

Interviewer: Saadia Ahmed

Interviewee: Tine Fielding

Date of Interview: 8th of September 2023

Location: Curtin University

Duration: 31:27 minutes

Transcript

Saadia: Hi, Tina. Thank you so much for being here at Curtin University, and thank you for consenting to become a part of this project, which is the Evolution of Disability Arts in Australia. You've also been a participant of our workshop, um, which is like, you know, which means that you're very aware.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: What's going on, uh, with this project. So thank you again. Um, thank you for being here this morning. Um, so, Tina, shall I start the questions?

Tina: Yeah. Of course.

Saadia: Um, so, Tina, how do you identify yourself as an actor if you talk about your art form?

Tina: Um, as an actress. And as well, a writer. Sometimes in, in "Sparkles" or if I do so I get extra credit for some of them. I, I, I'm co-producer, um, because I asked my female colleague actually produced "Sparkles" actually. What is a producer? What things does a producer do? So she told me what producer does. And I sometimes say "let me go behind the camera" and help her a bit with, we're producing so and in that sense I became one of part of producer team. So that's why.

Saadia: And so do you know - when did you start acting?

Tina: That's a pretty good question. I always say all the time, "my family, my family is like the Von Trapp family" from the "Sound of Music". And it's so true. So true. I see

them, I see my sister, Steph. I'm part of on the stage with my, with my dad doing that with singing, dancing. And I was, I was really young at that time. So I like I try two points of view, like audience point of view and then I like it - when I started growing up, I went to this mentor and company called Chorus, and I started "Circles" journey. But then I told a friend of mine, I told when my supporters are out I want to go Chorus. And I went to Chorus and, but when I started acting started from there I started acting, I was, I was in. I did a new, like new so small, for a company called Poles Apart Company. I was part of that. And we did a play called "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly". I played the lead role in that one play as Hera, she's a Greek mother as well. When they found out and that it is based on a true story with baby Gammy, who is Down syndrome and he's from Thailand because the beliefs, they actually believes in Down syndrome. Um, the son is very powerful there and when the family want to adopt him and they went back to Australia. So they take time to go through the process to adopt the son. And our crew approved him in the play and we did really good. And that when I said "I love dancing myself. So I want to dance in absolutely everything in in the play so that I was up been like acting so yeah.

Saadia: That's great. So if um. And it's okay if you don't remember the exact year. Do you remember the year when you started acting?

Tina: Um. No I wouldn't no, no. I was, I, I was I in my teens.

Saadia: So, Tina, you said that you enjoy dancing and you're an actress.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: Why do you like acting? What's the reason?

Tina: Um, I love, um. That's a good one, too. Sometimes I mean bad, sometimes I don't. That's me. I love, um, just, um, about me, like, um. I think I have seen too many movies. From "Come Along Now". And I told myself I, I want to go to, I want to. I want go to L.A. and I can see myself, myself in L.A, and I know inside that I need to do something. And that's why I love acting. And from there onwards, I do it all the time. This is so, so true. I always told people I love and that's my family. And I remember all the time I knew my dad, doing my Oscar speech all the time. Yeah.

Saadia: Lovely. So Tina, while doing acting, or maybe when you were watching someone acting. Because if you're an actress, you would also enjoy watching.

Tina: Yes. That's right. Yes, yes.

Saadia: What is your best, uh, memory when you were acting or watching someone doing acting that you really enjoyed?

Tina: As I. And I was in musicals.

Saadia: Sorry?

Tina: Musicals.

Saadia: Okay.

Tina: Yeah, musicals. It's like acting and singing too and dancing together.

Saadia: Up to you. But because you identify as an actress. So I think acting would be it.

Tina: Yeah. Um.

Saadia: You really enjoyed it. And you were like [inaudible].

Tina: Yeah, yeah, it was like Heaven. Yeah. Uh, the first time I saw I love acting is from... From my family. Yeah.

Saadia: Okay. So you really enjoyed watching them acting and performing?

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: Uh, so Tina, because you have been acting for a while now. Um. So would you like to tell something about the people that you have worked with, and have you been working with the same people throughout?

Tina: Yes, I have been working with my friend, Jacqueline Pelczar. So she's really good. I mean, like me and her are like a dream team. As well, Cody Greenwood, is just producer of her own work. I remember the first time I saw Jacqueline, is at DADAA, and I was like, 22 somewhere about there and because Ashley paired me and Jacqueline up from there and I have been working with them from I think from the day I saw Jacqueline I think that in I was, when I was when I was like, in my 30s. Not, not, not, not in my 20s, in my 30s onwards. And I always when I went to my acting, I always felt younger but in “Sparkles” I was I was in my 30s and in, in, in my main series “Out of Here” I was, I was, I was in my 30s. So, so I have to look young in in what in, in what I do.

Saadia: Okay. Um, so, Tina, um, have you always worked with the same company?

Tina: Yes.

Saadia: Okay.

Tina: Rush Films. The company I work, I've been working with is Rush Films and in my series I'm working with a different company, but it's, um, person I work in – actually same company as Cody. And her name is Sophia Armstrong...her company is black – Blackwood [River Films].

Saadia: Blackwood?

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: You work with two companies?

Tina: Yeah. Yeah.

Saadia: Um, and these companies are based in Perth?

Tina: Yes, they are. Yeah, yeah locals.

Saadia: Um, so now this is actually very interesting. Like I think it's a very interesting question that is it always fun to act or there are times when it's not fun?

Tina: Um, if it's fun for me, um, it's like a pedestal. I want to have fun. And, um, because, uh, when you feel you're having fun inside, you are having fun.

Saadia: Yeah, yeah keep talking.

Tina: When, when you don't feel fun you, you can feel it inside.

Saadia: Uh, so, Tina, is it always fun to act or are there times when you don't enjoy acting?

Tina: Um. I do have fun acting, I really do. I love acting, it's where I come alive. It's to say that I need it and. Sometimes I don't have fun with it. So. Yeah.

Saadia: Yeah. So there are times when you don't enjoy it?

Tina: Yes.

Saadia: Would you tell me a little about those times when you don't enjoy - perhaps an example?

Tina: I say when some want to push my buttons too far. That's when I don't enjoy.

Saadia: When it's too far? You have to go too far you don't enjoy acting?

Tina: No. When I remember. There's one thing I remember I-I, I had my breakdown on set and that is in second course. And I was we were doing this near the car and I was like, freaking out, really freaking out. And that's when I know I can't have fun. And my friend Jacqueline saw this happening. And she come up and she tried to calm me down and I went, I calmed myself down. I pushed myself so and then I went and start again.

Saadia: Uh, so now we'll come to your – this - we were talking about your past practice, and now we're coming to your present practice. So has your work changed since you started? Or is it the same way that you act?

Tina: Some has changed in many ways and some has not I - it's up to what kind of... It's up to the casting like is different characters. So if if I, if I get like some cast some cast from sparkles I, I will feel, I feel the room like I like. A guy I got back into part again. But when we catch him and different cast and characters. After I bring it from my head back in again and it went from there. So it's like something a bit update like...

Saadia: Update?

Tina: No not update. Adapting.

Saadia: Adapting.

Tina: That's it. That's it. That's what I always say. Adapting to different cast. So, yeah.

Saadia: Yeah. I think adapting is a very important thing for an actor.

Tina: Yeah, it is. Yeah.

Saadia: So are there - is there anything different that you would want to do in the future?

Tina: No, we didn't know. I would like to be authentic, be myself and, um. Leave it as it comes. Like bring it on. But I will like everybody adapting. So it's me adapting or doing things happening in future. So I can work on.

Saadia: Okay, so it depends what comes.

Tina: Yeah, what comes, yeah.

Saadia: Uh, what do you think your audience thinks of you?

Tina: They love me [laughter].

Saadia: Of course they do

Tina: But some, I suppose, some audience don't get it. Some can't understand that's what I'm saying. That's what I'm afraid to act to screen. I think because of my acting and the team, we've got many, many awards for "Sparkles" because of a story, because of what I, what I'm saying and... But why people love it so much.

Saadia: And what about media? What has the response been from the media?

Tina: Really good, amazing. I'm a bit overwhelmed by it, but. And that's that's very common with me. I'm, I'm so excited by it as well. I got a busy page on Facebook and as well I got my own website. I've got many social medias as well. I got, I got my own page on Instagram as well. So I am, I'm active with young people. Young people come see me.

Saadia: Okay. Um, now we are coming to your practice. Do you think that you are famous and many people know about your work?

Tina: Um, I already know I'm famous myself, and but I rarely meet. With I don't know, other people know my work because I'm upcoming and on topic. So I have more work. So from there, people will see that I'm not, I'm not a one-trick pony with my acting. And so to be the first in what I do. So in "Sparkles" I got First Nations with Gary Cooper and LGBT[QIA+] because I am actually part of LBTIQ[IA]+. Um, I know I got Down Syndrome and as well I'm a lesbian, so they don't actually define me. But that's who I am and I kind of that so but I kind of, I can't help what, what I can be in the future. So but, but I can do to people in, in, in um, you know, actor with disability doesn't matter who, who you are, what you are, to bring yourself into art, in art and be, be authentic, be you.

Saadia: Uh, so, Tina, um, because you work with a lot of people.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: You have worked with different casts and, uh... Who do you think that besides your own work does the best work, whether it's an actor or anyone from like, you know, your field whose work you like?

Tina: Um. I would say Garry Cooper from "Sparkles" because. So because he's my [inaudible]. I love his work. His dog is actually part of a big movie from Australia "Red Dog" and he's the first [First Nations] person ever graduated from WAAPA from the past. And now he's in a... I forgot. Trying to think [inaudible], I think I can remember organising that and as well, with many casts I have got, I can I can pick first, first, first [inaudible]. He's really good. He's been working with. He's short films with my a friend of mine who has passed... I love her so much. I miss her and her name is Holly Jones. She's really good. She's helped me with my...in "Sparkles" – elocutions and I love her so much. From "Out of Here" I got this new cast, but. I really love this person. I really do. Her name is Cam [Claire] Appleby. She is one of the co-founders of Undercurrent [Theatre Company]. I love her work, I really love their work so does my brother. Aiden Hawke, I love their works. They're an actor as themselves and as Trinket [Estrange]. And my friend of mine Emma Jackson. She's helping me with my elocution for "Out of Here" as well as well as well as an actress herself to be in Black - working in um, um, a play for Black Swan [Theatre Company]. I can't remember the name of it. Her first work is "Deb". So working with the friend of mine on it, Holly. So she is in that one. And... just working with her on stuff. Sophia Armstrong who is producer of "Out of Here". This is one of her works. Her first one. And Cody, Cody Greenwood. She did "Under the Volcano", "Girl Like You" and I can't remember the third one is, yeah. The third one is my one "Sparkles". Takes more time to become, to become one of success in "Sparkles".

Tina: She knew some of them to go into, to go to, to move to, to move to Sydney and to become a amazing costume designer for this Disney - I think it's about space thing with Emma [Jackson]. So the director for that one as well. Um. Jacqueline Pelczar the director of "Sparkles". But I'm not. But I'm not on the one she did. She did a mini series called "Single Ladies" and one of her successes as well as "Sparkles" and I got my team - and Mick, Mick McDermott I think you know him from his work from "Hounds of Love". Um, I but one, one of the actors I want to work with is Emma Booth. She is a local from here as well. So as well Hugh Jackman. He's a local from here as well. Yeah. And I, I really love to work with like local stars that becoming famous in America. And

and I love, love to work with them. Um, I always say I'm a person with Down syndrome, but I'm not the first famous person with Down syndrome, I've been in the place I've been around the world. And with my friend of mine, Julia Hales. And that is we belong to - "[You Know] We belong together". I went to – recently, we went to a world trip. We went to like London first and then Scotland, and then I went to Sydney and it was so, in Sydney it was so loud. And we got back. Um. The way cast coming in. And one of the highlight of mine is for me I see why [inaudible] I remember I remember my first, my first, my first words were "flaming flamingos". So, yeah.

Saadia: Oh, thank you for sharing such, um, uh, like, you know, names of these amazing artists because many of them, uh, are not, like, everyone wouldn't know about them, but, like, you know, just sharing their names. I think that's very important to, like, you know, to support your community.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: I think that's amazing. And also, have you, uh, have such good words about people who are becoming famous.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: And are building their way up? I think that's also amazing. So thank you for that. So now coming to your politics, do you call yourself, um, a down syndrome artist when you write your program on your poster?

Tina: I see myself as Down syndrome. At first, when when I did "Sparkles", I don't see myself as Down syndrome. I end up back a bit, but now I grow into it now. So I'm happy about that. Um. And I don't put it on a poster that much, or only put it on is where where awards are from on the poster It's like [name of award] and leave my career, career as - a Flicker Fest, I think where films go when it wins awards I only put on a poster itself. The poster is always full, always full up with many awards away. So...

Saadia: No space on the poster.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: So, but do you identify?

Tina: I do identify myself as Down syndrome, yes. Yeah.

Saadia: Do you think that other artists who have disability they should do that?

Tina: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Saadia: And do you think it makes a difference to what people think of your work if they know your disability or it doesn't make a difference?

Tina: It doesn't. My family always say as my disability, as a ability. And what that means is it's it's not it's not a bad thing. It's a good thing to bring my talent, to bring my quality to what I do. And with that, I love it so much. I can have fun writing, writing and acting my, my story and to show what people what I can, what I can do and if, if they don't like it, is their own problem not mine. So I do, I do best.

Saadia: Um, so, um, do you think that other artists who have disability, they identify with their disability?

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: They do ok. Are there other things, you think that, uh, different artists with different disabilities would have a different answer about –

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: - don't identify with a disability.

Tina: Yeah.

Saadia: People who don't want to talk about it. Do you think that?

Tina: It does. Yes, I do, I do agree I'm like as I do as a beginning, I did this same thing. So I do get um. If they don't want you to identify themselves as disability, they don't have to. If they, if they want to, they can. It's up to it's up to them to identify, or not.

Saadia: Um. Thank you so much, Tina. These were our questions. Just your final thoughts. Is there anything that I haven't asked and you want to say?

Tina: Um. The questions is there you finished are really good questions. I love it so much. Thank you for - to ask me to take time for that interview. Um, I got nothing, I got nothing in my head. But I would say is bring yourself to your own work. And so, so I think I think the authentic self. If you want to identify as disability go right ahead. That's all I have to say.

Saadia: Thank you so much, Tina. Thank you so much for being here and it has been a pleasure having you. Thank you.