**JEMIMA DURY – GRAEAE REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL INTERVIEW
TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewer: When did your relationship with Graeae begin?

Jemima Dury: I very first got involved in 1984 when my Dad, Ian Dury, was a patron. I was aware of the company from then because he had got to know Nabil Shaban very well. So, Nabil used to visit Dad's flat in Hammersmith and quite often I was there so I got to know him a little bit.

 And then really my sort of very direct involvement started when a script landed on the doormat, back in it would have been the summer of 2010 probably, as Reasons to be Cheerful was being conceived and produced. So that's when Graeae sort of came back on the radar for me. Obviously the involvement with the show started from the moment I actually went to see the first performance.

Interviewer: What memories and emotions did Reasons to be Cheerful conjure up for you?

 Well, I don't think I've ever completely fessed up to Jenny and other people at Graeae that the first time I got the script, that year, it was a very busy year for all things related to Dad. The film, Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll had just come out earlier that year in January. I was a little bit jaded during related projects, I was really knackered from doing that.

 So, when the script turned up, I acknowledged it and I thought, lovely, that sounds great. I kind of read it and let it be and then I waited and then there were invitations coming for the first performance. And I didn't respond straight away. I suppose I was a little bit lacklustre about okay, I've got to get this together. Eventually I arranged with the company to go and see the show at Stratford East. I turned up and I didn't know at all what to expect. I kind of turned up, slightly out of sense of duty, that I must come and see the show. Then by the interval I was kind of pinned to the back of the seat and oh my god! Whatever they want me to do, I gonna do it. I shall be completely available to Jenny for the rest of my existence.

 Straight away watching the show, by the interval, memory after memory after memory of Blockheads gigs and that kind of energy straight back to the 70's that all came up for me instantly. I think it did for people who hadn't even been there, frankly, because when I went to the toilets in the interval, there were all these young black kids from Newham College, they're in the toilets, Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll. I just thought, god talk about a new audience, it was amazing. I felt immense pride and excitement that the music had gone around and come back generation later, still have that impact. So, I felt very proud of what Dad and the Blockheads had achieved.

Interviewer: What did you think of Reasons to be Cheerful when you first saw the show?

 I hadn't seen anything as brilliantly accessible on that level at all before. When I did see it, my feeling was, of course, why isn't everything like this? Why aren't all shows made accessible? This should be the way theatre is run in every performance in every production.

 So, it was a very, very pleasant surprise. It wasn't a surprise it seemed like a no brainer to me actually. That that's how a show could be produced, so it was very exciting and extremely positive. Very positive experience to see a company doing it and making it possible for anyone to be involved without compromising on quality or skill. You just pull in the skills and make it possible for anyone with a particular skill to be there doing what they do. It was brilliant.

Interviewer: 1979 is the year Reasons to be Cheerful is set. 2010 is the year it was first produced, 2017 Reasons to be Cheerful is on tour again. Over these years what has changed?

 Oh well that's quite a lot of scope there. Now luckily I've worked this out already that I was 10, and then 41, and then nearly 50 on those three occasions. When I was 10, I was just starting out in a dance career and I was very much influenced by my Dad's career and what was happening to him. He had risen to fame, so life was very intense and on quite a big scale and quite lively. It was all very exciting and proactive, there was a lot going on.

 Then jump forward to 2010 and I had lost Dad and my mum as well, so life had taken a completely different turn. But also I'd had three children by then so it kinda came with a intense sadness and then extreme joy as well. In fact, I was probably a but unhinged for most of those years around then.

 Going forward again to 2017 things are very positive and a lot calmer and very stable. I'm quite happy domestically. I am writing a novel and archiving a lot of Dad's work. Pushing 50, things have calmed down a bit, which is good.

Interviewer: Do you have any memories of the infamous Ian Dury and the Blockheads 1979 Hammersmith gigs?

 There were quite a few Hammersmith Odeon gigs and to be totally honest they've all kinda blurred into one gig for me. I was most likely there. Because Hammersmith Odeon, as it was known, was quite a sort of gig home from home in those days. It was dad's local, if you like. Yes, I remember them extremely well, I remember the dressing room, I remember the smell of the dressing room, I remember the sweat, and I remember Blockheads kids nicking anything they could from the rider table. So there was a kind of backstage set of memories and then there was out the front and we were usually up in the circle, as kids, to keep us a little bit out of the mosh pit.

 Again, it was hot and sweaty in the auditorium as well. Just looking down from the circle at a seething, pogoing, jumping mass of Oi Oi and shouting. Yeah. Amazing though. Energy, energy, energy. I think really I'm spoiled for experience there because you can't get a more funky, rhythmic, soulful, united band than the Blockheads. You couldn’t get a more exciting entertainer and all-around kind of intelligent, amazing person on stage as my Dad and that's very nepotistic; but, I also think it's true.

 Very hard act to follow, don't know if I've ever seen a gig as good, to be honest. Yes, Hammersmith Odeon, late 1970's definitely the place to be.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you heard Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick sung by a female for the first time?

 Oh, wow. That was such a surprise and such ... It was the best moment when I first saw the show. It was such a revelation. It took Graeae to think laterally like that. The Blockheads wouldn't have done it, the family wouldn't have done it. None of us who had grown up with that song would not have made that brave move to just switch it around. I mean it doesn't seem brave now, it seems absolutely logical. It's brilliant, so brilliant. And it really makes sense in the song in another way. So I loved it, I loved seeing Nadia perform that back in 2010, really exciting.

Interviewer How was it for you seeing Spasticus Autisticus performed at the 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony? What did you think about the song being banned back in 1981?

 It was such an extraordinary experience to see the Paralympic Opening Ceremony. It was really unclear what was gonna happen because it ... The lead up to it had been so shrouded in secrecy and we had all been so quiet about it that I barely spoken about it at all to any one, just a couple of family members. It was really hard to imagine how it was all gonna play out on the night. Graeae kept it very quiet what the sort of premise of using it, the staging and all of that had been very quiet. It was a huge revelation. It just sort of kept delivering, and kept delivering, and kept delivering for all the minutes it was on.

 I think one of the greatest moments is imagining the lyrics going round and round and round the stadium on a digital board in front of The Queen. I'll never get over that, that was just wonderful. I think Dad absolutely would've just been gobsmacked by that whole experience, he would have loved it.

 Back when the song came out, I was too young to really think clearly about it at the time. Now, it doesn't surprise me at all that it was banned. No. I don't think anyone then, and a lot of people now, are comfortable with the word spastic, I don't think people really understood what it meant. It'd been so overused as a derogatory term in the wrong way, in a very ignorant way. That there was a very bad connection made with that word.

 I think Dad had done a very clever thing to highlight that and to draw that out and to make people uncomfortable about it. But I am not surprised that a certain broadcasting body found it difficult to overcome the controversy and just play it anyway. That, no, doesn't surprise me at all, I think they'd struggle today.

 But we go onwards and upwards and hopefully, hopefully ... You have to really sit and listen and consider it and there are plenty of examples of other people's songs being misread and misheard over the decades and that's a classic. And, you have to really think about it to understand the message. But, people can't get past the words, the obvious words, to get through to the message. It takes careful thinking and delivering to present that song. I believe it will be played widely and nationally at some point.

Interviewer What do you think of your Dad, Ian Dury, would think of Reasons to be Cheerful?

 I just love, love, love, he'd love it. Absolutely love it. He'd be proud of his own work being presented in such a fresh and energetic way. I think he would enjoy hearing and seeing what was being done with the work in the way Graeae have presented it. He would be right behind what Graeae doing, he'd be 100% there.

Interviewer Why should everyone see Reasons to be Cheerful?

 Because, it is the best example of accessible theatre, it is entertainment of the highest order, it's fun, it's a musical, what's not to like about it, basically. Just immense fun.