



## Everything in Harmony: An Interview with She Goat

### [00:00:19] INTRO

**Duška Radosavljević:** Hello and welcome to the Gallery.

French-born Eugénie Pastor and British-born Shamira Turner began their working life together as part of the theatre and musical ensemble Little Bulb, based in the South East of England. Prompted by the way in which their physical likeness led audiences to confuse them for each other, Pastor and Turner worked over a number of years to explore the performativity of female identity throughout history and, in 2018, they rolled out a national tour of *DoppelDänger*, a music theatre piece they co-authored under the company name She Goat. This piece, which they describe as retrofuturist, explores bilingualism, the blurring of boundaries, Baroque-pop mash ups and – as they reveal in the conversation that follows – the abysmal blunder of Brexit.

This show was warmly received by audiences and critics alike and made way for their second boundary-busting offering *The Undefinable*, which premiered at Camden People's Theatre in December 2019, before being set to embark on another tour. With non-normativity, the art of radio and the agenda of accessibility at its core, *The Undefinable* – as its creators explain in this interview – holds the potential to also overcome the limitations of the pandemic.

This interview was conducted on Zoom on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020, during the Covid-19 lockdown in London.

### [00:01:58] MUSICAL WAYS IN

**Duška Radosavljević:** So, as you know, this is part of a research project – we are trying to talk to artists about the way that they make work in the way that you guys do with privileging speech and sound. We kind of use this conversation in a way of really trying to understand how people have arrived at where they are now, in terms of their artistic practice. I'm familiar with some of your journeys, some of your shared journey via Little Bulb, but maybe we can go even further beyond that and trace your way into the Little Bulb if you like. But obviously there is that story as well that is separate from yours and that will separate at some point in the conversation. Shamira, you were a founding member of Little Bulb, maybe we can start with you – if we go back to how you arrived at that way of making theatre and then we'll go to Eugénie as well.

**Shamira Turner:** Well we all met at the University of Kent, the four of us in staggered years. And it was Alex, the artistic director's final project at university doing creative performance practice, so devising work from scratch and all that entailed. The four of us made *Crocospia* and that was Little Bulb's first show, and it was our way of making work together but also making a working relationship together and figuring out this dynamic that we knew we wanted to do more of. It was actually my first experience in some ways of devising and making works from scratch. Kent – the course was excellent because it gave you a lot of opportunity to investigate live art, performance art, and there was a real emphasis on making work from scratch and lots of opportunities to investigate different ways of just diving in. You didn't need to necessarily have authority to do it, you were encouraged to just make it happen. I think that's filtered through in all of Little Bulb's work and maybe is a sort of making identity for Eugénie and I to just: 'We want to make this thing happen'. Even though we maybe don't have the qualifications or might not be the best person, there's something interesting about how I get that done, whether it's playing an instrument I don't know how to do, for example, or something more technical like editing. So we made *Crocospia*. I was halfway through my course at Kent–

**DR:** How did Alex [Smith] actually assemble that group of people together, on what grounds?

**ST:** Right. Alex and Clare [Beresford] were in the same year, then next up was Dom [Conway], and then next up was myself, and I think that Alex and Dom had had a relationship of like – there was lots of scratching and work in progress stuff made, and they'd mucked around making some extracurricular shows together. And obviously Clare and Alex were in the same year so they were making work quite



a lot. I was the wild card, unknown. I sort of did one workshop with Alex and I guess we thought each other were pretty cool. And he saw me pitch for a show that I wanted to direct, which saw me bringing together three different texts from different eras and weaving them altogether. I basically just pitched to get some funding from the drama society to make this show and he took a chance on me based off of that. So he just had an intuition or something so I'm extremely grateful to the serendipity of that moment – since then we just kept on making work together.

**DR:** While you're talking about *Crocospmia* – that was a piece that did not have an element of live music even though it did have an element of music in it. So this criterion of music-making didn't exist at that point when he was bringing people together, but somehow you all ended up being musicians as well as performers later on in the company–

**ST:** The very first rehearsal for *Crocospmia* we each taught each other a song that we loved. And *Crocospmia* had a lot of a cappella singing in it and three-part harmony work in it. Music is sort of worshipped in the show as very focal, as a tool for memory – it revolves, like literally, it revolves around a record player. And these records are consciously set up for 'this moment now', and narratively that feels like something that links the children in the story to their parents. So it's about dealing with loss and having respect for song. We were all very passionate about music but had different – for example, for me, I'm untrained. I mean, I play a fair few instruments now and they've all been acquired through, like, 'needs must' for different shows. Each member of Little Bulb will have their own relationship to learning instruments and to music over the years, and my experience was that I loved singing and I was passionate about music but I didn't know how to read music. In fact, I still don't. I write letters, the chord letters and stuff, and find my own way of getting the information across. But in our second show Alex got an accordion for £20 off EBay, and this was before they became a token of a fair few shows – I know they had a bit of a resurgence at one point, but maybe we were just before that, that trendy moment! So I started learning accordion, and probably because of that imposter identity of thinking: 'I'm going to get found out, people will know I'm not a proper musician', threw myself into it. It's a sort of irresistible keenness – you get a bit and you can see the results and in order to make it happen it's just you and time and figuring it out. And I always like coming back to this quote from Tom Waits, which is to set yourself the challenge of writing on an instrument you don't know how to play. And for me that's very interesting because there is something special about interacting with something you maybe don't know officially how to do. And now I play autoharp, guitar, keytar; and Eugénie and I for *She Goat*, we taught ourselves to make electronic music using a Push 2 Live Ableton software, which we identified would be so useful to advance our sound to the next level. And I've now got a feeling where if you want this texture you can kind of find a way of interacting with it and seeing what it's like when you apply yourself to that, and in the same way that maybe you could get the best, I don't know, bass player out there, but there's something about how Eugénie plays bass, for example, that I love – it's her individual impulses and her style that makes making music with her interesting to me. That's just, sort of, one element. I think that's how it is with all of Little Bulb, we've all got different influences and levels of experience and keenness to apply ourselves on new instruments. That possibly comes from Alex because he loves the world of a new show being born out of a certain world or genre of instruments, both aesthetically and sonically. And when someone tells you 'You have to learn to play a song on this thing now – go!', you just end up doing it.

**DR:** And Eugénie, you had more of a professional musical training, if I understand correctly, before you joined Little Bulb.

**EP:** Well, I learned to play flute from when I was a kid but as an extra-curricular activity – and in France going to music school after school was relatively accessible financially, so that's what I did for years and stopped I think when I was 15 or something. So I had a solid foundation in learning how to read music and learning how to play the flute. Music was quite funny for me learning it as a kid because I was both quite into playing it but the training for me was a bit like – I was really good at school but I was really bad at music school! For a long time it felt like playing music was never for pleasure, it was for technique and I never had the patience to fully embrace that technique and I didn't really like being told off. But that gave me a really solid foundation in how to read music and how to understand some of it. And then as a teenager I think I played bass, or 'played bass' in a 'band' for about four months – and then similarly just abandoned the bass and the amp and never thought about it again. But I



continued doing theatre and performance, again in an untrained capacity as an amateur and just enjoyed doing it. Fast forward a few years later, I do an Erasmus exchange at the University of Kent, which is where I met Alex, and Clare and Dom a little bit, but more on the periphery – I didn't meet Shamira because I don't think you'd started university yet. Alex and I were cast in a devised performance on Englishness, and me being French was an interesting perspective on that! And that was my first experience of devising performance. And then two years later I moved back to the UK to study and do a PhD and moved into a house with Clare and Alex, and it was the year they'd just formed Little Bulb, they'd just graduated. So we started living together and I was aware that Little Bulb had started happening and it was very much the early days – Shamira was in an exchange year in California at that time so, again, we didn't meet for another few months, maybe ten months! – and after a while, one night Alex in the kitchen asked me if I wanted to be part of the next show Little Bulb was making, and I answered: 'Yes!' And that Christmas I went back to France and Alex asked: 'By the way, do you happen to play any instruments?' Because we'd experimented with a cabaret format where there was a bit of music playing but it was more like songs and a few chords on a synth and it was not really the focus of the making. Before that show Alex was very keen to explore a band aesthetic. So I told him that I knew a fair bit of flute and I had a bass guitar even though I had no idea what to do on it. He asked me to bring them in, which I did, and that's how I reconnected with playing music. It was quite an interesting journey coming from – like, the way I had learnt music was very much: you have a sheet of music, it's very well written because it's Mozart or Saint-Saëns, or someone who knows what they're doing – and all my attempts at writing music in music lessons had been awful because I didn't really understand the language I was speaking with. So I ended up in a rehearsal room where the process was very much: 'Okay, can you write a song? Can you write a piece of music? Can you play this bit of music but create something around it and with it?', and it was very much on music as a tool for expression and as a theatrical thing. So music in Little Bulb is often used because of the aesthetic – as Shamira was saying, visual aesthetic, sonic aesthetic, the world it creates but also the emotions it can create in an audience. And it goes hand in hand with the more theatrical and dramaturgical elements. But it was a real learning curve to learn again how to play music for emotion, and how to make music which came from an improvisation route and for me that was a real challenge. It was easier with the bass because I didn't really have any basis to deconstruct, so in a way that was that dual coming at it where I had to, kind of, unlearn – not unlearn what I had learnt but rather learn a different way of using an instrument. And that's how we got integrated into working with Little Bulb. It feels like music – like what Shamira was saying about – it's less interesting to have someone who's a virtuoso and that's where you bring them in, and Alex seems to be more interested in: 'I want to hear you play this instrument.' It's very similar to the way the theatre is made, where there is often this question around: the work is devised and in a way the characters, or the creatures you create and put on stage can't really – they could be played by someone else but the process of teaching them that part would be a bit mind-blowing because it's so intertwined with who the person who made it is. And that's really true for music as well, where we've all had to learn new instruments or new ways of singing or new challenges that have made us into accidental virtuosos at what we do, because no one else could be doing it in that way, in a way. And it doesn't mean that we're technically, necessarily, the best, but it means that we are the best at playing that part we created for ourselves. And I think that's a very key element in the work Little Bulb makes and the work She Goat makes. And in a way that's what I think my training as a musician/performer – I still find it weird to call myself a musician even though that's what I've been doing for years now – but I feel like my theatrical and musical training has been through that learning how to make work with Little Bulb, as part of Little Bulb.

**ST:** I think it's also because the emphasis is always on serving the storytelling, and I think Eugénie and I like to make and experience performance that involves a hyper multi-tasking. And it never feels like it's about you playing the song well because you're trying to use the song to do so much – and we tend to pile on these extra, extra challenges and I think we're always trying to push ourselves so each show is a workout in some sense, and that can be literally physically, in terms of boosting our skills, but we want to see some form of high effort and sweating. And so yeah, we tend to set ourselves the challenges of learning new instruments and a new genre of music, which involves a completely new training sometimes. Eugénie and I both have this absolute love, inherently, of making harmonies – and harmonies devised by one group of people compared to another can feel quite different, and we have



a specific sound of unusual harmonies that are very close. So you build it autobiographically – not just in the terms of your story, your relationship with people you are working and making with, but in terms of what you can do to combine with each other in that moment to make this sound. And I think that stops the music from being focal in terms of accomplishment – it more becomes a sort of exercise that needs to happen for the rhythm of the show or the storytelling.

### **[00:17:20] JOURNEYS ALONGSIDE LITTLE BULB**

**DR:** You've both given us the story of your musical journey with Little Bulb. I'd ask you maybe just to tell me also what else you have done outside of Little Bulb. So, have you worked with any other companies? I know that you, Eugénie, you've done a PhD alongside this work as well. So what other lives exist outside what we've seen so far?

**EP:** I now lecture at London South Bank University, and I'm now there on a permanent part-time contract, but I started as a visiting lecturer for a few years following on my PhD and always having a foot in academia and research through practice but also through a more theory-based element to that research.

**DR:** And was your PhD music related?

**EP:** No, it was on what I called 'physical theatres' – which was sort of a shorthand for experimental devising performance, but with an emphasis on physical vocabularies as a starting point. So very much the kind of performance you identified as having been quite key in the past decades in terms of a paradigm. And it was a comparison between the UK and a French context, and how language shapes the way we think about how we make performance and how we experience performance in one and the other context but always with a focus on: 'How do you connect?' There was a section on sound and how sound in its physical quality enables a connection between a performer and an audience, or performers and performers, in a way that just a visual element doesn't – and advocating for performance as a more holistic, sensorial experience, which I know is nothing new but felt like, especially coming from a French perspective at the time, was quite different from how performance was thought about, especially there. So I think those questions around co-presence and being bodies in the same space and using bodies that make sound and what sound is and further – you know, there is a touch inherent to sound in all that – was very much at the forefront. And so alongside that, once I'd finished my PhD, I did a bit of work with some other companies as a deviser, so usually as a performer, co-creator, in work that was I would say of a similar world to what Little Bulb does. Not in terms of the work that they create but in terms of where they're programmed, or how it works, basically, so a lot of work at Battersea Arts Centre! Little Bulb was taking a lot of my time as well at the time and alongside that I did a one-on-one piece called *Pube*, which again felt like was very much interested in similar questions around: 'How do you share intimacy, how do you share embodied knowledge with an audience?' And the fact that it was one-on-one, those questions were brought to the fore in a way, but similarly this idea of 'how do you connect with someone, how can you provide a space as an artist and as a performer?' – because they go hand in hand but there's that element of performance – to me that's really important. That you create a space for an audience who genuinely connect with you and what does it mean to be – what does honesty mean, and what does safety mean, and what does consent mean in a space where someone's created a structure for another person to come and, in this specific context, donate some of their pubic hair to a stranger? Yeah! So I feel like all those questions are always a part of what I do and experiment with, and there's often an element of music being something that can enable that – and musical performance or sound performance as something that can enable that and that goes beyond a recorded element, like the liveness of it.

**DR:** How does that work? Why does sound enable that?

**EP:** I'm sure there's loads of scientific reasons for it but I'm not going to ridicule myself in trying to explain! But from maybe – I don't know, from maybe a slightly more artistic version of that – there's some performers whose voice is amazing and they're amazing on record, and then you go and see them live and it is amplified, it's going through a microphone, there's a very careful system of amplification, and yet there's something about hearing their voice there and then that's suddenly weirdly transcendental. And you feel touched in a way that you can't feel touched listening to the record.



**[00:22:10 to 00:24:03] 'This Is Not Enough' from *DoppelDanger* (2019)**

**EP:** And there's something almost animalistic, you know, feeling sound in your chest and feeling it on your skin and feeling it surrounded by other people. If, like, you're at a concert, if you're in a really intimate setting, there's something that sound and music in particular can access, it's like a fast-tracked intimacy. And it's complicated because a lot of the time that requires a lot of technical abilities, so I'm not saying it's like a spontaneous connection but there's something about the craft of it that enables those pockets of emotions to be felt. That's what Hollywood does all the time – certain chords are going to make you feel a certain way, certain tonalities, and it can really open worlds in a way that words can't, that movement can't. Maybe it's because it happens on several levels sensorially, it happens through your ears but also the element of touch is really present.

**DR:** Shamira, what other lives exist for you, other than She Goat and Little Bulb?

**ST:** Well, I would have graduated in 2010 and gone sort of directly into pretty much full time making a living with Little Bulb, but I have also worked with a lot of other companies making devised work. And I think something that I was sort of investigating, and really passionate about – in making performance and in representing my body and how I present on stage while I was at university and in Little Bulb's early work – I was very interested but sort of had a need to investigate how I was representing my gender on stage and in storytelling. And I think that this maybe began in a sort of more pixelated, more blockish way and has become more nuanced and subtle as I've grown up as an artist and a person. And I think perhaps there was a relationship – well, there must be a relationship between the personal and your choices as a maker and a performer – but I was very drawn to creating and representing characters who were I suppose as an umbrella term, we could say 'awkward in their skin' in some way. And that was often to do with a sort of unsettled or not quite fitting dynamic that kept coming back for me in different ways. And I really wanted to work with 1927, I really admired their work and they were looking for a male actor to create *Golem* with. And I sort of took a punt and said: 'I'd love to try out for you. I know you're looking for a man', but I'd been investigating for a while, at this time we were saying cross-gender casting, cross-gender performance, and basically playing men in shows with Little Bulb, which had happened three or four times at this point. It worked out and I worked with 1927 to make *Golem* and played Robert. And I think my sort of fascination, or need artistically then, was to muck around with the voice and the body and shape and movement and representation, to genuinely present as this vulnerable chap on stage. And that mission artistically, or need, that's kind of gone on but become different variations of that. That's now sort of smoothed out into a more fluid, non-binary place in terms of my investigations, but I'm still really fascinated by these subtle shifts in how we inhabit our body and also use the range of our vocal quality and it's something that I'm interested in work to use the lowest register of my voice in terms of singing and also vocal and character performance – and these things have kept coming back. Yeah, I love working with other companies, and I really enjoy it because you expand everyone's skills: you bring your own experiences, little warm ups, techniques, interests, ideas about making theatre and the logic of making a work, and you throw all of those in together and you each take away new things. So every time I come back to working with Little Bulb, or back to working with She Goat, I might have picked up a few interesting things to reflect on or bring into the mix and the same with my other colleagues. So I think it's a real strengthening act to branch out and try on each other's practices and techniques for size.

**[00:28:01] ENSEMBLE CHEMISTRY**

**DR:** How would you then qualify your individual contributions to Little Bulb before we move on to She Goat? What's the chemistry of that ensemble and what's your, kind of, element in that chemistry?

**EP:** I'm not sure if I can answer that! I feel like one of the deciding casting factors for Little Bulb has been based on personal relationship as well as artistic reasons. As we were saying earlier, I've not been asked to be in a show because I'm a virtuoso at the bass, which I really am not, I was asked to be in the show because there was something about my relationship with Alex and then later on with the rest of the company that meant – there's a real combination between the human relationship and the artistic relationship, and that's obviously what She Goat was born out of as well, I know we'll get to that later. But I feel like one of the contributions is that we've become family but we were extremely



good friends to begin with – very intimate, close friends. I think in Little Bulb everyone's so wildly different and yet it does feel like we're all weirdly related, even physically to an extent! [*Laughter.*] So it's quite hard to really track what everyone brings – it's weirdly easier to notice when someone's not part of a process. There's an energy to the process and the show that's different but you can't necessarily quantify it but it feels like the energies shifts depending on who's part of the show, and you can tell but you can't necessarily pinpoint it.

**ST:** I would fully agree with what you say. It's like a family dynamic: making the work completely feels born out of the relationships and that chemistry. There've never been auditions – if a new show expands to bring new people we want to work with into the mix, it's more often than not there's a friendship that's formed there that predates the working relationship. Because the mix of personalities in the room – that will create the show, that is the ingredients. And I think that sort of, is probably echoing what Eugénie is saying when you – yes, maybe you can tell more the absence of somebody than the contribution because I feel like making work for Little Bulb is about trying to make things that please the other people in the room. That's your first audience, and if I can make Alex laugh or make a song that Dom likes, there's something about creating something we're excited about and happy with and inspired to get involved on each other's work that's really motivating! The material can always be improved or taken in a new direction going through the filter of somebody else's brain and impulses and skills, and something might start, like a skeleton of a song, and then it just shifts over to somebody else to help you take it to the next level. I think a willingness to work in this way is actually probably one of the most important things that you need to be comfortable with. Maybe that's with a lot of devised theatre, but it's certainly my experience in Little Bulb. And with She Goat because it's just the two of us, it's so integrated in each other's space but still that thing of: 'First and foremost I want to generate ideas and bits of material that make Eugénie's heart sing', because if that's not happening then the next steps don't feel justified. Because Eugénie and I obviously met through working together with Little Bulb we have that training ground and that learnt language for how to make in a quite trusting, unselfconscious way, where you can follow your impulses and you can do something that you don't have the authority to do. And it will be subtly autobiographical in some way. I think that all of that work has parts of our relationships and our experiences, our relationships with each other, bedded into them – and elements of invention and imagination, of course, and it all becomes so interwoven that you couldn't necessarily pull it apart – like little secrets of what's true just for us. But I think Eugénie and I had a real craving to explore our working relationship further, and particularly make work that was more weird and more political. I think that's only a positive thing in just identifying those new itches that you suddenly need to scratch and leaning into them and finding ways to address those needs. The need to work with Eugénie is definitely woven into the need to make the kind of work that She Goat makes because when it boils down to it it's us and what we can create together and deliver together on stage or in the performance space, or maybe in your ears if it's just an audio content. That's like the bare bones basic tools – it comes down to our relationship.

### **[00:33:15] THE BEGINNINGS OF SHE GOAT**

**DR:** Let's go into how you decided to start making work together.

**EP:** It didn't start as us thinking: 'You know what, we're going to explore our own language.' It started more as a side idea because of the fact that – for I think it must have been six years prior to that – Shamira and I were consistently mistaken for one another, or thought to be the same person or thought to be twins, and when you say to people you're not related they ask if you're lovers, as if that was the next logical step!

**ST:** More often than not, we would come off stage and say: 'Why would you think I'm more, why is it more likely I'd be Eugénie rather than myself?'

**EP:** Very bizarre! We'd played with that by making a song in one of Little Bulb's cabaret gig experiments, and then we just thought: 'Shall we lean into it and have fun with it and see if we can spend a bit of time playing around with exploring what it means to be doppelgangers?' And at first, the very initial ideas were like: 'If we come up with one or two cabaret pieces that make us laugh, then that's great.' And we started thinking about it and working together a little bit on it and got given space



at Battersea Arts Centre, because those ideas started when we were doing the first *Orpheus* there, so we were already in the building. And then out of that first experiment we started exploring fairly weird images and sonic worlds and really leaning into: 'What can we do that is our impulses we feel we want to explore, and how can we play with that?' And then what started to emerge felt like quite an interesting and exciting thing to keep pursuing. The process of making our first show was also the process of discovering what theatrical and musical language we were speaking. And so we had that shorthand in those working strategies. We were starting from a place of knowing each other extremely well and knowing how to work with one another, and having a lot of things that we were already sharing, but what we had to find was what language was emerging and what strategies we were starting to create.

**ST:** We were also trying to unpack the uncomfortableness of this sort of long-lived feeling of being mistaken for each other and what that does to your identity. And also lean into it and just think: 'Do you know what? This keeps happening so let's push it, let's really go there and become each other artistically, visually, sonically, let's meld our voices!' It felt like a place that we sort of wanted to go to and to just acknowledge what the world kept giving us, the experience of the world kept giving us. But then alongside making the show, Brexit happened. And that was a really scary and upsetting and surreal moment because we were actually going into rehearsal the next day, or the same morning of getting the results, and Eugénie is French and I'm British, and it made me feel so sad and scared and disassociated from this land that we were making and performing and co-habiting on. And it just felt like: 'Okay, so more than ever we need to figure out a way to respond to this unhappiness or this confusion that's here.' And it's really a show that's about othering and otherness, but actually underneath it all it's a show about togetherness, and how the other person isn't taking space from you but they make you stronger. And it might feel like a battle for space, but when you look deeper it's actually a stronger community and more of us is a better world, more opportunity. Just figuring out that that was why we were making the show suddenly – and actually what we'd been trying to learn about this experience the whole time making the show – I think that was how the show had to be impacted by the real-life events. That's suddenly when the personal became political, and the two fused for us.

**EP:** It really felt like the language, the show, the company identity – because for a long time it was Shamira and Eugénie from Little Bulb, a.k.a. She Goat – and now the company has an existence because of the work that we've made as a company. So it felt like *DoppelDänger* was very much us finding who we were together, finding what performance we were making and also, as Shamira highlighted, it was quite organically responsive to what was happening around us and to us in a way that maybe that some shows we were making with Little Bulb weren't in the same way – which is where that political element comes in. And in a way the fact that that process was so intertwined, that all those elements were intertwined, is also what gave us the musical and theatrical tools that then we used and played with and subverted in the making of the second show. So when Shamira mentioned the Push, that light-up machine that's basically a physical version of Ableton as a software – which we learnt in a super idiosyncratic way, which I think is a bit of a headache for anyone who actually understands Ableton, because the way that we use it is very theatrical and very 'us' based on what we need it to do – the reason why we were interested in it was to play with this idea of duplicating sounds and voices and playing with sameness and doubling, layering. So there was like a real thematic purpose to that acquisition. And the fact that we wanted to play with abrasive textures, and playing with drums, and playing with voice modifications a little bit – that's still a really big part of the world of the second show, in a way. So it feels like we aggregated tools to create a language that was responding to what was happening in our lives that in a way has made us into She Goat – like, we've emerged from the chrysalis with an identity that has been forged through the process of making the work together.

**DR:** How did the name come about?

**ST:** There is a poem ['Magnificat', by Michèle Roberts], I found it very moving – it's very beautiful, and when I read it I was compelled to share it with Eugénie, probably in rehearsal one. And it's about a female friendship in a moment of crisis: one taking the other in and supporting and looking after through the grottness and the toughness and the gentleness of that recovery period. And it ends describing this moment, this sort of caring dynamic: 'Like two [old] she-goats butting and nuzzling [each other] in the smelly fold.' And we figured that's what we were doing and that's what we needed to do, that's our identity, and how we co-create.



## [00:40:52] THE SHE GOAT WAY OF WORKING

**ST:** What Eugénie was saying in terms of how the needs to make *DoppelDänger* fed into how we make the latest show *The Undefinable* – I think one of the real hallmarks about how we're compelled to make work is that we're really in each other's space in a positive, helpful way all the time. When we're making we don't sit out and watch each other very much; we're sort of always doing things together, we write music in real time together, like sat next to each other, we set timers and give each other the listening conch, or speaking conch or whatever to: 'You lay down that drum track and I'm going to lay down the bassline.' And sometimes we work in an acknowledged, structural way to make sure it feels very equal, and we swap round who does what role because it keeps us making new decisions. But so often the experience of being on stage, it's kind of like we are both running down a hill holding hands! Like with *DoppelDänger*, it was very much a relentless experience of us playing music. Even the text, we say pretty much everything in harmony. We speak in harmony with tiny little – like the text is scored, we share sentences. For the new show we came up with a concept for us to be radio DJ hosts, which was sort of – we're in this interdependent relationship and sonically, and with the text we're constantly supporting each other, finishing each other's sentences, setting each other up for the next moment in terms of tech, helping with cueing each other up, chipping in. And I feel like we could have never arrived at that show language if it hadn't been for *DoppelDänger* and realising it is something quite specific to what we crave in a kind of onstage relationship and the kind of work we want to make. If you pulled out my lines they wouldn't make sense in a way. It has to be – it is a two-person experience.

**DR:** So, it sounds like the first show came about from this impetus of the theme of being mistaken for each other, and then the second one came about as a result of the formal considerations you were developing in working with each other.

**EP:** More or less. As in, when we'd done *DoppelDänger* we thought – well, we had a chat where we were like: 'What do we do next? Do we both agree to do something next?' and we were like: 'Yeah, of course, but better to check!' And in the reflection of what was preoccupying us at the time – we were living together at the time we started talking about this next show, and we were together and individually, having a lot of thoughts around what it meant to be, well, to be at an age where suddenly a lot of the relationships that felt important to us, and had been important to us throughout our 20s were suddenly not given that much space in the narratives we were told. And in the way people – I don't mean people in particular, but in a lot of the messages we were receiving, [people] were like: 'Oh, now is the time where you settle down with one person, and then that's it.' And it just felt like the narratives we were hearing about what it meant to be people who identify as women at the age we were in were suddenly erasing all the things we were feeling that weren't neatly fitting into any of those – where suddenly the paradigm was shifting in a way that we were feeling a bit unhappy with. So that motivated the idea of exploring what love meant beyond the necessarily more expected version of the narrative, not because we have anything against that but just because it felt reductive to not have space to explore that and the fact that – a bit like with *DoppelDänger* – what does it mean to label things and feelings and relationships and why do we need to do that? Is there a place for ambiguity and ambivalence to exist in a way that's nourishing rather than in a way that has to be shut down? So that was one of the impetus behind the making of the second show, and as we were entering the rehearsal room we also thought: 'Well, we have this array of techniques and languages and theatrical things that we worked so hard to identify as serving what we want it to make together. Shall we see how we can use that language that we have?' Not in a one-trick pony way but more in a: 'Well, we worked really hard in finding stuff that feels creatively exciting for us in the telling of those stories, so how can we use that? How can we subvert it, how can we play with it, and how can we push the elements that we were finding very interesting as they were emerging during the first process?' So one of those elements was around making the work accessible to visually impaired audiences, and what that meant practically in terms of how to integrate text so it serves a dual purpose of being a theatrical text but also being audio description for an audience who might not be able to see. So it felt like the way we arrived at making the second show was a place of greater artistic – like, not confidence, that's not the right word – but we felt like: 'We have a solid base, where do we go next? And what feels urgent and important for us to speak about as a two? And what is in our lives at the moment as individuals, but also as the way we



work and live and love each other that feels important and that we want to explore, where's that need to say that?'

**[00:46:53 to 00:49:18] 'Between the Lines' from *The Undefinable* (2019)**

**ST:** So it was born out of the need to answer these two important questions and create something in what felt like a bit of an absence for us. Make a work that gave space to the kind of relationships that feel really important to us but weren't prioritised or represented in the sort of mainstream culture that we were experiencing, or that seemed most prevalent. I think it was really about trying to find language or ways to identify what those things are and what we were feeling a sense of a kind of pre-emptive loss about – and defend that important space and that important dynamic in our lives rather than let it somehow 'bleb' away because that's the most predominant arc. Yeah, and beginning to feel 'othered' a little bit in being caught in this predicament. So letting the work answer that unease and that question and letting the work be a fight for representing, and also trying to see if we could make a show that was accessible, inherently accessible, from the word go – because we made *DoppelDänger* retrospectively accessible to visually impaired audiences. Because our work is so sonically dynamic and sonically integrated we were really keen to find a way of doing this with *DoppelDänger*, and then we just thought – the more we knew about it, the more we were like: 'What feels frustrating is that we can only offer one night that's accessible. What if every night was accessible?' And: 'What if we're bearing this in mind in the making process, not as an afterthought that gets laid on top?' And I think that there was a third thing we set ourselves in making a show and that was how to make a rehearsal experience, and a touring experience, that was less emotionally exhausting and less stressful, because *DoppelDänger* we are so proud of, but it was all-consuming it was so ambitious, and every get in was like: 'Okay, there's video, there's technical sound!' It is a tiny show but we did everything we could think of! We kind of wanted to maybe put our experience higher up on the list, in terms of building a work. So an example might be me going: 'Oh, we could use the autoharp in this song!', and Eugénie going: 'Well, that means that we have to tour with it', and being like: 'Aha, yes!' So what happens if we kind of narrow down the stuff in the room? Yeah. So there's three questions to answer when making work.

**[00:51:58] OVERCOMING BARRIERS / INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY**

**DR:** What are you doing at the moment then? And where are you going next?

**EP:** Well we had been awarded Arts Council funding to fund a tour of quite a few venues between March, June and September. We did two tour dates in March and then everything collapsed! So those tour dates for the future at the moment are being rescheduled for later, when theatres might reopen. But part of that funding was also to look into another two strands. One was how to create workshops or events around the show to engage with the themes of the show – we did one of those at CPT [Camden People's Theatre] when we opened a show in December in collaboration with someone called Daniel Fulvio, who's an amazing engagement director, engagement person. And we hosted what we called *The Undefinable Unplugged*, which was about a 15-20-minute extract from the show in the afternoon followed by tea, coffee and biscuits and open conversation on the themes of the show. And that specific session – I think the people who had been invited were mostly people who identified as LGBTQIA+ and who might have been from a maybe older community than people who might be used to going to CPT for instance. They were invited basically to have a conversation in a safe space on the themes of the show. So we had plans to create more of those in some of the venues we were going to tour the show to, and so we're now in conversations with Daniel to see how we can create an element of engagement that happens maybe digitally. We're rethinking how we can engage with an audience. And the last strand was around looking into making the show into an audio-only experience. So the plan was to see what do we want to do with the show we have? Can we explore ways of making it into an experience that happens through the ears only? Motivated in part by this idea of accessibility – that's prior to the lockdown – accessibility and how do you reach people who can't physically come to the theatre? And because the show is so grounded in the world of radio and music it felt like we were interested in finding the experience that could be audio-only for it, so it's become particularly prevalent at the moment, that element of it.

**ST:** Exactly. When we wrote the grant at the start of the year we wanted to adapt the show into a



version – or investigate adapting the show into a version that could reach more people and was made for digital bodies, as Eugénie says, and now suddenly that does feel really important and really necessary! So we're still going to investigate that and it still feels like a next intuitive step for the work. Much like a late night phone-in talk radio show, *The Undefinable* sort of presents as this space where we reach across the airwaves to the people who may be lonely, they're lying awake at night, the reasons you might tune in to the radio as a sort of beacon, as source of communion in some way. We're really interested in those dynamics of what radio can offer and we do that with the theatre show – we create that space where it's not clear if it's actually a live radio show or just actually just a space for Eugénie and I to do this strange interaction together, to spend time together, to hang out. It's both of those things at one and the same time. So we're not sure whether this adaptation of the show could take the form of a genuine radio show, or a podcast, or one-off audio play, if there's anything there or maybe it will translate into something radically different. But it feels like an interesting thing for us to investigate with our practice because it's another way for us to be able to keep making work together and – when we started making *The Undefinable*, because I was on tour a lot, and we were hunting for funding, we decided to make a commitment to meet up once a month and do this thing that we called – dorkily – 'Theatre Club'. And we each ran an hour of rehearsal and so you'd have the whole month to reflect, maybe come up with a concept, and then we'd have coffee in between the two hours. And that, with the sort of time to marinade in between, that was the essential building blocks of the show that it became. So we just started talking the other day whether we might start doing that again and have these like, fortnightly or weekly Zooms, and just see what She Goat looks like in a digital playing ground. Give it some space and start just working this way together. It's an unknown, but an exciting thing to try out in the conditions.

**DR:** It sounds really great. It's really great to see people continuing to work in these circumstances as well.

**EP:** Well, lovely speaking to you both.

**DR:** And you!

**EP:** Thanks so much for your time and your interest.

**DR:** Thank you.

**ST:** Okay, now I'm going! Bye!

**DR:** Bye!

Transcription by Tom Colley

### Clips Summary

[00:22:10 to 00:24:03] 'This is Not Enough' from *DoppelDänger* (2019)

[00:46:53 to 00:49:18] 'Between the Lines' from *The Undefinable* (2019)

Audio available at <https://www.auralia.space/gallery5-shegoat/>.

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