

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

Emma:

Hello. I'm Emma Rice, the artistic director of Wise Children, and you're listening to Wise Children's Lockdown. Our Lockdown project is about us finding ways of staying close to each other. On this show, I call up an old friend, play some records, and most importantly, get to chat and reminisce. Come and join us for Tea and Biscuits.

Hello, and welcome to Wise Children's Lockdown Tea and Biscuits, and today I am chatting with the amazing Carly Bawden. Hi, Carly.

Carly:

Hello.

Emma:

We're already a bit giddy, aren't we? Seeing each other.

Carly:

Yeah.

Emma:

It's really nice to see you.

Carly:

It's lovely to see you. Oh, you too.

Emma:

So first of all, and most importantly, what is your virtual or real biscuit of choice?

Carly:

I'm going for a Lotus biscuit, you know those Biscoff ...

Emma:

Yes.

Carly:

We've been polishing them off like nobody's business, and they made me feel like I'm in a fancy hotel or something.

Emma:

Or a hairdresser's.

Carly:

Or a hairdresser's.

Emma:

I know, they're delicious, aren't they? Crack cocaine of biscuits, great choice.

Carly:

Yeah, so I'm going for a couple of those. What about you?

Emma:

Oh, I'm going to go for a simple Crunch, Fox's Crunch.

Carly:

Ooh.

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

Emma:

I know. I don't like a filling-

Carly:

I haven't had one of those for a while.

Emma:

... and I don't really like chocolate, which we might come onto later.

Carly:

Oh yes, of course.

Emma:

Simple Fox's Crunch. So tell me-

Carly:

Nice.

Emma:

... how's lockdown going? Where are you? Paint me a picture, how are you doing?

Carly:

It's going all right. I am in the house of my boyfriend and fellow cast member of Romantics Anonymous, Harry Hepple. So I've been here since it all began, so him and his lovely housemate Sam have been very kind to let me stay here for the foreseeable, and I'm currently sat on my bum in the living room and enjoying the sunshine pouring in and the birds tweeting away.

Emma:

And are you coping? How are you managing with no work?

Carly:

I'm doing all right. Part of me, the introvert in me, sort of likes a bit of the quietness, and I guess because we're all in the same situation, that there's slightly less pressure at the moment to feel like you've got jobs lined up, because it's just nearly impossible. So that's nice, in a way, and just to sort of get back to sitting in the garden, which we're lucky enough to have, and reading and all of that business, which I'm grateful for.

But also, on the other side of things, it's always in the back of your mind how things are going to go, just because things are going to be so different when we get back to life, and I still feel just a tiny bit sore and a bit sad that I, a couple of jobs haven't worked out for this year now because of the situation, including our lovely Romantics Anonymous. But I'm really grateful that we got to have a lovely run in Bristol, so that was really lovely.

Emma:

I know, it's a really interesting ... Because you say you're feeling a little bit sore, which I do, but because everybody's in the same boat, there's no ... You just have to let it go, don't you? And we can't control it, that's the other thing.

Carly:

Yeah, completely.

Emma:

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

It's just ... It's interesting that you talked about the introvert in you, because I think that's something that people rarely thin about theater people, is actually how many of us spend our lives putting on a show and performing, literally, but actually a lot of us are introverted on the inside, aren't we?

Carly:

Yeah, definitely. I definitely am, very much so.

Emma:

We could sort of vanish, me and Simon at times, and just sort of go into a little bubble and feel very nice, and why do we put ourselves through it?

Carly:

Yes, I know. I'm the same, I'm the same.

Emma:

So tell us about your first choice of music and why you've chosen it.

Carly:

Okay, so my first choice of music is the Mambo, from the Umbrellas of Cherbourg, which was our first show together, and that show is just so special to me, and was my first West End experience, and I remember the first time we met, I remembered the audition so vividly.

Emma:

Me too.

Carly:

Me marching to St. [inaudible 00:05:09]'s church to come and meet you, and I was terrified, because everyone in the waiting room looked really sort of glam, and I thought "Oh, no," and I rocked up in a shirt and trousers and thought "Oh no, I've stuffed it already." And then just going in there and meeting you and Nigel and the lovely, strapping Gareth Charlton. It was just such a wonderful experience, and I think that was my first experience of an audition being warm and joyful and exciting ...

Emma:

Oh.

Carly:

Rather than scary.

Emma:

Well, it's brilliant to hear you say that, because of course I've got the other side of that experience, which I had watched lovely young woman after lovely young woman coming in and teetering on heels in short dresses, and so much makeup I couldn't see beyond them. And I'd actually said, "We've got to get a message out to these agents that I can't see these people," and then you walked in in your flats and your jeans, and honestly, I mean, it's a terrible truth about casting, which is it's a bit like speed-dating, but you've got it the second you walked in the room. And then of course you opened your mouth and the voice came out, and there was never a doubt.

And I think they made me recall you, didn't they? I think everybody said "Well, you can't cast a lead in a West End show on one meeting-"

Carly:

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

Yeah, that's right.

Emma:

... and I was like, "Can't I? Because she's the one I'm going to give the part to." And I think we called you in again and we made you get flipped around by Gareth, and I was like-

Carly:

That's right.

Emma:

... "We're done now, this is my Genevieve." Let's listen to a bit of the Mambo. (singing) Oh, we're having a good old boogie to that.

Carly:

Ah, yeah.

Emma:

It's the sound of the '60s, isn't it? It's amazing, so sort of retro.

Carly:

It's so beautiful, what Nigel Lilley and the band created in that show with Michel Legrand's music, it was so incredible. I loved listening through it all again while I was trying to pick at track. It was such a joy, and I just remember how fun it was dancing to that every night with, didn't we have balloons, we had like helium balloons with hair bands on the end-

Emma:

Yes.

Carly:

... and we had to put them on our wrists?

Emma:

Tied to your wrists, it was really sort of '60s kitsch, wasn't it?

Carly:

Oh, it was beautiful.

Emma:

I mean we all, just the whole company loved that show. And it's interesting, I've been reminiscing quite a lot at this time, and umbrellas is one of those shows that pops up for so many of us, and it's partly that it was a beautiful piece of work that did not happen at the right time, so it didn't get the love and recognition and the long life that it deserved, in my opinion. But also, it launched so many creative friendships and partnerships. It's where I met you and it's where I met Jo Riding and Don Marsh and Nigel Lilley and Meow Meow, and Etta, and [Les 00:09:31], and Andrew Durand, and you think about that. We all collided in that moment, didn't we? And we're all still friends, colleagues, supporters. So it's really had another long life, hasn't it? That's what I think, the [crosstalk 00:09:47] in this ...

Carly:

It felt like it had, yeah, it had such a huge impact on me, and it has such an important place in my heart, that show and that whole experience. And like you say, the friends that I've made from that as well.

Yeah, it was really, really special.

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

Emma:

It was also the first time and the worst time, for me, that the critics got to me. I remember almost howling with grief when the reviews came out in a way that I have never done before or since, which is interesting. I don't quite know why apart from we all invested everything into the show, and they were so cruel, and it was the first time that I think I understood trolling. I mean, I stay away from it, but there was some online stuff early on that talked about a moment in the show which I stand by and loved, which is the first time Guy and Genevieve have sex and they're very young, and she gets pregnant from it.

I felt really strongly that we had to narratively understand that these people had actually had sex, so he took your knickers off on stage. We didn't see anything, but, and I thought it was very, very powerful, because she was so young and she was a virgin, and then all these awful trolls picked up on it and they talked about the big white knickers, but they had to be big and white because she wasn't sexually active, they needed to be girl's knickers.

Carly:

What does that matter? I remember finding that so odd, and I felt heartbroken when those reviews came out. Yeah, I made the big mistake of sort of straightaway in the morning popping up and very eagerly getting online to see what people were saying in my pajamas, because we just had the best press night ever, had such a wonderful time, flying high, and just being brought down with a crash. I was so heartbroken, and to see, yeah, such ... It felt really personal.

Emma:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). It did.

Carly:

The things that were said, and that, about my knickers, I found that so-

Emma:

Intrusive.

Carly:

Yeah, it was so odd.

Emma:

It was intrusive and objectified and there was a cruelty which I hadn't experienced before, really, and I think, my love of the show is also wrapped up in how vulnerable we all were and how hurt we all were, which I don't think people hear or understand. And I don't know whether that would happen if it ever happened again, I think it's a different world. But I think we were right at the peak-

Carly:

I agree.

Emma:

... of something we didn't understand, and as I say, I wear it as a sort of scar. I love the show, but my goodness, it was painful, wasn't it?

Carly:

Yes, it was. I feel the same thing, and I feel very protective of it in such a loving way. Even just listening to it all, it brought that joy and also that vulnerability back, just because we did pour our hearts and souls

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

into it. We really did, and I thought it was magic. I always, so grateful when people tell me. Often still people tell me that they really enjoyed it, and I-

Emma:

Oh, I get that too.

Carly:

... love that.

Emma:

Me too.

Carly:

I love that.

Emma:

Let's play out, this is the end of act one, it's the Lovers Depart. Oh my goodness, Carly, listen to this. (singing) Two grown women weeping over the airwaves, oh my goodness.

Carly:

Oh, blimey.

Emma:

It's astonishing, isn't it? The musicality, the emotion, the lack of cynicism, and the harp.

Carly:

Oh, epic. So epic.

Emma:

Right. I'm going to have to move us on, even though I feel that we could do a whole program about the Umbrellas of Cherbourg.

Carly:

Yeah, we could.

Emma:

That was the Umbrellas of Cherbourg, written by Jacques Demy and Michel Legrand with Carly Bawden and Andrew Durand on vocals, with accompany from the 2011 show. And tell us about your next song choice and why.

Carly:

Ooh, so my next song choice is Carey, by Joni Mitchell, who I've long been a very devoted fan of. And I had one album already, I think it was Clouds I had, when I was younger, and I would play that all the time. But it wasn't until I did, sorry, back to Umbrellas of Cherbourg again, shared a dressing room with the lovely Laura Brydon, then she introduced me to the album Blue, which I'd never heard before, and she leant it me. And I just remember listening to the whole thing from beginning to end in one sitting and just, I couldn't believe I hadn't heard it before. And it's one of my ultimate favorite albums and I just love it to bits, but I love this track and I love playing it at the moment because it's just so upbeat and beautiful and it makes me think about looking forward to seeing friends and family and squeezing them and having a good old drink and a laugh. (singing)

Emma:

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

Another sensational voice, which is what I want to talk about, Carly, your sensational voice. You are truly one of the most talented people I've ever met, but that isn't the thing, it's literally the effect your voice has on me. I mean, I think it's so pure, but the way you use your voice like a musical instrument and channel your emotions through it is something so rare and I feel so lucky that I've been able to work with you. But my next choice is going to surprise you a little bit, because we went on, we worked together, you were in Tristan and Iseult for me ...

Carly:

Yes.

Emma:

Playing *White Hands*, amazingly. I haven't got any of those songs, but I want to recall a moment, because we stayed in touch as friends, and you played Eliza Doolittle in Sheffield, and you invited me up. And Simon was the sound designer, Nigel Lilley was the musical director, and Dan Evans had directed it. And I came up, I thought "Yeah, I'm going to see Carly, I'll see Simon."

And oh my goodness, that night is seared in my memory forever. You were absolutely transcendent, it was just amazing. And there was a happening in that theater on that night which I have never experienced, which is you got a standing ovation in the middle of an act, in the middle of act one. I have never known an audience stand, and we all did, it was irresistible. It was such an amazing and intoxicating moment, and I said to Simon knowing that we're going to talk, "Is there a recording?" And he said "Well, there's not officially a recording, but there might be an illegal one," and we have, the illegal chains of theater have been working, and we've got a recording of it. It's not the best recording ever, but this is you as Eliza Doolittle in the amazing production in Sheffield, and thank you, because it's when you realize that theater's like a drug, and I was purely an audience that night, but there was this woman, my friend, and I had to stand and I had to cheer, and here you are. (singing)

Oh, bloody marvelous. And I also remember, Carly, when you arrived at the press night party that night, you looked absolutely stunning, you looked like Grace Kelly, and I suppose there's a little bit of me that I feel a bit like your mom, which is funny, because I know and love your mom, but at that moment I felt like, because I'd met you right at the beginning of your career, and that night when you walked in in that amazing green dress, I just thought "Look at that astonishing star that's just walked in."

Carly:

Aw, thanks.

Emma:

Absolutely amazing.

Carly:

And that was another really special experience doing that show, I felt so lucky to be a part of it and working with Dan and Nigel, the whole company, and Simon, it was just such a dream team. I loved doing that number and getting to just jump around the stage being ridiculous, and I remember in rehearsals Dan saying "We're thinking about putting you in the bath." I thought "Okay, I'm game, let's do it," thinking "How's that going to work?" And it was so much fun, every night, singing that in the bath, having to quickly get all these soap suds off and then run around in a nightie, it was so much fun.

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

And I remember that press night so well, it was such a brilliant night, and it was so wonderful to have you there. Oh, it was the best, it was one of the best nights ever.

Emma:

It's genuinely one of my lifetime highlights of being sat in a theater, absolutely without a doubt.

Carly:

Oh, that's so amazing to hear.

Emma:

Amazing.

Carly:

It was awesome.

Emma:

Well, I'm going to take us forward now, because I managed to tempt you to the Globe in my brief time there, which sort of-

Carly:

Oh hell yeah.

Emma:

... it sort of matters, doesn't it? Because all of us, it felt that I, even though it was two short years, that it felt really important that the people closest to me all shared in that adventure and that part of the chapter, and you came and you were part of 12th Night playing my Mariah, and you were really different, because Mariah's usually played by a comedy actress, usually quite country, wenchy I would say is the traditional, and you played her icy and Scottish, and ooh, she was scary as well. I thought she was a really-

Carly:

Ah, she was fun.

Emma:

... unusual take on the character.

Carly:

I very much enjoyed that.

Emma:

How was it, playing the Globe?

Carly:

Oh, it was amazing. I felt so, really like high every time I went out there. It was amazing, and just to have everybody stood so close and how responsive, it's so unique, isn't it, that response from the people down there in the yard, and how sort of sparkly and zesty and up for it everybody is. It felt amazing, and to be able to just be on stage and see the sky and be in such a brilliant, special, unique venue, and doing it with you as well, it was really brilliant, I loved it.

Emma:

I was interested. I mean, of course I knew you'd be absolutely fine because you're country farm girl at heart, but you're also, I hope I'm not insulting you, because I know and love you very much, but you're

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

quite obsessive, aren't you, and controlling of your process and your talents, and there was a tiny bit of me that I thought "I wonder whether Carly's going to find the sort of rough and random nature of the Globe a challenge," but you didn't at all. But planes-

Carly:

It's all coming out now.

Emma:

... go over, and people shout out, do you know what I mean?

Carly:

Yeah.

Emma:

It's not a controlled environment, is it?

Carly:

I totally know what you mean, and yes, yes, those things might be true of me. I think I get in my head too much, I think, and it means I can often be a bit of a slow burner in terms of sussing characters out. But that's what I love about working with you, that you always sort of, from the first time we worked together, sort of brought out my bravery and helped me get back in touch with that more, so I can sort of throw caution to the wind a bit more. And I think that's what I really, really enjoyed about the Globe, it felt completely different, the vibe of, yeah, totally uncontrollable, things happening and it being so new and different every night. Yeah, it was ...

Emma:

And you can't get in your head, can you? You have to be in the moment.

Carly:

No, you just can't, and that's very good for me.

Emma:

Yeah.

Carly:

It's very, very good.

Emma:

And you're very brave, Carly, and very instinctive, but you're very clever as well, which is just something, a cross you have to bear every now again and I just go "Don't worry about that. Come on, don't worry."

Carly:

Come on.

Emma:

So we've got another bit of recording, this is Words of Rascals from Twelfth Night, you can hear Carly on lead with Tony Jayawardena and Marc Antolin, and this is written by Ian Ross. (singing)

Carly:

Oh, yeah.

Emma:

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

It's fizzing with energy, and it's great to hear you rocking out a little bit, because that voice of yours can do anything.

Carly:

Oh, God, that music was so brilliant, what Ian did, it was so much fun to see. I think, sort of going back to my approach to work sometimes, it's really interesting, it goes hand in hand with that. I think because of the way I work sometimes, I think people sort of may assume that I'm quite a serious human, and I'm really not, I'm really not, so I really enjoyed cutting loose.

Emma:

And I loved seeing you cutting loose, as well. And that's, you're the full package, because you've got all the intensity and all the truth, but you've got all the silliness that I love as well.

Carly:

Thank you.

Emma:

When you hear that, a singing disco. No wonder they chucked us out.

Carly:

Shakespeare disco, I mean, what better genre is there?

Emma:

I know.

Carly:

Come on.

Emma:

Oh my goodness, intoxicating, listening to the energy coming from the stage and the audience, absolutely brilliant.

Carly:

Oh, it was electric, I loved it.

Emma:

What's your final choice and why?

Carly:

Ooh, my final choice is Reaching for the Moon, by Ella Fitzgerald. I had the pleasure of getting to sing that every night in the pre-show for Tristan and Iseult, I think the lovely Ian Ross suggested it and sent it over to me, and I immediately was like, "Yes please, that's the one." So I'd love to just have a listen to that, and Ella's just one of the best. (singing)

Emma:

Stunning. It's amazing to hear that sort of gypsy violin in the back.

Carly:

Yeah, it's stunning.

Emma:

It's sort of got all the folk roots in it, as well as the jazz. Beautiful, beautiful choice.

Carly:

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

Yeah, it's got all sorts.

Emma:

I wish we had a recording of your rendition.

Carly:

Oh.

Emma:

I've always loved the sort of ephemeral nature of theater. I talk lots about it, you have to be there to enjoy it, it's a moment of people coming together. But this lockdown has made me wish I could time travel, I'm feeling really sort of like I want to hold on to all the things that we've made. Tough.

Carly:

Yeah, I hear you, I feel so nostalgic at the moment.

Emma:

I know, it's devastating, isn't it? It's because we're normally always planning and looking forwards, and that's really been taken from us theater people at the moment, because we really don't know what's going to happen. So yeah, the only choice is looking backwards, which is gorgeous and sad and wonderful and slightly distressing all at once.

Carly:

Yeah, it is.

Emma:

Let's talk about Romantics Anonymous.

Carly:

Yes.

Emma:

So, from my point of view, I was brought this film, I can't remember when, it was a long time ago. I always, sort of as a habit, say no to projects that are brought to me, because I always think that I should have the original idea, but I did watch this film and thought "Damn it, this is really beautiful and I can't bear the thought of somebody else working on this."

So I started working on this musical, and truthfully, you were always Angelique in my mind, always. I couldn't imagine that this character that needed to have such a unusual, complex inner life, and such a fragile outer life, and I just knew that you were the actor that was going to be able to understand this part. And I let the project go a couple of times, but these things, they hold on to you. And so we did make it, and we made it at the Globe, and you were my Angelique, and I think it's a seminal performance from you, because she's such an unusual character that's got all these social anxieties, which I just alluded to, I think is something you understand a little bit.

Carly:

What?

Emma:

I know, I don't know what I'm talking about.

Carly:

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

I don't know what you mean. Sorry, [crosstalk 00:39:47]-

Emma:

But you're a magnificently complicated woman, and all of the inner world, which of course your natural truth came out. But what you landed was the comedy, so much. I mean, I just think it was a standout performance which will come back, I'm sure of it. But talk to me a little bit about Angelique and what she meant to you.

Carly:

Oh, yeah, I absolutely love playing Angelique, and sort of going back to what you were saying, you couldn't bear the thought of anyone else doing it, I really feel that way about her. I remember by chance being in New York when you did a workshop, and I went to go and watch it with the lovely [Kirsty Woodward 00:40:32], and we were both laughing our heads off and in bits, and I just remember completely falling in love with it. I always know that I think something's amazing when I'm really, really jealous that I'm not in it, and I was really, really jealous that I wasn't in that [crosstalk 00:40:55]-

Emma:

Again, the counter to that was I couldn't believe my luck that you were in New York at that time, because I wanted you to fall in love with it. Because I'm thinking, "Look, I'm thinking long term here, and that's my Angelique," which is a terrible thing to admit, but ...

Carly:

Well, it totally worked. So when it came my way I was so over the moon, and the character is funny. Sort of going back to my usual approach to things, I am definitely a slow burner and I sort of, people probably find it a bit annoying in rehearsal processes, but I tend to sort of take a bit longer to figure things out, and I always admire people that can come to rehearsals quite early on and they already seem to have quite a vivid idea of who the character is and what they want to do with it, and I've never really been that person, but with Angelique, reading through it and starting off with rehearsals, I just immediately felt like I understood her and got her, and it just, yeah, it just sort of clicked for me, and that was the first time I'd truly experienced that with a character, and I just love how flawed and how emotional, but also her attention to detail and her sensitivity to everyone else, and being rubbish in group situations, which I am also rubbish at.

But also, yeah, as well, how funny she is. I really, really enjoyed playing her and I just love, I'm so in love with all the characters in the show. I love the relationship that she has with Jean-Rene and their whole journey, and being able to bounce off of, first the lovely Dominic Marsh and then lovely Marc Antolin, it was such a privilege to be a part of, and I would just love if we could somehow ...

Emma:

Do it again.

Carly:

Have it again, yeah.

Emma:

Oh, well, I'm not going to give up on that. Of course it's coming back. And I agree, I've worked with you many times, and Angelique just fell out of you, and it was a real joy. You're always a joy to watch, and you get used to actors and their different processes, so it's not something that I worry about. But this

Wise Children's Lockdown

Tea & Biscuits with Emma Rice and Carly Bawden

one, she did, she just sort of popped out of you, and that was Carly at her most instinctive and brave and flawed and complex best, it was such a blessed time.

And isn't it amazing, when you start looking at where we started, so many of the Umbrellas of Cherbourg team were part of the making of Romantics. We had Dom Marsh and Nigel Lilley and Jo Riding and you, and me, so it's amazing how, it's all feeding in, isn't it? These shows don't come out of nowhere, they're all about the friendships and the trust and the belief in each other.

Carly:

Yeah, me and Jo Riding always joke that we should just sort of have each other written into our contracts that we just should be a mother-daughter team.

Emma:

For hire, mother-daughter for hire.

Carly:

That'd be delightful. Yeah, I just love the balance of the show, the heart and the humor, but also the struggle. It's such a beautiful show to get to explore and be a part of.

Emma:

The heart, the humor, and the struggle. That sounds like the title of a autobiography, doesn't it?

Carly:

It can be mine.

Emma:

It really sums up what it is to make theater though, isn't it? And [crosstalk 00:45:08].

Carly:

Yeah.

Emma:

So we're going to play out on Romantics Anonymous, Just Right, the astonishing voice of Carly Bawden, and my promise that it's not the end, because I don't know, it's going to happen, isn't it? Shows this beautiful don't come around too often and it needs to be seen. So before I play out, Carly, can I say thank you? Thank you for your blazing talent, your total commitment, your amazing professionalism, your fun, your annoying attention to detail, your even more annoying ability to remember absolutely everything and tell me, but most of all, thank you for your voice, which is truly sent from the gods. It's been a pleasure.

Carly:

Oh, and thank you. I feel so incredibly lucky that I get to know you and work with you as an artist and dear friend. You and the shows that we've done together mean so much to me, and you're magic, and I'll be forever grateful. (singing)

Emma:

If you have a memory or connection you'd like to share on Tea and Biscuits, leave us a message on our phone line, 0117 318-3846. That's 0117 318-3846. Keep checking our social media for details of our next show. Tea and Biscuits is part of Wise Children's Lockdown. Thanks for hanging out with us, bye. (singing)