

**Transcript of the Abbey Talks Podcast Series recorded on September 7 2017 on the night of the Irish Sign Language performance of *Katie Roche* on the Abbey stage.**

**Amanda Coogan (AC) and Lisa Farrelly (LF)**

LF: Welcome to the Abbey Talks Podcast Series Amanda Coogan. Amanda I know you as an internationally recognised performance artist, indeed sometimes that's how you answer the phone to me! But tonight I'm catching you in another guise as our sign language interpreter for Teresa Deevy's *Katie Roche* on the Abbey stage. For those in the hearing world who have not witnessed a sign-language performance here at the Abbey, what does a sign-language performance entail?

AC: It's a really kind of multi-layered job and my approach to it is firstly as a translator. So I need to sit down with the script to actually work-out a translation for it. But because I'm not just translating the written word I'm translating a whole conceptual idea, the play as a production as conceived by the director and by the actors and the designers, so it's some kind of beautiful spin on how the actors are manifesting those characters; how they say the words, in what way the director has pushed the story, maybe highlighted some bits etc. etc. So the best way for me to approach a sign-language interpreted performance is to see the production first and then go back to the page but seeing it through how it has manifest on the stage, this particular production. And then what I love to do is I work out a translation for the speeches, trying always to see how I can bring it into a cultural prospective for the Deaf community. So if language is culture, language deems culture, it's so important that in some ways I make it culturally appropriate or if I can make any elusion especially to Deaf culture when there are great themes of inequality, be it discrimination and on the stage these are the potent stories that filter through the deaf community anyway and they want to see these and a need to see this reflection on the stage. So I'd be super aware of those things. And also then looking at the production I need to watch the actor's movements really closely because I am just one body so the production is being filtered through translation of "one voice" (in inverted commas). And so one methodology of signing and I need to work out a way of representing who's speaking as I'm interpreting a conversation, or a back and forth and I'd often do that by trying to mimic the actions of the actor. And literally in the most simplistic way if an actor has their right hand out in a certain way and is waving it up and down before I say their speech I will wave my hand right there-boom and I'll then put it in to sign-language or we call it role-shift in sign-language in a super simple way if one of the actors is tall or is on a height and another actor is low then I can role-shift between those really easily that's kind of normative in the way we speak in sign language. The thing about one translation of one performance through one person's vision is that the way of speaking in sign-language is almost always as reported speech so we do that all the time naturally in sign-language

LF: Reported speech?

AC: Yes we do; *he said, she said*, mimicking the way they say things. If I'm reporting to you that I had lunch with my friend, I'll start talking like my friend talked in ISL '*and then I said...mm mm mm mm*' to tell you that story so it lends itself really nicely to a singular translation.

LF: So in terms of that act of translation because you are embodying every character on the stage you have shortcuts, you've condensed or compress a gesture or do you fingerspell every word?

AC: Oh Janey Mac, no, I wouldn't call them shortcuts, I'm condensing them, what I would try to do, now I'm always 8-10 seconds behind, that's normal for any simultaneous translation, sometimes a little bit longer, you know. And it really depends, that's why I need to see the production so well because sometimes there is a moment when I can catch up on myself, you know where performers stop speaking or there's some activity and so I can maybe start speaking the speech just before they go in to that as I know I'm not going to have enough time to do it. And also a lovely tricky thing if there's something beautiful happening on stage that needs to be seen something really sharp like a smack or being thumped with a walking stick or whatever, I need to know when this is coming I need to know the few lines before that and so I will often simply just go "watch the stage". This is the meaning of this but actually the visuals are more important than the words to tell you; I'm going to hit you with this stick or something like that. Of course it depends on the play, sometimes the plays are beautiful metaphors when there is some kind of rich density and I can bring that metaphor into a culturally appropriate way for ISL and make it gorgeously rich especially when you're going to translate Shakespeare it's so open to these beautiful deposited and trans-substantiated metaphors into ISL. But if it's simply "*I gonna whack you with a stick*", I'll just turn to the stage so my audience will look at the stage, they'll know, look at the stage, you know...this is happening. And if it's something beautiful I'll say it after the action.

LF: Ok so you like the action speak, take centre.

AC: I'll let the action speak so my audience or a deaf audience will see what they're interested in really getting the meaning out of sign-language interpreted or performance or visual people. Visual is the primacy of how they read and especially in the theatre. So my translation or any slip (sign language interpreted performance) is always foregrounded in the visuals of the bodily activities that's going on on-stage. So the most exciting ones to translate are those super visual productions that are very active, very physical, very visual.

LF: In terms of this production, Caroline Byrne's production and with Caoilfhionn Dunne's fluid choreographed Katie this would especially lend well with your style of practice as well as anchoring itself through a deaf perspective?

AC: Absolutely I'm a visual artist and performance based visual artist so anything this deliciously visual and this very embodied physical performance that Caoilfhionn makes is just glorious. I mean I do think tonight that I'll literally be doing a lot of '*Just look-just look at her ! Just look at the stage*', you know there are just moments where she's crawling in the muck, moment where she pulls at her apron from under the muck. When the altar/ table is lifting up- I'll stop everything-because I'd just be like a buzzing fly at the side of the stage if I'm wrecking the visuals of that and the audience would kill me as well, '*like what were you talking about in the middle of this beautiful-when something is coming up under the ground*' with these kind of culturally appropriate things-

LF: Because the Deaf audience want to experience it at the same time as the hearing audience-

AC: Well that's my aim, they'll never have exactly the same experience because they speak in a different language and they have different embodied experience of the world fore-fronting the visual over the aural. So it'll be a different experience from hearing people and that's not means to say its better, weaker or anything it's simply different it cannot be the same BUT I will try and make it as rich an experience as you know I always think that I've done a good job if I'm getting the same reaction from the Deaf community as hearing community, if you know what I mean. So if a hearing community don't like the show and my Deaf audience go '*what did you do that for? We didn't really like that play!*' I'm like super! I did a good job. If they are literally ecstatic and they are standing and my Deaf audience do too then I've done a

good job. If it's a bad play and my audience jump out of their seats, I haven't properly appropriately followed the production.

LF: How do you distance yourself? If you are the conduit between the director's vision and the actor's performance? I suppose it's like you're the receptacle?

AC: Yeah totally. Well that is what a lot of what an interpreters job is, to be that conduit or receptacle to pass on information from one community to the other, you know and it's a really gorgeous place to be, you know, cause as a maker in my other life with all the responsibility of coming up with all the creativity; the images and the gestures. It's such a gorgeous learning experience actually to come and go, oh, how delicious! I mean that's in some ways where I need to be disciplined to the production and watch the production first, me personally because I'll start buzzing off the script. And if I read the script before I see the production. So my discipline is to watch the production and be very careful about referring to that production.

LF: Because I suppose watching you interpret, because you're a performance artist you do have to be careful about that-your flair-

AC: Yeah, as an artist on the other side of my life could bring my own reading and so in some way, really gorgeous way it's really beautifully disciplined and in that discipline of watching other people's work and trying to put that across in another language, that's a physical language, I learned so much. You know one of my biggest, I constantly refer to it but one of the most important plays for me as an artist, I interpreted the *Gigli Concert*, here, many years ago and actually tackling Gigli's music, Gigli singing to a Deaf audience and trying to really work out how I can culturally approach or create it. And then being sensitive to the production and sensitive to the actors on stage and especially the guy at the end, the big moment at the end, that was an amazing challenge that has fed in to my practice completely.

LF: That was a question I was going to ask you, the place of music in your work and especially working with Deaf actors, where do you begin with that? Because for an actor who has been deaf all her life and would not know music by Nina Simone or Beethoven or Gigli-Where do you? How do you?

AC: And all of these things I refer to and use in the production we're making downstairs "*Talk Real Fine Just Like a Lady*" and so what I did was first of all I literally made a translation of *Mississippi Goddam* for them-which is Nina Simon which is where the title *Talk Real Fine Just like a Lady* comes from- Oh my goodness Lisa their jaws dropped, they couldn't believe that out in popular culture there was someone talking about oppression like that. And of course when I made the translation I made culturally appropriate translation so they were literally ignited...OMG!

LF: Because they can identify with this as a minority-

AC - totally identify as an oppressed minority, cultural minority living under the thumb all their lives they're just striving to say you know what we are intelligent normal people who can hold down jobs, we just can't hear. There's a few steps you need to help us that (they wouldn't even use the word help-my goodness) and so constantly striving to bloom, to reach their potential, to also tell hearing people, that they have a beautiful language, that they're being ok being deaf, it's not something to be pitied-They don't miss music they just don't know it!-

LF --I remember your father Laurence Coogan doing the exact, saying those exact words on the Abbey stage for the noble call for *The Risen People* and you were the sign language

Interpreter that night and then you interpreted for the hearing audience what your father was saying and he was saying-He was saying exactly that, the only thing we can't do is hear ...

AC - I know exactly and you know when I talked to Dad just before the noble call and myself and Jimmy Fay the director ... of *The Risen People* [ha ha...I'm having a senior moment-LF--*at least you didn't forget his name haha*]... is my husband and my Dad's son-in-law-so we were chatting with Dad at home over the kitchen table, you know literally saying, look it, the noble calls are like this and Dad hadn't seen the play or had access to the play because I hadn't interpreted it yet so once we were going through it, he said *I would love to do this- I so want to talk for the community and it's so good it's the night of the interpreted performance*, so he talked about oppression, he talked about the march about oppression that fizzled up from the community in the early 70s. And he was one of the leaders of the march, gorgeous, gorgeous, really important story from the community and you know, those noble calls were so important. And I'd even say the Abbey have been putting on sign-language interpreted performances of each production since 2000 and with ISL that still has no legal recognition here in the country this is an amazing support for the national theatre for the language has done for the past 17 years, really really incredible. I really do fervently believe the Arts is the place where things start to move and change and shift and blossom and grow and be accepted.

LF: I'm always immensely proud on the nights that we announce the sign-language performance and you know I'll be watching the audience, the hearing audience as well and they'll sit in and they may not have been to the theatre in a while and on a particular night you stand up or Caroline or Vanessa will do the fire announcements and they twig as to what is happening. Usually I think because you're in company in theatre, you bring people along and you can see that recognition like yeah this is what we do, yeah and we do that as well, I'm so proud of that because it should be what we do especially as the national theatre.

AC: Me too, you know it's so important maybe because they don't complain to me I've never had people come up to me. We arrived at the sign-language interpreter performance evening-in fact the opposite-they always come and say that it enriched their experience that I mirrored the actors in such a way that it gave them another – a shadow... you know I'll try and approach a performance and see if I can fit in it somewhere and not just be the woman in black be on the side of stage where appropriate and where possible so you know if there's something like a chorus, you know, perfect chorus member or if there's observer you know someone on the outside looking in. just watching and reporting, like *Lughnasa* is the dream,

LF: In terms of *Katie Roche*, Teresa Deevy the writer and Katie Roche the character they're both as interesting as each other in that Teresa Deevy became deaf in her early 20's, learned lip-reading at the theatre, later wrote for radio in a medium at a time when she couldn't actually experience. So we are all kind of re-visiting Deevy now, but would Teresa Deevy have been known to the Deaf community? Would they have embraced or known about her back then?

AC: Well Lianne Quigley who is the co-ordinator of the Dublin Theatre for the Deaf would have given me *The King of Spain's Daughter* script about 3 years ago and kind of bouncing on the video message; literally squealing up and down going "OMG" she's a deaf writer, she's a deaf artist! So it was a kind of discovery and it was around this time that Waking the Feminists, I interpreted WTF conference and the Deaf community, Deaf artists, Deaf actors and performers were invited and were involved in some of the things that were really wonderful. But I think that there had been a production of *The King of Spain's Daughter* in Oregon if I'm correct where the cast was doubled so it was, no excuse me so it was hearing actors and deaf actors; there was a double of each character and we call it shadow interpreting. And so the play went on simultaneously in spoken English and in sign-

language and I think that's how Lianne had come across it. And of course the Mint Theatre in NY had been doing over a number of years have been doing a series Deevy's work and I think she gave me the script it was 2014, 2015 and I kind of went I'm not a literary theatre-maker, we needed to iron out a lot of noodles in there and Lianne Quigley and the Dublin Theatre of the Deaf they're so hungry and evangelical about speaking about their experience, speaking about their experience of deaf people and speaking about being sign-language users in the world. They are literally foaming at the mouth to speak about these things so we kind of work out a lot of the themes; deaf people's themes which you can see in Katie Roche and in *The King of Spain's Daughter*, the Annie character is very similar to Katie.

LF: Can you give us a little break down as to *The King of Spain's Daughter*. It's a similar story to *Katie Roche* I feel, no?

AC: Absolutely and you know as a maker myself, they are two years apart, you have a character, this is the way I'm reading it, I would suggest and you throw different circumstances at her and see how that character would react. So in *The King of Spain's Daughter* there is the young female character; flighty, exuberant young girl, dreamer is called Annie. And she's living with her father and very shortly after the opening, her father beats her just as the father of Katie Roche beats Katie and he gives her an ultimatum. There's a very sensible man, at the beginning, but he is the same age as her, there's a young man who she can marry or she has to go back to working on the factory across the river, across into the main land and the factory is soul destroying that is would kill her except she is not in love with this man at all and she has another young boy that she kisses and in the script she definitely kisses, she is kissing on the edge of where her father and Peter and Jimmy are working. I don't think she's in love with the boyfriend guy either but really interesting and what's really ignited our exploration of this text is there is a female character called Mrs. Marks so maybe like the sister in *Katie Roche* except that she is that double discrimination/women against women discrimination so we were really looking at the context of the writing of the Irish constitution which absolutely demoted women's roles and put us in the domestic sphere and clamped down on any kind of equality that in the research I've been doing that proposes post-independence was there that women were very much involved in society and so the constitution was a clamp down. That it was clamped down with the acceptance of a lot of women. A lot of women didn't... I mean there wasn't a revolution, 50% of the population of women didn't get up in arms and say you can't designate us to the domestic space to bring up children. So we're really looking at that and we're looking at that oppression. I've really set up Mrs. Marks as a kind of deity or a devil and she flicks between both of them and unclear which she is and then the Annies are living in the fabric of her skirt.

LF: I was going to ask you so I suppose we are getting into what audiences can expect from *Talk Real Fine Just Like a Lady* which is on in the Peacock as part of the fringe festival, so what I'm hearing is that it's going to be a live installation performance piece, so can you tell us a little bit or can you tell us a little bit about what audiences can expect from this production? Can you reveal what it is?

AC: Can I reveal?! So I'm in the middle of making it which is always terrifying time to articulate something out of your head. It is a , I hope a beautifully balanced collaboration between my practice as a performance based artist and the Dublin Theatre of the Deaf practice as theatre makers albeit community theatre makers who want to speak in the professional sphere to the hearing world they want to speak about their lives. And so I've taken us off the stage -proper-and I'm putting the visual arts on the stage so there's a lot of filmic-painterly content going on the Peacock stage and then all the action happens in the auditorium -inside-so in the auditorium everyone sits down in their normal seats but they will be in the middle of an installation. They have to sit inside Mrs Marks skirt so the skirt becomes a landscape, it becomes mountain, it speaks to the skin, it speaks to the

mountains, the fields that *The King of Spain's Daughter* is set on. There's a rich metaphor you can read into the installation. We have really appropriated the themes of *The King of Spain's Daughter* into the deaf situation.

So speaking of being pigeon-holed or categorised into doing one thing so for Annie she had yet to marry, stay in the domestic space even though she wasn't in love with any of the men that had asked her-I think this dreamy quality of here where she thinks the King of Spain's daughter -she dreams that the bride had a flaming red dress or the next time she speaks about it's, it's a green dress or a blue dress is actually frisson or sexual desire I think it's all hit by flavoured by sexual desire and that's something we're knitting into our production. But it's more than that containment so for, all these women and my cast are all women, multiple Mrs Marks, multiple Annies, all Deaf women, They were brought up in an institution of deaf school for girls and so there's lots of references to that kind of closed tight expectation of what you should do as a Deaf girl-what you should be as a deaf girl was for them on being oral-learning how to speak -learning how to lip read *talk real fine just like a lady* and so we're really going for that and Mrs Marks is making them speak and for a Deaf person -I have to tell you for all the women-that was bordering on abusive- It is not a language that they can access because of their disability and the kind of training and brutality of the oral system at they call it, profoundly marked each of these women's lives and they were just bursting to talk about it. So we've had really tried to follow Deevy's script with this line of exploration.

Now everything is in sign language but I'm making this very beautiful soundscape with the sound designer & composer Aine Fay and my approach with my Deaf actors -my Deaf performers was to translate it for them, literally put the sound on my body-*it's a bit like this* ...so we're using Beethoven's 7th symphony, again, exploring, highlighting, honouring other deaf artists Beethoven, Deevy, exactly the same situation both deafened in their later years - all of my actors were either born deaf or became deaf in early childhood and so are specifically sign language users and Deevy we know had some kind of home signs between herself and her sister but it wasn't formal, of course Beethoven was in the hearing world, in the sound world so much I'm not sure if there's much research on how he chose to communicate..

LF: How do you convey- how do you transpose Beethoven music or convey this- you mentioned it earlier- because there's no lyrics like say in Nina Simone it's your interpretation of Beethoven

AC: It's very much an Amanda Coogan interpretation of Beethoven, I have certain mannerisms-styleisms that I have in my performances and they're absolutely there but I think in attacking Beethoven 7<sup>th</sup> as the last movement of it as I did. I really wanted to convey the passion- the extremes that Beethoven goes through and then there's all the beautiful .. so I wouldn't go..*this is the violin..this is the trumpets* or anything like that, I'm going with the emotion of the piece, and of course I did a lot of reading around it, the whirl dervishes I went for and all this kind of petite loveliness and there's a lot of hip wagging as the tone changes not just arms and fingers ----the guys went ' *oh you're right- he's like that*'

LF: What was the feedback like?

AC: I think that in some ways these things are at some kind of a distance when I do it in the rehearsal room or they see it on a video but when they get into the space and the installation will be quite claustrophobic and the great sound system there I think there will be some re-verb they'll actually feel it on the wooden floors, I have all the Deaf on the wooden of the

Peacock as well- so they should be able to get some kind of buzz off that and that will give them a rhythm but who cares-I'm really interested in-as I talk about translating music there-following music to the letter- I'm also really interested in the performances- and I use the strategy all the time in the work that actually the sound element and the movement element don't have to be synched! They can actually be, you can actually double vision this and you can actually choose to flick between one/other and there's sometimes when they collide but that is determinedly directed by me and they meet and they fall off each other again and so you know sometimes I need to beat that in when I'm speaking, when I'm working with hearing performers- *stop listening to the music-stop following the music* where gloriously with these Deaf performers- I don't have to give that note at all at all

LF: It's obviously no coincidence that you've programmed *Talk Real Fine Just Like a Lady* in the peacock during ISL awareness week and also for that debate in the Seanad for recognition of ISL as the third indigenous language-can you talk a little a bit about that about the importance of that?

AC: I really wanted *Talk Real Fine Just Like a Lady* to speak to *Katie Roche* on the mainstage and of course I had a great relationship with Fringe this collaboration three years ago so I wanted to be in Fringe and I wanted it to be in ISL awareness week and so the only week that all of those collided happened to be the 19-23<sup>rd</sup> September and gloriously it all fell into place, it wasn't an accident. The beautiful accident was on our opening night the final debate on our ISL bill goes through the houses of the Seanad. As I was saying ISL is not legally recognised here in Ireland, it is in many European countries, in America and in western developed world and even in the under developed world some countries in under developed world as well.

And more than and more than legal rights, access- information- in your preferred language as we might think the Irish Language act being debated in the North at the moment, how we use our first language Irish, here, it is much more fundamental in the Deaf community, it is much more fundamental, this ISL bill will allow them to go to the doctors and understand what the doctor is saying, to go to the bank and negotiate a mortgage to go to college and get access to tutors and lecturers and all these everyday things that if- because of your disability because of your lack of hearing it makes a big barrier to access these things without sign language interpreters.

So this bill is super, super important for bridging these gaps that this community needs bridging and also the kind of amazing recognition that they are here and that they are enriching members of society, this gorgeous, multiplicity, ways of being, that this is a community that you couldn't kill by banning sign language in the 50's, by not allowing deaf people to marry all these kind of eugenic ideas that they've had- they couldn't kill the community-it's still here- and in some ways, this bill, will be a becoming for that, it will radically shift Deaf people's perception of themselves but bringing some kind of national legal recognition as a language that has refused to die because actually human beings need to communicate and for these people trying to speak, trying to lip read just failed-to a natural language that is completely accessible for them which is ISL it is a unique-it is indigenous to Ireland, Britain has a different sign language-France has a different sign language- America has a different sign language because languages grow in the communities that use them.

This is a beautifully pure language, it's also linguistically gorgeous, it's deliciously, it's OTT, over dramatic, reportage on the body, you have to be totally unashamed of anybody looking

at you or your body, it really enriches Irish society, I would of course-advocate that-because it is my birth language-my first language but I don't think I'm talking off the Richter scale there

LF: Can I ask you about being a CODA, a child of deaf adults and ISL being your first language, I know you don't know any different but what was that like? What kind of household was it?

AC: As I say everybody's upbringing was their norm but so in our house the doorbells would flash, the lights would flash when the doorbells rang which was great fun for the nic-the-nackers

And from myself and my sister and my brothers perspective; we were super loud, super roaring, screaming, very loud music as is the noise always in a Coda house. We were the loudest house on the street. There was a beautiful documentary a couple of years ago called *The Loudest House on the Street*. And I'm not the only one, every coda with two deaf parents who don't tell you to turn down your music, the television and you know stop shouting, don't slam doors-Well Slammed doors was always a problem! There was a certain noise element but if it made vibrations we would kill each other; me and my sister and my brother-*Don't slam the door!*- then Mum and Dad will know we're fighting. I suppose the funny thing is and maybe it's particular Irish, but a lot of Codas my age, have the same story when we born, I'm the first born, there must have been some social worker that told them to buy a radio for us, just to stimulate in case I wouldn't learn how to speak, I mean it's ridiculous, I live in a hearing world, I can hear! Anyway that was the thinking back then in the 70s and so they bought one of those old radios with the knobs and we'd come down for breakfast and Mum would turn the radio on every morning. She'd turn it on during teatime and it was out of tune. So it was just out of tune, shhhshhhsh , I could barely hear Radio Ireland and jingles and very authoritative voices in the background. But it was really out of tune. And I lived with it for years and it came to a certain stage I think maybe I was 9/10, I was just pre-teen and my mother went back to work and a babysitter came in during the summer holidays and she just turned the dial and MUSIC but it was a clean clear beautiful sound came out of this box at the end of the kitchen table and it was a revelation!

LF: Being the first born hearing child of a deaf couple you probably heard this from other CODAs as I suppose you would have been in a position of responsibility to bridge that gap between the hearing and the deaf world; whether it's talking to insurance sales at the door, the milkman. You grew up in an adult world very quickly?

AC: You know there are pluses and minuses to it I think CODAs, I was the designated interpreter in the house as well which often goes to the eldest first born girl.

LF: Not the first born boy?

Yeah, it's funny there's is a bit of American research a couple of years ago. Oh I recognise myself there.

So I would communicate between Aunties, Uncles, Grannies, Grandads. The News: Who's died in Kilkenny...Who got married, who is expecting a baby and all those things. Tell your



Dad that such and such bought that field but I really wouldn't understand what I was saying but the other side of it is I wouldn't be the artist I am today without that.

And I think that children have chores. And you know my chore was just to interpret- to tell my Mum what the milkman was saying or to tell my Dad what my Nana was saying in the news from Kilkenny. So I think it was like doing the wash-up, I think it was like making your bed, tidying your room.

LF: I'm conscious of time now so I'll zip through this! I always find it so funny just before you do a sign-language interpreted performance I offer you water and you just kind of laugh because knowing you as a performance artist you do these durational performances that last 24 hours, there's a test of endurance there. But what I want to ask is, you know you've had years and years and years of this practice, what do you learn from it or what are you learning or what do you learn the most from it by doing that to your body, out of your mind, onto your body...What are you learning from it? What are you getting from it as well?

AC: In my practice as an artist I really need to do plus 3 hours performances so I like 5/6 hours it depends on the piece.. And I've done 24hr performances. And so there's a whole process of going beyond a determination and so it's actually about being very much in the moment. You go into total flow and deep concentration on this. So I like my activities in my work to be super simple. If its walking up and down the stairs, that's it, I'm putting one foot in front of the other in a very particular way now or I am moving my hand to A place and I want to bring it to B so I will be in the moment of that gesture completely so the strategy is looping, repetition so there is something really lovely about repetition within these things so what happens is you become deeper and deeper and deeper in concentration on that so all the rubbish falls away- *'When I go home now I must wash the kitchen floor kind of rubbish'* falls away. It's like a stone. It's like it drops under the water...more and more and more..

LF: What does an audience do for that then?

AC: It helps me stay there and it gives me responsibility. In some very personal way, I have said I will be here until 7 o'clock and that's the fabric of my work so I will be here until 7 o'clock the next evening.

But also that engagement, there's something very powerful about the eye gaze. So of course in all these performances you go through a crisis. So you drop out of flow-out of concentration- your body hurts, you feel like you can't go on and one of my strategies to get over that is to look at the audience in the eye. And by the audience reciprocating, that gaze, they feed me again. It's like they're going *'go on, go on, go on, keep going, we're behind you'*.

So it brings up all of that wonderful resilience. That has been said a lot about my work, it's all about the resilience of the human spirit. It's a conceptual conceit that has this woman has walked up and down stairs for 24 hours. Because nobody saw it. People dropped in & out. But nobody stayed for the full 24 hours. It was only me. I could have nipped off to my hotel room for a couple of hours at 4 o'clock in the morning.

LF: Who are you doing it for? For yourself to test your limits?

AC: No, no, it's an absolute shared experience. It's not for me. It's not for the audience. The work is a form of conceptual art. There's an idea and the idea is powerful but it's embodied conceptual art. There has to be a physical manifestation. I can't write a beautiful proposal saying a woman will wear 9 coats and walk along the perimeter of the gallery. I've written the script for it and the script is pretty much like that. Or a woman will sit in a yellow dress and wash it for 4 hours. I've written those scripts but it means nothing until it happens and it's my commitment if I say it's going to be 4 hours, it's going to be 4 hours unless I need to be hospitalised. Genuinely, that's not an exaggeration. I have fainted a couple of times. But listen I've been practicing for over twenty years. Fainting a couple of times is pretty good, you know, I was carried off by an audience member once, beautiful interventions like that.

So it's a kind of experiential commitment. People are really, really engaged with the experiential and the embodied experiential.

So people come to see my work, they know because it's written down that I've been doing it for 3 hours or the invigilator might say, she is in hour 6 now or whatever mediation that people will look for. They have to believe that.

LF: And sometimes your audience refuses to leave...

AC: Yeah. A LOT.

So I work in *Tableau Vivant*. I was going to say I like to cut out the theatrics and here I am sitting in the Abbey- It has theatrics of its own really. So I like the door of the gallery, the door of the venue, I really like to work site specifically, that when you come in, the performance is already on- and that when you leave the performance is continuing. So when the doors shuts, when the doors shuts, you go home and you can still imagine these women doing these activities- you haven't seen it collapse. You haven't seen the performed selves, falling back down to the everyday. And again it's a conceptual conceit but it means that it should ring & zing, have this shadow like an imprint on your eye, your retina. And often with a long durational performance, I need to say to my minders or what we'd call stage mangers here in the theatre, they have to earth me afterwards. You might speak to me but I'm still not listening-in that you might say *Amanda it's 6 o'clock, it's over*, You'd need to actually touch me and zzzzp then I'll come around or come back down to earth. I'm zinging, highly stimulating to go beyond boredom in that John Cage kind of way. What happens when you go beyond boredom is a kind of revelation.

LF: Last question and this is to the woman who had a stamp issued after herself in 2013, (laughter) what does success mean to you? How do you measure success- what is that to you?

AC: I don't know? Isn't that so funny.

That's such a juicy question.

I don't know.

I don't know if I've ever made something successful that I'm satisfied that's perfect. I suppose success and perfection are two different things. Actually for me it's always about have I got rid of enough stuff to make it finished. Sometimes there'll still be too much going

on but you know this is the great thing about performing myself, I just feck it out in the middle of the performance. Get-Strip it immediately, that's the great thing about being the conceptual artist and the maker, it goes on my body and I can make these really fast decisions especially when you're that highly tuned to the place and the moment and being there.

It's finished when I've chopped enough out of it (laughter)

LF: We should go to the Abbey stage and get ready for this sign language performance...  
Thank you Amanda Coogan.

AC: Thanks a million Lisa Farrelly.