

Ruth Getz Interviewed by Tess Vocalina on 28 October 2022 re her role in Dancing, Trailblazing, Taboo! Eleanor Marx: A Life in Movement performed at the Bloomsbury Festival on 23 October 2023 in collaboration with students from London Contemporary Dance School.

Why were you initially interested in taking part in the project and what were your expectations heading into the piece?

Julia got in touch with me and asked me if I'd be interested and it sounded so interesting and different and like a real chance to learn because I think it's always good to be learning as you go along. Also, it's just really fun and exciting where you can collaborate with people. So, I think, as a singer, I quite often work on my own, so the chance to work with lots of people is great.

Absolutely, very collaborative throughout the whole process. Talking about your process, what was your rehearsal process because we were in and out of the room a lot, we didn't really have that whole group until getting into the week of it.

In terms of rehearsal, because I live up north, I didn't have a chance to meet in person, so we had quite a lot of meetings online and we could work online, which is does the job of getting people together and working through how you want to do things. I did a lot of that with Amanda and Julia and that was really helpful and also a lot of it I would do on my own as well. So, I would work through the pieces that I was doing on my own and also I have people that I can talk to and go through stuff with. So, I did a bit of that as well and got some feedback in that way and then eventually, when we came together at the final week, we could assemble it, so to speak. It was great. It was a really interesting way of doing things.

Was there anything, either throughout the process of rehearsing or when we were all finally together as a group was there something big that you learned throughout the process of this show that you want to carry with you throughout future projects?

I think what I learned is just trust that it's all going to be fine. You might think, "Oh my goodness, how's this all going to work together?" but I think when you've got people that are committed to each element of the performance, that when you come together for the final week and put it all together, that it all makes sense and so I learned to not overthink it and enjoy every minute of it and know that it's all going to work out.

Absolutely, trust the process.

Definitely and, obviously, Julia is so experienced and to learn from her that really was a great experience as well. I learned from everybody.

Was there one thing in particular that you learned that really stuck out to you throughout the process?

The stuff about really trusting how we're doing it and how it's all going to work together. I think that's the main thing that came through and always, always to enjoy what you're doing, every single minute of it, from meeting different people to watching how other people work, to enjoying the rehearsal process and then putting it all together, just enjoy every minute of it.

The piece itself is very specific with Eleanor Marx and the story. Did you either know a lot about Eleanor Marx before the piece or had you heard of Eleanor Marx at all? What was your prior knowledge of Eleanor Marx?

Before, literally nothing. No, I might have heard the name, but no I didn't know anything about her, so that was really great to learn about this amazing strong woman with her as a feminist and a socialist and a really interesting woman with so much to say and she achieved so much. I found the piece really moving as well. I think we all did, everyone that was involved in it. I think we all were really moved by the end of each performance that we did. We were like, 'Oh my God, we really felt that.'

Has this sparked your interest and made you more curious about women like Eleanor Marx that are from the 19th century that have done these amazing, socialist, activist things, but no one knows who they are?

Absolutely. I think we should be shouting about these women much, much more and telling their stories so that people can really learn from these strong women and also for future generations, for young girls growing up now to know that these women were being strong and powerful in history. It's an important message for now and for the future.

Absolutely. With your specific role in the show, you are very unique in the sense that you are a singer and you are kind of a watcher to all of the dancers going on, then you're also standing with the Eleanors and being a part of the Eleanor trio. What was it like for you to experience being a fore-frontal person to tell the story of Eleanor Marx through song and then also getting to watch all the dance play out throughout the show?

It was lovely. I know what you mean. At first, I thought I was going to be this sort of 'other' person, but, by the end of the rehearsal process, I felt like I was also Eleanor Marx. I think everyone was Eleanor Marx, so it was great to be included in that way and to feel like I was telling the story as well. I wasn't just a bystander, but I was part of the Eleanor Marx group as well. I think my role evolved into being part of the Eleanor Marx group as well.

I know it might be hard, but do you have one specific moment that was either your favourite moment of the process, funniest, most memorable?

I'm trying to think because there were so many moments. I think right at the beginning, I remember when the dancers started singing *London Bridge is Falling Down* and I remember looking at the audience and they just looked so enchanted and delighted by this performance

that was just starting and they looked so engaged. I remember thinking, 'Oh this is going to go well.' I think that would be one of my favourite moments.

How was your experience working with the student dancers, and the adult dancers?

Amazing. I'm so in awe of the student dancers. They had so much energy and they were so talented and really good with using their voices as well. They really embraced that. They embraced every aspect of their performances and they were a really fantastic group of people to work with. I enjoyed every minute of it; they were amazing.

Is there anything that you want to say that I haven't touched on?

It was also amazing to work with Sophie and Amanda who are really accomplished performers and that was a real joy, apart from being really gifted actors, just really great people as well. It was really fun and the other thing that I wanted to say was amazing costumes. The costumes were fantastic and I think Lesley did such a great job of putting this amazing look together for the whole piece and a few people commented about how great it looked. I think as an ensemble, the way we were all dressed was such an important detail that really worked. It was great.

Thank you so much, Ruth

It was great to have all the students there as well. I think that was a really nice part of it and it felt like it didn't matter if they were a student or not a student. We all just worked as one.