

Five Minute Interview

Lee Armstrong: Albert Narracott

When I was a kid I loved watching films and at school when you had to take your subject choices for GCSE I decided to do the things I really wanted to do so I took Fine Art and Drama instead of History and Geography. The course, the teaching and the facilities were really good at my school and they pushed me.

When I was 16, they encouraged me to audition for National Youth Theatre and I got in and then I was staying in digs for 2 weeks, working with these really creative people – up and coming directors and actors some of whom are now pretty big, we hung out together and created a show and I thought these are the sort of people I'd like to knock about with...

I started researching some of the big actors that I really liked and looked into the Acting Schools that they went to and I auditioned for East 15 Acting School. They accepted me onto the Foundation Course – because they didn't think I was good enough for the full course and they were probably right. Then when I auditioned again for the full course – they still thought I was very young and so they told me to go away for a year and they'd keep the course offer open for me.

So I did - I worked in London as a dustbin man, gardener, a cold-caller, chugger – I was skint and scared I wasn't going to be able to pay the rent a lot of the time. I did these jobs that I hated and I decided that I was going to do a job that I really loved.

So I went back to Acting School and I worked my socks off – I was getting up way before school started and working. Over the three years I worked harder and harder and that really paid off for me. I don't really believe in talent – I don't think it exists – I think it's hard work – I think you create your own luck. I think as long as you constantly try and be the very best you can then it pays off.

I've been out of East 15 for a year now and while I was still at Drama school I got a lead part at Finborough Theatre and was working with this incredible cast – I remember coming out of rehearsals and feeling like I'd done five rounds with Tyson – that was a big step up.

I've done other little bits of TV work and a job at the Royal Exchange Manchester and The Royal Court but this was my first big role – you don't really get any bigger than this!

The first day of rehearsals was a little bit daunting but again I just believe in the power of hard work – I just try and work as hard as I can – it's just about getting on with the job.

I came into rehearsals and worked with the puppetry actors earlier than the other actors – I was pleased about this because they were a really friendly bunch but it also gave me chance to have a little play with them. We spent a week improvising which felt like we were learning together. They were learning fast and were incredibly good so they made my job really easy.

I'm still learning about the role of that fourth puppeteer – I need to be a bit lighter when I'm stroking the horse – I need to interact with it like it's real, talk to it as if it's real and to accept the work that the puppeteers are doing and to bounce off that. It's a phenomenally big show – it's not like any other play I'll ever do again and I can't even say what I've learnt from it but I know that I'm learning something new every day.

If anyone is interested in becoming an actor – just go and do it – don't listen to what anyone tells you – if you really want to do it and it's what makes you happy then just go for it – it's not about the celebrity factor because the problem with chasing fame is that it's not really about making yourself happy – I think everybody should do whatever makes them happy and hopefully if you do that you end up being really good at it and hopefully eventually you might get acknowledged for it.

