *The Commitments* was a was a massive meteor in the Ireland for so many reasons, but definitely for myself it you know triggered an international, I suppose, viewing where people see me in that environment working with a master filmmaker like Alan Parker. And you know but it was an interesting one, Joe, because I went to Hollywood with the whole film you know, it was a massive game changer, we were kind of you know famous in Ireland overnight. But still I had this love and this passion for theatre and I felt very under qualified, I felt that I hadn't trained, I don't know why I had this love of dance I wanted to go to Italia Conti, I wanted to go to you know RADA, I wanted to go to Central you know. I had this romantic ideal that I would train and you know tread the boards, you know, and that to me was a classic that was the you know the Judi Dench, the Maggi Smiths, you know that's what Lawrence Olivier did you know, that's what you know Martha Graham did, you know trained and I had this passion and I just felt when I get that training and then nobody can tell me I'm not good or nobody can tell me I'm not capable.

So I think because I was from you know, a very troubled city but I had incredible parents, I have incredible parents, bless their hearts. And they were so encouraging and they recognised that I had a passion for it and some sort of ability and they really were so encouraging and supportive and you know I was so blessed to have that in my school had Cora King, Korita Kier, teachers in my school, Mrs Martin, that were so encouraging and recognised that I had some ability and you know really helped me understand that mature speech, literature in a certain way, work on my voice so you know went to Hollywood did *The Commitments* PR, did a little bit of moseying around, but I just felt like a sort of a real you know square peg in a round hole. I just felt out of place, I never felt like I was that kind of look that they wanted, I didn't you know I suppose when I look back now I just wasn't confident that it was a place that I was going to thrive in or get work, and I wanted to go to theatre school. And I came back during the

promotion and I joined the Abbey Theatre which was one of my dreams, and I did about two years in the Abbey and then from the Abbey, went back to LA to visit a friend with another friend and met tarantino and did a little job in *The Commitments* and then from that came back to Ireland, no I came back to London and joined a co-production with Ninagawa and the Royal Shakespeare Company. I found a Thelma Holt production and met a lifelong friend there Sweetpea Slight who was a Thelma's assistant and ended up living with Sweetpea in the most extraordinary house in Westbourne Terrace and you know Sweetpea went on to write her own marvellous magical book about that time of our lives, *Pass me the Urgent Biscuits*, the book was called, and from then on I was surrounded by you know theatre lovers, and you know Sweetpea started in the National when she was 19 as an assistant to Thelma, and just you know they were my crew in London, they educated me what was going on, from that then you know filming, doing bits and pieces, I ended up joining Complicité. So I met Simon McBurney through my darling agent Penny Wesson who was my agent at the time from I was 19 until I was about 32. And Penny says this is the guy you need to meet, and you know to this day I have never worked with anybody as extraordinary as Simon, and I feel that I got the training the five years on and off that I worked with Simon and Complicité and Lilo Baur and Annabel Arden and all the extraordinary teachers and actors that I worked with then, that was the training that I never got.

JM:

I mean, what that is it's so much to unpack there, that such an incredible like bolt of life there. I also love the idea that you do *The Commitments*, you work with Tarantino and you're like worried that you want to go to drama school, and I can just imagine every person in drama school going 'All I want to do is be in a film like *The Commitments* and work with Quentin Tarantino, so that impostor syndrome thing is really toxic isn't it?

BG:

Yep it very much was, and I have you know looked at those areas in my life... I mean, I remember with the beautiful Jamie Lloyd before we did *The Faith Machine* in the Royal Court and the night before the night we were open and I was up on the Chelsea, King's Road buying you know booze and whatever flowers and chocolates for everybody on the night, and I met Jamie in the aisle and M&S on the King's Road and he was like so how are you feeling being open tonight and I started to cry and I was like 'I'm gonna let everybody down I'm terrible!'. I don't know, like utter imposter syndrome, I had an utter lack of confidence you know which is a really interesting thing that I've really looked at in the last few years, and just like well you know, you only have one shot at it, so yeah recognise that as we all do you know, but I think if this pandemic experience hasn't taught us all that it ain't no dress rehearsal and you're allowed to feel insecure, you're allowed to feel that you're not qualified, but I mean you know it's not going to do you any good so do we better work on it and embrace the moment and be confident and practice self-confidence and lack of worth, the

lack of self-esteem in all areas of your life, you know. So it's been a very interesting journey and I do look back and I just think God, you know... but regardless of all those feelings I just got in there and got stuck in and did it you know.

JM:

Yeah absolutely, and I think I think that's so important it's also recognised, that probably everybody else is feeling like that, I think we sometimes have this myth that you're the only one who feels insecure, scared and everyone else is nailing it and actually I think you know as I grow older, I'm like oh man everyone's just faking it until you make, it so they're gonna do it.

BG:

Yeah, I mean I remember this beautiful actor I worked with in the Abbey and I was only young you know, I was 19 or whatever, and I remember one night we were doing the show and I remember, bless his heart, he had what was called to me, I'd never heard it before, he had stage fright. And I remember going what are they going to do, and they said, well his understudy will go on you know, or whoever it was covering him, and I remember kind of going coming home and thinking 'he had stage fright... you know what is that, you know like do we need to get the fire brigade?'. You know, what is a stage fright, you know really like so young and totally you know ignorant of what it was.

And you know and I look back now and the poor man, he had just lost his wife a few months before, it you know you know pretty recent he lost his wife, and obviously somebody thought this is a good idea to get him into the theatre and get him up on the stage and get his confidence back, but of course there was such a delayed sense of grief and it wasn't processed and you know we live in a country, you know I'll only speak for my own country here but we live in a country where there's mammoth grief and mammoth trauma and a lot of very you know dysfunctional setups and we only know at the stage where people are talking about mental health, grief, dealing with grief, dealing with addiction, dealing with you know the legacy and the horrors that the all of our history politically has left behind, and currently and the church what that has left behind and currently incapable of owning up to what they've what they've done in the horrors that they've caused in this country so I live in a country where I'm very conscious of that so you know, and in those days and only I can see a change 30 years later there was no grief counselling, there was no counselling for people to go to help you know and I realised now what that is all those moments in life where you think I'm lost, I'm lost, I'm lost... now we have a language that people are hopefully coherent of, they have a capability and an understanding and an empathy and an openness. They want to understand it and that is delayed grief, or lack of confidence would be coming from a place that you were a second-class citizen and that was very much my case growing up in Derry. I was a catholic from the bog side, I went to a particular school, I was not academic, I was not from a wealthy part of the city, my parents were an engineer and a hairdresser.

So the idea of me going to drama school, don't be silly. But what I had was incredible encouragement from my parents and my school and my teachers, and what I did was I earned their confidence and their respect through public speaking and challenging, not even aware that I was, but we challenged the so-called ruling class that didn't believe that the Catholics were of equal status to them and my class were very good at public speaking, and they were very academic girls, and when the right headmistress came into our school she encouraged us to go to get our A-Levels and our O-Levels and to get to university, which there was a flurry of my girlfriends did, so it's about confidence, life's about confidence.

JM:

Definitely. And how much damaging I suppose is that the systems that rob you of that at such a young age before you've even had a chance to kind of figure any of that out.

BG:

Absolutely you know, and blackmail you know... brainwashing, sorry I use the term brainwashing you know, like that you know the fear, the state fear in collusion with government fear, all the fear that I was, that was you know projected onto people and brainwashed, blackmailed and abusive, utterly abusive, it was definitely there. But my parents weren't religious in a sense, you know, my father respected the church because it was a place for people to go for comfort and support, but they were no dozers about the, what you know Catholicism is very different to actually, people that put themselves in a place of power and acted God-like, so yeah we were in a way raw but you know you have to overcome those things and move on and that's what I chose to do.

JM:

Yeah definitely, and is that what is that, I mean what advice would you give to the other Bronaghs out there now who I suppose are 15, 16 who are feeling that way? Is it just get stuck in, and do what you want, ignoring what everyone else is saying, and that you do have a right to be there, is that the advice?

BG:

Well you know I do actually believe, thankfully, that young people have a lot more confidence now and the idea of becoming a success is not something that kids don't relate to anymore. There's more and more and more of us able to access you know the wonderful things that we see on, you know, the great sides of social media and the positive side where people can become you know successful just through doing what they do on their Instagrams, whatever, but you know - believe in yourself and do not let other people's criticism deter you. That is their projection, that is their, that's their own stuff they need to work out and you know find positive people. All you need is one positive person that's going to encourage you and see your talent and give you the advice and you know steer you in that direction. Children are so porous and young people and

you know you can't have your dreams obviously crushed by the wrong people and the negative people, even if they're people in your own family, which I didn't have, but I can certainly see friends that did.

But you know don't waste your time thinking that you're not good enough get out there and see if you are, and learn and listen and embrace it and study your work and be prepared for your auditions and learn your lines, and look after yourself and become the best version of yourself that you are, just be the best version of yourself that you can be you know.

JM:

I love that, I love the idea of just focusing on what you what you can do, but also the idea that you don't have to take a criticism to heart - that can be about the person making the criticism nothing to do with you.

BG:

100%, I mean I did a lovely chat, I had to do a talk there about two years ago with friends of mine and Derry who are all social workers and they work with the most extraordinary group of young people who have all come through the care system. And a friend of mine, Bronagh, also is called, Bronagh asked me to become involved and it was this it was an organisation that they had created themselves, the social workers, within the care system to award young people like a certificate of achievement, and these are kids coming from the most horrific backgrounds and a lot of them growing up looking after their own little siblings you know once they get to the age that they can legally look after them. So you know you'd have 16 year olds rearing their 10 year old brothers or sisters because they didn't want them to go under the care system, so you know as tough as it gets basically, and you know from very dysfunctional, abusive backgrounds. And I was up on the stage and you know they asked me to come and make a speech to the kids or somebody and they seen in their eyes in the city as a you know a person of inspiration or whatever which I always kind of go, really? But okay, let's do this... I'm up on the stage and you know my friend said, you know you can prepare a speech, and I thought you know what, there's nothing I'm going to prepare until I hear what these kids have to say, because I I'm not going to talk at them or down to them because I can't begin to understand what their upbringing has been like and I'm not going to be patronising or condescending, I'm just going to listen which is an art I believe we all need to study and give a lot more time to in our lives. Just listen to what people have to say. So I listened to them all, seen them all you know, I mean it was an incredibly moving experience to see these kids, what they've achieved you know, and some of them have their you know some come in with academic achievements some come in with training as engineers as hairdressers, as beauty therapists and sports therapists, and you know incredible achievements and I just stood on the stage and I was chatting and sang a song with my cousin and I just spoke directly from my heart and I don't know how I kind of got away with it, but I did. Not got away with it, but I was deeply honest and I just loved it, and I just thought

in everybody's chest if you visualise you have a wee light bulb and no matter how much abuse or how much toxic language people use and they're covering that up say symbolically, like it's mud going on top of your light bulb, on top of your light bulb, caking that light bulb in mud and that nobody else has any idea that your little light bulb is blown away under your heart, no matter what anybody says you remember that that wee bulb is always there, and it's always glowing. And the amount of the kids that went to the social workers that day and for like a year afterwards, we were meant to do something last year just as lockdown happened, they all said that's the thing that kept me going you know, and that's what I would say to anybody and that's what I do myself if I've had moments where I just think 'Oh I didn't do that you know, I couldn't do that, I'm not gonna...' that to me is a lovely visualisation to do you know.

JM:

Yeah definitely, and that idea that people can cover up your light but they can't dim it, that's a really powerful message.

BG:

Yeah, because you know in this business alone you know to me it's a symbolism and a little message for life, because you know in this game that we're around it's such a competitive difficult game, and it's such a wonderful life as well the life of the actor, the entertainer, but it is synonymous with rejection and sometimes struggle and poverty you know. And you know when you see people up there getting awards, and you see people up there getting their you know recognition or whatever, that means to me, awards don't mean anything, but the symbolism of an award to me, it's much deeper than that. To me, awards are the moment that someone is acknowledged for keeping going, they kept going you know, that success, just keep going because everybody has a story no matter who you are, no matter how famous or magic or wonderful or rich or beautiful or perfect, everybody has a story. Now don't get me wrong, some people's journey is just one big you know rainbow, some people's is an absolute you know crocodile swamp, and you know you just gotta keep going, and that's the key, but you know take it standing up and just keep on trucking because that's the key, you know no matter what, that's what makes us the actors and the performers that we are, and the interesting people. Don't let anything you know knock you off your pedestal or off your stool, keep on going you know. The journey is in the learning and how you take it you know, don't let it, what's the word, you know don't let it basically define who you are, you define who you are you know.

JM:

Yeah definitely and have you, because I mean it's amazing and sort of spine tingling when you describe it like that, and it feels really kind of calming and inspirational in the same place, but it feels like maybe that knowledge or viewpoint you've got there is hard won. Have there been those times where that's been challenged or you've found it difficult?

BG:

Oh, 100%! I mean we laughed so much on *Brassic*, because I was you know you know a good wee bit older than most of the actors, and I just kept saying '30 years in the business darling, 30 years in the business'. And I've been doing it 30 years you know, and I've learned a lot and there's been moments where you know I was really down on my work and skint, and not you know, consistently getting knocked off my pedestal, and thinking that you've got something in the bag and then boom you don't, and you know really looking forward to productions and then them not being what you thought they would be, and finding out that the person's not to the person you thought they were or whatever, you know.

But you know you just got to take it on the chin, and get up and keep going because you want to do what you do you know and be human, and my brother always said a brilliant thing - acknowledge your disappointment. And it's such a brilliant thing to do because it's then not going to be pocketed somewhere where I haven't dealt with the grief of it you know, but I've been there in experiences and walked up red carpets and went 'it wasn't always like this, it wasn't like this two years ago', you know so I don't take it for granted. And you know I've been in a place where you know I have had to leave my home and rent it out and go and live somewhere else to try and make ends meet you know, but I don't take it for granted anymore. And what I do is I work hard and I give it the best shot and I know that jobs that I don't get, I go 'Well you can't phone that, Bro you know, or you didn't really you weren't rock solid on those lines' and all that kind of stuff, but you know more times than enough and I'm going well I gave that my best shot, because you know that's what you got to do, and you got to respect the people that you're working with respect the agents. And hopefully if you're happy enough to be with the agents that you want, you know respect that they know what they're doing as well you know big time. But yeah, you know I've had all those moments and that's why I get so excited when I see friends that I know their personal journey has been really hard, and there's been really brutal moments and I really do when I see them keep them going and getting up and just doing rock and roll performances, I'm just like yeah baby, you know it's good, own it you know.

JM:

Yeah, and I feel like it's interesting because that kind of keeping going, that kind of living hard and rising high feels like that really connects to your PlayCrush you know *August: Osage County* because I'm like if that's not a play about just keep going through the attrition of life, like I don't know like what is, right?

BG:

Oh I mean, where do you start there? You know, I'm just going to say 'masterpiece' before we start because okay, American theatre as good as it gets. I was extremely blessed and I do not take one moment for granted that I shared the time that these exquisite actors performed this in the National during the *War Horse* production that we did in 2008, and they were there from the Steppenwolf

company, the company with Tracy Letts in the National in the Lyttelton and we were able to see this play in it three times you know so to me *August: Osage County* is one of the most brilliantly transcribed, dysfunctional family eulogies that there is. And you know, it is a play that is basically about choosing to be the victim, creating the cycle again and again and again, or making the choice to change the dysfunction that you come from, and you know for me having seen that play the times that we did, it was not just staggering to listen to the writing but to see the performances from you know Deanna and Amy Morton who played Barbara and the mother Violet... to see those performances in that theatre, I will never forget it. I will never forget the magic of those actors and they had the most gruelling schedule, they did not have any time off where we were in repertoire. We did a couple of days off for a couple days on, they were on every day I think they were there for ,I think they were there for three months.

It's the most extraordinary performance and you know did this, to bring friends to that show that had never been to the theatre before, to witness where you know friends of mine who were builders from Kilburn, and they sat in that audience and they howled and they cried, and they were astonished and the look on their faces watching theatre... as good as it gets to me, it was like us as children watching theatre you know, it's something you never can recreate because films are always there obviously we can put them on, but now I realise when I've seen those great performances and people speak to me about performances from *Complicite*, that I was extremely lucky to be involved in, or *War Horse* as well, or *Girl from the North Country*, you know, that it's something that's in the air, it's forever in the ether, those magic performances you know. It was a masterpiece.

JM:

Yeah, I suppose the transitory nature of them is what makes them special right like you have to have been there, otherwise that thing won't exist anymore. And I agree, I think this play is a total masterpiece. And I find it really interesting that it's for you it's about cycles, and whether you're consumed by them or break them, which I think is a kind of really beautiful way of looking at the play. And did that, when you saw it is it just you know that you sort of are viewing this as you say masterpiece consummate skill, incredible performance skill, or was it resonating with you in your own life ,did it resonate with some choices that you wanted to make or hadn't made, or was it more like from a distance, just the sort of sheer kind of skill and brilliance of it bowled you over?

BG:

I think both. I think that the choice at the end the Barbara makes, you know once again, I'll never not rave about Amy's performance in that show, and obviously created the role with Tracy Letts and Steppenwolf. As they say in Ireland, she was a weapon, which I always think is such a brilliant way to describe Violet Westoon and the character played so impeccably by Deanna Dunagan, I think Deanna was I think she was in her early 80s at the time. I mean her performance, like they were doing you know, this is like a two and a half year

show, this lady was giving this performance twice a day some days, and you were sitting in the audience going 'I'm exhausted doing *War Horse* and I'm getting chunks of breaks in between you know! These actors didn't leave the stage. So you know the genius of this production, you have this incredible set of this beautiful you know Midwestern American house, so from the top down you know there was beautiful kind of sepia lights in each kind of window, so this the whole stage was filled with this house, like a doll's house, and you know you had the beautiful native American actress in the attic, almost like the sort of to me like the sort of spiritual, the brain, the consciousness of America sitting at the top of the house, and she's a character of utter peace, just utter peace throughout the play – dignified, clear, coherent and you know there's so many brilliant Tracy Letts' quotes in amongst the play, he's basically saying you know America you know it's a shit show, it's over you know, and talks about the genocide and talks about all the you know the horrific things that have happened in order to you know create what the America that we know now.

I just found the quote there earlier it's so brilliant, 'This country...' - This is Barbara saying this at the end – 'This country, this experiment, America, this hubris, what a lament. If no one saw it go, here today, gone tomorrow, dissipation is actually much worse than cataclysm'. So, when you see this woman who's obviously got a prescription drug, very serious prescription drug, habit, which obviously is a massive problem in America and having spent a wee bit of time there I didn't know you know really what Vicodin was and all these prescription drugs that people are addicted to now, but it is obviously you know, epidemic kind of scale at the minute, and you know that the drug pharmaceutical companies you know... so this woman is addicted to these pills and the dysfunction and the pain that she's caused throughout her life, and all her pains and all her wounds of her life, her dysfunction, she never chose to really look at it. She wasn't able to deal with it.

So you've got these incredible storylines going on throughout it, dysfunction, addiction you know, basically you know, genocide, colonisation, all these huge huge subjects that Tracy Letts flooding through this play, in this incredible set that you walk in and you think 'Oh this is going to be good; you know and then he just starts throwing the punches and the audience are getting the punch after the punch it's like you sit there like a little plum in the audience and by the time you come out someone's just stood on your head, that's what it felt like. But you know the clarity that he delivers these stories, that everybody in that audience could at some point relate to and you know, choosing whether to repeat the cycle of addiction. Do you repeat the cycle of abuse, of dysfunction? You know, all the strange relationships that go on in between, but also the hilarity and the utter genius of the humour and the punchlines that are coming, you know, just when you need it just when you can't take any more. I mean you're sick, you're sick in that audience, looking at that family when that when the kitchen, when the after the funeral that they all sit around and have a meal, I mean it's just you can't believe how vitriolic and how much of a weapon you know the mother is,

and then there's just lines where you're on the floor laughing ,you know, so it's just it's extraordinary that it can just you know roll it all into one ball and just throw it in your head, you know.

JM:

Yeah definitely, and I think it was ridiculous, I saw that I saw the production at the National as well, and you really get this sense that they also kind of never stood a chance. I think when you see the native American woman, you see that house that somehow feels toxic and cancerous in itself, whilst also being kind of beautiful and colonial and it's just so weird, all the contradictions that are in the house. You just think like these poor people, just no one ever stood a chance like the world, the American system, that initial genocide that that whole country is built on just kind of swallowed these people whole, right? And you're just watching and trying to fight their way out of it and I remember when Ivy left, Ivy obviously is the daughter, to sort of think she's in a relationship with her cousin, but ends up being in a relationship with her half brother, like, but still the empowered choice to leave and do it anyway, that was so interesting to get me to a point where I was like emotionally I was like yes I think you should go and have that relationship with your half brother like what a weird place to be emotionally, but I was like I genuinely think that's the best thing for everybody.

It's so... I just thought that emotional complexity where it gets you to and who you're siding with and who you're empathetic with is a kind of mark of genius and I feel like the Americans are better than anyone this idea of like the family unit as country like as a representation of the whole country, yeah I feel like Tracy Letts just nailed that.

BG:

100%, there's no stone left unturned you know, and that's so true I mean I think for Ivy and her relationship with little Charlie, it was the only comfort in life she had, and it was not going to do her any... any joy of any form could be found living under the roof with such a toxic abusive victim of a mother, so you know whether or not she did go to New York and stayed there with him, you know, whether or not it became a fully fledged relationship like you know they all warned her against, and obviously you know all the brutal stuff that she talks about, the hysterectomy and that that she had cervical cancer, you know - was any of that true, I often wonder. Just so she knew that she wouldn't if they were cousins you know, she wouldn't be having a child with her cousin, and you know so yeah I mean, you know what what's worse do you run away and find comfort with somebody or stay in a house and die slowly? So, you know I mean it was, it was it was an extraordinary setting and I think the fact that that life couldn't survive, they're not even tropical birds you know, the great story to start with the parakeets and they basically say even the wee birds died there that you know the tropical... but just how unhealthy toxic environments are for people, obviously, and nothing will grow and you'll just either become in the cycle or you'll become estranged from your family. And I think when Beverly, who you really do love by,

the end of the... sorry, Barbara, who you really do love by the end of the play, I do anyway. You know you just want her to be happy and obviously her husband's left and he's left for younger woman and a lot of the stuff that the mother's saying is true unfortunately you know, and you know that we do understand maybe a bit more about men and women, about what makes us tick and midlife crisis and men maybe do you have a menopause as well you know different to what we experience as women but... you really want her to survive you know she's kind of like the American dream, you want her to survive, you want her to get help and get out, and she does she leaves you know. Once she realises how you just you know what a nasty piece of work her mother is and that maybe the father's suicide could have been prevented, she just gets up and goes and it's a great moment of liberty you know.

JM:

There's that there's that killer line, I think isn't there, earlier where she says 'I wasn't the one that told you, Ivy, it was mom'. And Ivy says 'There's no difference'.

BG:

[Bronagh imitates the character] 'There's no difference'... yeah

JM:

Oh my god, and then you're just sort of begging for Barbara to get out of it aren't you, just like please don't let this consume you. But it strikes me, that it does fall back to what we were just talking about before in terms of the idea of your lightbulb right inside each of those characters, and how smothered it can get, and I feel particularly for Ivy but all of them really are accepting the criticisms that everyone else is giving them as truth, and in a way the journey, the play in a way feels something exactly as you were articulating earlier which is to go, you don't have to accept those criticisms, that's probably about the person doing the criticising.

BG:

It always is, I think it always is. It's just having the skill, the education, the help and the knowledge to know that that's projection and you know what other people think of you, all the classic lines that we know, what other people think of you is none of your business. And the judgement is you know, judgement is other people's ego, you know, the ego is the image one has of oneself all the great lines that I love reading when I read things about the brain and spirituality and the ego the human ego, when you read the great you know the great work of the people that wrote about egos, that's other people's opinions and other people's image of you and you know the hardest thing a human being can do is look at themselves and their behaviour and their toxicity intake, their projection on to other people and you know how deep insecure, how deeply insecurity can run in somebody, and a lot of the time deep, deep insecurity in a human being causes

such enormous pain in others, because that person actually has no self-worth and therefore they'll be damned if they're going to let somebody else feel worthy.

So it's a huge study of psychology, obviously of human behaviour, a huge study of that and you know the great line at the beginning when they're heading under the house, the mother and daughter are talking and you know you do see great hope for Barbara and her daughter Jean, and she really wants to help her but you know Barbara's experiencing her husband leaving her, having an affair with a younger woman, and she says to the daughter 'Thank God we can't tell the future, we'd never get out of bed'.

[Joe laughs]

You know, you're just like 'ain't that the truth girl!'. There's all those wonderful lines, you know it's just it's just brilliant, I mean the darkness of families and the inner truths and the incest, the children, you know wedded, yeah you know the children born under you know out of wedlock, you know your brothers your cousin your mothers your sister, you know all this kind of stuff you know really a lot of us you know we never discuss but we all know, that's a lot closer sometimes than you want you know, human behaviour, it's ugly, you know it's wonderful and it's beautiful and it's fabulous, but you know you know we're extraordinary creatures and you know capable of extraordinary beauty and great art and great music and extraordinary literature that lasts for hundreds and hundreds of years, you know, people that can write about human behaviour that we're still performing when we get back to... you know hundreds of years later these plays are still being performed you know and this play to me is one of those, one of those testaments, the great study of human behaviour.

JM:

Yeah I think that's right, and exactly as you just said there I think that it's not just about learning that you don't have to accept other people's criticism of you, and I suppose that's Ivy's journey, is her going 'oh yeah I don't have to be the version of me these people want me to be' but also I suppose for Barbara it's about exactly as you said realising the damage you're causing yeah by not having your own shit together, like what that's doing to the people around you, and how that crushes them.

BG:

Yeah, awareness you know, awareness is... it's all these words you know that are very hip at the moment you know, mental health awareness, mindfulness, you know all these words that people are using which is great to hear, and you know kids are doing meditation at school and kids are doing mindfulness, and I'm seeing these hilarious videos of my friends kids meditating, but like that's the way it should be. When you are aware of how you speak to people, when you're aware of your lack of awareness, when you actually have the respect and the patience and the decency to ask somebody how are you, how are you, when

you've got the time out of your own day not to be so self-possessed and obsessed and self-concerned with your day that you actually might be able to stop and ask somebody how are you getting on, you know, and that's what we hopefully have had in the last year - revolution of mindfulness, and all these words that we're using. It's basically respect, it's human respect for other people and when you respect other people and even if they're a bit different, and you've got the intelligence or you achieve the intelligence, the emotional intelligence, because you care, and you want to care about other people, about the difference, about the colour of somebody's skin or the what outfit they're wearing that's different to yours or the fact that somebody speaks a different language, or maybe can't speak, or has a disability of some sort, when you have that - then that's respect, and the problem with the planet is that we don't have enough of it.

Because everything's about human beings, Joe, it's not about cities or depressed, or 'that city is very depressed' or 'that place is very depressed', it's not about the place it's about the people in the place, because people make the place, people leave the energy behind. People talk about houses, 'I walked into that house, there was a bad vibe' - well you know what it really is is energy you know and the reason why we're floating about this big ball, you know, controlled by the sun and the moon and the whole of, you know, the world's magic that it is, it's because we are guests here and it's about respect, and we need to get back to what the Native Americans talked about and that was worshipping the sun and worshipping the moon and worshipping actually what's keeping us all here because all there is just human beings' energy and that's why we're here you know, so I think if we can come out of this pandemic with just a wee bit more respect for people and the fact that this is a whole lot bigger than we all thought it was a year ago, that this is a game changer, this is a paradigm shift in human beings, we have a chance now to change things around. It doesn't matter how much money or wealth or power you have you know, we're all human beings in the same human race.

JM:

Yeah definitely, absolutely. It's so amazing to hear you talk so passionately about it, and it just completely resonates with the play I think, because I feel like that's the humanity of the play, right, is because they talk about like the plains, I think at some point, the plains are a spiritual place, and obviously the house, and all that but really you sort of think like okay, Violet and Mattie Fae' parents abuse them, they've gone on to emotionally abuse their kids, it's just what people will do to each other, I suppose in the name of their own egos and their own insecurities and I think that's a really beautiful vision of the play that it's sort of saying have the courage to break out of those cycles, but I suppose also muster the courage to like look in the mirror and be like what are you perpetuating, what damage are you doing?

BG:

Yeah because when the coast is clear we can move on but the bottom line is for

so many of us we don't own our own behaviour. When you own up and you can woman up and you can man up to owning your own behaviour then we can talk about it, then we can move on you know. But I mean for any country that's, and these are massive you know social issues that we're still going to you know we're going to talk about until we're extinct, but you know owning up actually you know to how countries came to be the countries that they are, you know, and if people in America still want to operate from a place of utter utter ignorance and still want to carry a flag supporting slavery then you know we don't we really don't need those people around. And that's the problem, that you know these people have made that choice because they're too afraid to see that life can be different because they they're too afraid of their own identity and their nationality and when you really know the truth, that brilliant Shakespeare line 'The woman does protest too much', you know, 'The lady does protest too much' you know when people keep protesting about something they know deep in their heart that they're in the wrong, but people are terrified to own themselves and own up and you know be the person to say 'right I messed up here' you know because identity you know, what is identity, what does it actually mean?

Who are you, what it means is you're actually afraid to stand on your own and you know being part of a group a group of hate or a group of you know racial abusers or whatever it is you want to talk about, that's when people think they're stronger, they're not they're actually you know, although they're doing all the damage and they're perpetrating horrific crimes and violence on people, but you know to stand on your own and to be a strong individual and doesn't matter you know whether you believe or not, being able to stand up on your own is really where the great bravery comes from and if people want to get under the... that's where we have movement, and that's where we have peace, but if people want to still stay in groups full of hate and you know all the pain that they're causing and they're not going to you know own their own behaviour then we'll never move on you know, but a lot of people do. That's why writers are so important, because they stand on their own and they collect what they believe and what they've experienced and what they see and they put it in a very coherent piece of theatre for us that hopefully we can learn from and be comforted by.

JM:

Yes yeah and I think that's what's interesting as you said earlier about Tracy Letts, he really sweetens the deal with the comedy right, like you sort of go oh my god if I can laugh through it it'll somehow get me through this. And the other thing I find amazing about the play is it sort of suggests that like if you do, like if you are confronted with the trauma and the truth and the stuff that like scares the shit out of you about yourself and your family, weirdly something better is on the other side like, and it's not that the play wraps that up in some sort of sweet bow or anything, but I think well the characters are as you say starting to stand on their own two feet, for better or for worse, and there's something... maybe not optimistic but ultimately hopeful in the play for me, because that is saying like

lean into the trauma, lean into the fear of you know owning yourself and actually like a better world lies on the other side of that, if you can just grit through it.

BG:

Yeah right, yeah you know it's the human element that's so brilliantly written with you know the character of Barbara, this woman's menopausal, she keeps talking 'I'm having a hot flash' but you know everything that could be going wrong for this woman is going wrong and then the father obviously clearly by the end committing suicide you know that the fact that she walks right that door at the end in her dressing gown is so symbolic, of no matter how you know crap life can be for some people, we all have a choice. And it's finding that strength to make that choice. And you know having enough times where you are beat by the brow you know under the ground and you just go I'm out of here man do you know what I mean. So you know that that's what gives us hope, it is hope and you know that life is far from perfect and obviously we strive for we you know we're sort of striving for perfection, and all that stuff, and there's no such thing you know, it's about you know you're going to have to roll with the punches because we'll all roll down the hill and get covered in mud but there is that idea of the wee light bulb still there and it's how you dust yourself off and get back on you know and you know it's so true, there's a great quote I read recently and it's such a brilliant line it's so simple and it's just again another master of the use of language Maya Angelou 'Nothing works unless you do'

JM:

Yeah that's amazing.

BG:

You know, what five words, really? And you're going to do that? Yeah you just did that, you know. You know it's genius and that's what, because all we have is language, Joe, you know that's all we have is language, and love is just language love is energy, you know, that's all we have. I can't die for you and you can't die for me if you know, if you're the love of my life, you know, you can't retract what's happened and what's happened this year has been so heartbreaking to witness but none of us can change it. All we have is language and all those classic lines you know you'll never forget, you'll always you might forget what people say or do but you'll never you know forget how they make you feel, again Maya Angelou, you know these wonderful women that have been you know through the most horrific experiences of a child, as well you know she has had horrific she was raped as a child you know, as a young child very young, and you know really severe stuff happened to that lady, and you know, you you're looking at somebody who changed their life turned it around and became you know an iconic figure in, not just in black American female culture and legacy, but in her academic work, her dance work you know, and her writing and again incredible wit. So in the face of it all you know she was a huge success of herself so you know this is all we have is language you know, and power, and what it creates in the unification of theatre and what it does and it brings people together and it's

magic you know it is magic.

JM:

I mean I totally agree. And is that why this is your PlayCrush, because it sort of hits all of that stuff like just square in the face, it feels like a real, it feels like it's all those things you're talking about, and I suppose a philosophy of life that you've built up over your own experiences, and what you've seen and witnessed and somehow seems just to be so beautifully articulated in this play.

BG:

Yeah, it really does you know. You know I was writing down just from some notes about it, to me it's a clear slice of family war you know and the study of human behaviour you know it's a template for war, you know, the blame, the addiction, the patterns. There's a great line as well, she talks about Barbara when she's talking to your husband, you know, women's war against men..., that they you know 'he doesn't talk to me' you know, what I'm gonna say 'he just never talks to me', and she's got a great line: 'men always say shit like this as if the past and the future don't exist'. You know people's incapability to be in the present, and that to me is what the great Buddhists and the great Zen masters teach, be in the present, you know that's life, that's life's work right there to be in the present because we're so obsessed with the future and the past and the past can define you and you can let the past define you very much if you want but the real work is being in the present so you know that victim that obviously Violet plays so brilliantly and any time she strikes out and causes you know such heartache and vitriolic venom that she spits out at her children during the play when actually the moment might come for her to own up, she tells the horrific story about her mother and the cowboy boots and then one sees the damage. So it's understanding the patterns of damage, it's understanding that and to me you know this is a masterpiece of that behaviour and the fact that he so brilliantly, so brutally and so eloquently pieces it all together in every line and every paragraph in every you know interaction with characters in this play, you know to me it's all there you know and there's nothing that he doesn't really cover you know.

JM:

And then all of that have you got is there a favourite moment or scene, or interaction that sticks out for you? I mean obviously the kind of weave of the whole play is extraordinary but is there anything that... I mean that boot story really sticks out for me as does the dinner food obviously major middle scene after the funeral, but yeah is there a scene, a moment, a line that really pinged out for you, your favourite bit in that play?

BG:

Oh, I mean there's so many of them, there's so many of those moments, I mean I think it's so entwined with the performances that I've seen, and just when you thought that these performances could not get any more real I knew after the first performance, and I went back again you know, I brought my mum, I brought my

best friend and her boyfriend at the time who'd never been to the theatre, you know, I brought another friend who didn't have a particularly healthy relationship with her mother who this character was very similar to her own mother which is kind of traumatic for her to see, and she wasn't in particularly great shape after the show... you know I think for myself, Joe, the performances were everything but you know when all the sides of the behaviour of the heartbreak of the of the family, the dysfunction, the utter pain that they cause you know... when Amy Morton asks her husband 'You're not coming back to me, are you?' and he goes 'No, not now not never' and he tells her no, it's witnessing that woman, she doesn't speak, she just stood in whatever way Amy chose to perform her body at that time it was... just you've just seen inside a broken woman's soul it was just palpable the pain just when you thought how can this woman give anymore you know it just it was it was it was great, great, great acting and great, great, great art and performance you know. It really was one of the most astonishing pieces of theatre I've ever seen.

JM:

Yeah it's really amazing actually in a play, I mean it's a testament I think both the performer and the writer in a weird way, but in a play that is so well written, that has so many amazing lines, the moment of silence is actually the actual killer, where you're just like this broken person is before you.

BG:

Yeah because I think, and it is that, Joe, I think what I really took from it was everything that she had experienced growing up, we never really got to hear you know Bill's side of it, and what it was he was heartbroken about. He did love the woman or he wouldn't have driven there with her you know the support the baby, the daughter, but you know all the stuff that he had to deal with as well as the man, and maybe that her behaviour was indicative of her mother's behaviour, you just don't know, so basically everything that that she didn't say was said. And that's why sometimes in those moments of silence you know, I suppose it was a moment where he so brilliantly wrote that silence in the play, which we all must respect as actors, and that's our job as actors, all our job as an actor is to do is tell the story, that's all your job is! And you know the fact that she stood there in that silence you know, you needed that breather because all the wonderful writing that Letts had created in that moment was just laid there on the table for you. Extraordinary, I'll never forget it.

I think I'll be forever indebted to those actors that I was able to see that performance and that we got to hang out, and we became friends and we used to have drinks in the bar when they had so little time off, and they couldn't really stay much later you know, then needed to get the tube, when we'd be off you know heading into Soho for a night out all the young ones from, you know *War Horse* and having the craic, and go do all the late nights you know, these actors were back at home in bed because you know they all had to have voices the next day... but it really was the most extraordinary piece of theatre.

JM:

Oh amazing! Well, Bronagh, thank you so much for talking about the play and about your experiences and your career and giving your time over to us today, I really appreciate it. It's so amazing to hear you talk about love, life, theatre and everything in between.

BG:

Thank you so much for having me, I thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed the experience and it was a real honour to chat with you and be inspired to read this phenomenal play again, yep thank you.

JM:

Oh, total pleasure, thank you, and yeah I definitely recommend anyone out there who didn't get to see it, please do read it. There is a movie which is good but I feel like the play script is an even more special experience, so definitely recommend everyone to have a read.

BG:

Yeah it's a wonderful play, I mean I think Meryl Streep's performance is extraordinary, I remember at the time when the play was on, Emma Thompson came to see *War Horse* and I said, Emma you have to go and see *Osage County*, which she did, and I said I mean come on, Em, can you not make this into a movie, you've gotta, can you not look at something, you've gotta, you know look at these actors, and she agreed it was one of the greatest things she'd ever seen and she says darling, it's already been commissioned and Julia Roberts who's a phenomenal actress, is playing Barbara, and Meryl Streep who was obviously, and always is, you know an iconic actor... but you know we know that the play was the real deal... Sorry Meryl!

JM:

And I know she listens, she's a big fan.

BG:

Oh god, she'll be texting me as we speak! Lucky I had my phone on silent there, Joe!

JM:

[Laughing] Well Bronagh, thank you so much, and good luck with the rest of the year.

You too sweetheart, hopefully see you soon,

JM:

I hope so!

BG:

We'll get lost in Soho baby, the champagne's on me!

JM:

Yeah you've got that Brassic money!

BG:

[Puts on a cockney accent] Oh yeah, no problem mate, no problem, I'll save some!

JM:

See you soon!

BG:

God bless, thanks Joe!

JM:

Thanks so much for tuning in everyone. If you enjoyed this episode of PlayCrush, we would really appreciate it if you could rate, review and subscribe as it helps other people find the podcast. The Old Vic would like to thank Principal Partner Royal Bank of Canada and the T.S Eliot Estate for their support. Sherman Theatre would like to thank the Arts Council Wales and everybody who has supported us through this difficult time.