**Clips from Ursula\_Martinez**

**A:**  What sort of things did you do with Duckie at the RVT?

**U:**  Still making new cabaret acts and um, we also made a theatre show called ... well, it had various names, ‘cos we first made it at the Vauxhall Tavern it was called C’est Vauxhall. C’est as in French C apostrophe est. Then we took it to the Barbican and it was called C’est Barbican, and we took it to various places. It then eventually established its name as C’est Duckie. That was a very fun experimental show really crossing a real direct crossover of cabaret and experimental theatre with myself, Christopher Green, Marisa Carnesky and Miss High Legkick. We were commissioned by Duckie to make this show and that was cabaret acts that were performed at the tables where audiences are sitting around a table and given Duckie dollars and there’s a menu of acts and the audience choose the acts that they want to see and we, the performers, we come and deliver the acts at their table and the audience pays for the acts in Duckie dollars. And yeah, we made that show originally at the RVT in I think it was 2002. The Barbican came to the show and they liked it and they booked it for their Christmas season the following year and won an Olivier award for the best entertainment for that show. Um, we did two subsequent seasons.

**A:**  Very successful

**U:**  Yeah, very successful. That sort of started for me a relationship with The Barbican. I continued to make sole work, I did a second show called Show Off and a third show called OAP about fear of growing old that I did at the Drill Hall. Can’t remember what year, maybe 2003? Can’t remember. Ended up doing a

retrospective of these 3 shows. A Family Outing, Show Off and OAP ,which was kind of ... it ended up being a trilogy of shows um, around kind of identity and I suppose A Family Outing was identity in terms of the past and where you come from. Show off was an exploration of identity now in the present day, not only now in my life but now here on stage, in front of you and audience and playing with you know who am I , can I be real when I have an audience watching me. And then OAP was about identity in the future, about fear of growing old. So I presented those three shows um, at The Barbican as a kind of trilogy retrospective.

**A:**  They’ve been a big supporter of you …

**U:**  They’ve been a big supporter, yeah, and it was just like surprising, you know, that I was kind of being recognised by very much the sort of establishment, kind of main stream , you know, respected, you know, art institutions. While still, you know, doing my kind of subversive work on the queer scene. Also became part of a show called La Clique which is a big circus cabaret show, a commercial show, and I’ve been working … was working with La Clique. The show morphed into a show that’s now called La Soiree and I’ve been working with them on and off for ten years, you know, absolutely travelling the world, yeah, I’ve been quite busy.

And then in 2006 I’d made a cabaret act called Hanky Panky which is a disappearing handkerchief magic, strip tease act that I performed for the first time at Duckie. It was a Duckie event in Birmingham, I think for Birmingham Pride event, and yeah, well I had no idea what that act was going to become and how that act …

**A:**  It’s become enormous.

**U:**  It’s become enormous and also in another sort of, yeah, kind of pivotal sort of like point I suppose in some ways, Duckie was a pivotal point taking that show to the Edinburgh festival was very much a pivotal point. Making that act became a pivotal point later, but I didn’t realise at the time. I was working with La Clique and I was in Montreal and I was invited to do a gala performance in Montreal which ended up being filmed … complicated scenario but it was never meant to happen um, that it was filmed and ended up on the internet. I was very upset about it at the time, because it’s a magic strip tease act and I get naked and I pull a handkerchief out of my vagina at the end. I’ve been doing it line of context for many years and it’s always, it’s always just a winner. Audiences love it. It’s something that sounds much more shocking on paper, and in practice its fun and people really enjoy it. It ended up on the internet in 2006. It was very early days in terms of the whole kind of internet Youtube kind of scenario, but it went viral very, very quickly.

I was very uncomfortable about this because I felt that I had lost control of, not only my work, but also effectively my body, because of the fact that I get naked in the piece, and I suppose in alive context I was always ... and being in control with that act is very much is part of the act. It’s this high status I have in that act um, that I’m manipulating the audience with the piece, and all the power and the status is with me and in a live context I’m always able to choose the context in which I perform.

So I have many people always ringing me or emailing me. “I’ve got a stag night, would love to come and do your act?” and, more often than not, I would turn those requests down because it sort of changes the dynamic between my status and the audience. You know, I’ve often been asked to perform in a strip club which I also decline ‘cos it felt like the work was going to be misrepresented or mis-contextualised. So, soon as the piece went on line I was no longer in control of the context in which it was viewed, and I lost all power and all status because people were imbedding it in porn sites and erotic sites for a start. So people are coming across the act form a very sort of inappropriate context, or not the context in which it was originally made or, or perceived.

**A:**  So it ceased to be yours’ in a way?

**U:**  Exactly, it ceased to be mine, and I couldn’t control the context in which it is presented. So that’s for a start. Secondly, when it’s on line, even regardless of the context in which a viewer may have come across it, a viewer can watch it privately, they can press play. They can press stop. They can press replay. They’re on their own. They can feed their fantasy with no … nobody else there to stop them, and so that kind of changed everything. Because you can’t, even if you’re doing a live performance, you can’t control what’s going on for every live member of the audience. There might be some people who are appalled. There might be some people who are turned on. OK, there’s going to be a mixture of responses. But whatever those responses, when the act is done, it’s done and it’s over. But whatever the response somebody’s having when they watch it on line, they can keep having that response, because they can keep pressing play, and I started receiving the weirdest fan mail from that kind of, from that kind of … from the act going viral.

**A:**  And you used those in a new show?

**U:**  Yeah, well I was very upset by it at first, because like I say I felt that I’d lost control and I felt, I felt threatened, I felt vulnerable, you know? Some of the … of the fan mail that I being was being, that was being sent to … to me, just felt wrong and inappropriate and some of it was, you know, very sexual … um, I felt, I felt quite threatened. I felt quite threatened. You know? I felt nervous Is my address on line? Can anyone find ... ‘cos it was quite obsessive and odd, and I kind of filed it away for a couple of years, because I couldn’t really handle it. So every time I sort of redirected my inbox so that any emails I knew came to me via the website I kind of filed them away, and I didn’t look at them for a couple of years and … and then one day I sort of opened that inbox and started reading them, and you know, with time, you know, you can’t sort of be … you can’t be afraid or angry or passionate for ever, you know? Time kind of neutralizes ….

**A:**  It find its place somewhere.

**U:**  Yeah, and so I wasn’t so fired up anymore or angry or disturbed. I was kind of able to look at these emails with a kind of slightly more relaxed objectivity. I mean it was just fascinating. I was like “Wow, people are fascinating. People are fucking weird. This is incredible” Also the whole sort of like, internet thing had really started kicking off by then, you know

video clips and things and everybody communicating by internet. It had really taken off and I got this is an amazing insight into our contemporary world and contemporary communication, and the sort of loneliness of virtual communication.

So I kind of yeah turned it all around and made a show called My Stories, Your Emails, and in fact the first half of the show ... My Stories, was stories that I’d written way back when I was first making A Family Outing, and those were the first stories that I had written actually about my life. They never really got used in the show, but I still had them and I kind of used them then really. And then the second half of the show … Your Emails, was a sort of selection of the sort of weird emails that I’d received, and that show was commissioned by The Barbican, was commissioned by Queer up North festival and The Barbican. I’ve been touring … I’ve been doing that show ever since. It’s still on tour. I’ve just come back from France, I’m going to Madrid next week.

**A:**  Great thing to do, to move on from what was really horrible …

**U:**  Yeah well ... to turn it round, and I turned it round never as an act of revenge, it certainly wasn’t revenge, the show’s not revengeful at all. But … but it was a way of regaining the control and the sort of like power over myself and my work and my creativity, and uh, it did that, and I kind of regained control in a way.

**A:**  It’s still going …

**U:**  Yeah, yeah. Um, I still work in La Soiree. We did a big Christmas season just recently and won an Olivier award for best entertainment.