

Fred Gray

I personally believe that Dee Cannon is the best thing to happen to me at RADA. In term one I felt that Dee cultivated a trust within the group that surpassed all my expectations - a trust that was maintained and exceeded all the other classes. I still feel closer to the people in Dee's class than I do, generally, to anyone else in our year. I credit this to Dee Cannon.

In term two I went through a personal crisis and I believe all the attributes that made me a poor professional were challenged and scrutinised by Dee. I had a breakdown - not because Dee was malicious, or "too hard", but because she taught me to see things in myself that I had chosen to ignore.

In term three, all the things she had taught me came into play and I feel it was one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. I realise we had Monique for at least half of this project, but meaning no disrespect to Monique, it was only really when Dee came back that it took the shape and direction that it needed. The play brought the group even closer, sharing personal stories to do with the holocaust, including Dee who shared her Jewish heritage with us. It was clearly a personal subject to her and we shared that with her. The play also brought our peers and some staff members to tears, and whilst I realise the story is a familiar and sad one, I believe it had to be executed sensitively for it to have the effect it did. It was a credit to RADA; a credit to Dee Cannon. Personally, term three was when everything came together and I truly realised how valuable Dee's training had been to me. I am not ashamed to say that sometimes when I got up to do an exercise or to perform a scene sometimes I simply wanted to do it well for her, if nothing else. Surely that is a sign of an inspirational teacher, someone with exceptionally high standards that you strive to meet. To me, there is nothing wrong with a teacher who wants the best out of her students and will accept nothing less.

It is Dee's brutal honesty that makes her such an invaluable asset to the school. It has been suggested on a number of occasions that we are babied and molly-coddled in school, which I don't believe is necessarily true, but is miles from the truth when it comes to Dee. She treats all her students as young professionals, not as "students"; as adults, not as babies. I came to drama school not to be told why and in what way I am brilliant, but to be told where I am going wrong. I am not suggesting the former is true of anyone else because believe me it's not! But Dee Cannon has taught me more about myself as an actor than anyone in the school, and possibly more than anyone I have ever met.

I would also like to add that Dee is not hypocritical when it comes to honesty, she is receptive and respects people who are honest with her. On the few occasions that Dee and I had a run-in with each other, the next day I would simply pull her aside, apologise and put across, more rationally, what I was trying to say. These dialogues would always end with a smile and a hug. I feel that, despite her 'hard' reputation, Dee is funny, playful, sensitive and giving. She cares more about her students than I thought possible and simply pushes them to try and reach their potential. It was an absolute pleasure being taught by her!