

## [Transcript] The News Agents / The Donald Trump mugshot

This is a global player original podcast.

You were in custody today.

It's totally absurd in my opinion, but what was it like?

How do they treat you?

What was the experience like today in jail?

Terrible experience.

I came in.

I was treated very nicely.

I took a mug shot, which I never heard the words mug shot.

That wasn't, didn't teach me that at the Wharton School of Finance.

Of course Donald Trump didn't know what a mug shot was.

He's had a sheltered, very protected life as a property tycoon in Manhattan, where he's got every lawyer under the sun on speed dial and has worked with some pretty dodgy people.

He wouldn't know what a mug shot was, let alone an indictment.

He's never been involved in litigation in his life, has he, old Donald?

But he certainly is now, because this was his fourth indictment.

But it had all of the things that go with an indictment, all that we associate with an American indictment, including the famous mug shot, which was released late last night for the whole world to see with Trump glowering down the camera, very blonde, very red, very angry.

Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's John.

It's Lewis.

And you'll have noticed, of course, that John is here on a Friday.

And one of the things about everyone is talking about all of the effects it's having on Trump being indicted, sort of time after time.

But no one's thinking about the fact that every time Trump is indicted, which seems to happen on a Friday, John Soap will have to come into the news agent's studio.

When a butterfly flaps its wings in the rainforest, weird things happen.

Well, something else triggered me today, which was, oh my God, he's back on Twitter.

He used this mug shot moment to announce his return to the platform that he loved and was incredibly powerful for him to make his voice heard again on the platform that had booted him off after the repeated lies about January the 6th, about the 2020 election and all the rest of it.

But Elon Musk has welcomed him back and now he has reactivated that account.

So Donald Trump's Twitter fingers are alive again and he is using this mug shot.

He's back.

Did he ever really go away?

As a painting opportunity.

No, indeed.

And actually, it's quite funny because obviously he's been off Twitter, ex, for so long now that seeing the two last Trump tweets, I mean, it's held its own tail, right?

Because the last tweet that he had was saying, I won't be going to the inauguration.

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And then the next week, the most recent one is him saying, I'm being treated appallingly the picture of his mug shot.

I mean, even for Trump, what an extraordinary volume of political water has passed under the bridge since then.

I mean, it's mind blowing.

But we talk about the chaos that surrounds Trump and it's right.

There is a huge amount of chaos that surrounds Trump.

But what happened yesterday at the Fulton County Jailhouse was absolutely choreographed by someone who understands the theatricality of politics to the nth degree.

That photo, that image was rehearsed.

He knew exactly what he wanted to achieve when he sat down in the chair for that mug shot.

His head tilted down slightly, his eyes looking upward, his mouth tightly shut, his hair perfectly in place.

And just as you say, Lewis, glowering into the camera.

It showed anger, steely resolve, determination.

There would be no surrender.

Yeah.

It's funny enough.

I was waiting late last night, it's about half one in the morning.

John knew that this mug shot was going to come and obviously, deeply curious about it, thinking, you know, what is this going to look like?

And there are all of these deep fakes sort of doing the round on Twitter.

And I thought, you know, I've got to forget this, I've got to go to bed.

But just before I turned off, that picture appeared, wasn't tweeted by any one official, just, you know, lots of sort of Twitter porn live.

And I thought, that can't be it.

It can't be that.

That must be a deep fake.

But it wasn't.

I woke up this morning.

Lo and behold, it is that one.

And like you say, John, this is a picture that really does say everything that Trump wants it to say.

When he's glowering down the photo, what is the glower about?

What it is, is a signal of contempt for the justice system itself.

The visual matches the entire rationale and resonant of his campaign and all the words could go with it, which is that this is an illegitimate process and I have contempt for it.

But there was something interesting and there's a contradiction.

And that is the words that were underneath the picture, which said, never surrender.

In full caps, obviously, in full caps.

Here he is saying, never surrender, but he is the man who has just surrendered himself to the justice system.

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He has surrendered himself to Fulton County Jail, where he is being processed and going through the legal mechanisms.

And so on the one hand, yes, that photo is going to be on every mug, is going to be on every t-shirt that the Trump campaign are flogging, and it will help raise kitching millions of dollars for Donald Trump.

But it also represents the greatest jeopardy to him because now, more than ever, Donald Trump can produce a bumper sticker, which says, no to the jailhouse, yes to the White House.

It's so clear that that is the binary option that is now facing Donald Trump with these charges that he faces.

Yeah, and you could already see in terms of the digital reaction to it in the last, what, 12 hours or so, you see the polarization that that speaks to you, right?

Because on the one hand, it is already being mocked up and used as a kind of image of a political martyr by virtually every bit of the kind of digital right, and it is also being mocked up quite literally as memes and just loads of endless numbers of people taking the piss, everyone on the liberal left mocking him, but also again saying, look, we've never seen a president have to do this, this has never happened before.

It is just worth rewinding back just in case anyone is confused and you've been entirely within your rights to be in terms of the endless sort of cascade of different charges.

What this one refers to, and this of course refers to the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election, but not January the 6th.

This refers to the charges of election meddling and trying to effectively subvert democratic outcomes, particularly within the state of Georgia.

And you will remember this extraordinary phone conversation that took place with then President Trump scrambling around trying to throw the results of particular states like Georgia, like Arizona, having a conversation with the Republican Secretary of State in Georgia, Brad Raffensperger.

So look, all I want to do is this, I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have, because we won the state.

There are other bits of that conversation.

The 11,780 votes, find me, 11,780 votes is the famous part of that call.

But there are other bits of it where there is just a little hint of menace from Donald Trump about what might happen to Brad Raffensperger if he doesn't find those votes.

And people in Georgia can find themselves on the wrong side of the law.

And so there were threats involved.

But of course, when Donald Trump made his way from the jailhouse back to his plane, where he was about to take off to go back to his golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey, he was proclaiming that that call with the Georgian Secretary of State was absolutely perfect.

If you challenge an election, you should be able to challenge an election.

I thought the election was a rigged election, a stolen election.

And I should have every right to do that.

As you know, you have many people that you've been watching over the years through the same thing, whether it's Hillary Clinton or Stacey Abrams or many others.

And you have that great freedom to challenge.

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You have to be able to.  
Otherwise, you're going to have very dishonest elections.  
What has taken place here is the travesty of justice.  
We did nothing wrong.  
I did nothing wrong.  
And everybody knows it.  
I've never had such support.  
And that goes with the other ones too.  
What they're doing is election interference.  
They're trying to interfere with an election.  
There's never been anything like it in our country before.  
Well, it's pure Donald Trump.  
Let's just remind ourselves that after Hillary Clinton lost the 2016 presidential election, she mounted no legal challenges.  
She didn't try to organize an insurrection.  
She went to the inauguration of Donald Trump, which Donald Trump refused to do for Joe Biden.  
So let's just put that in perspective as well.  
Donald Trump did take 63 court cases to challenge the results.  
His constitutional right to do so, and he lost every single one of those cases.  
So yeah, of course you can complain constitutionally about election malpractice.  
You go through the legal channels and Donald Trump did and lost.  
But isn't it?  
Well, we were reflecting earlier that here we are again.  
We've had the Republican primary debate, first Republican primary debate of the season this week, and Donald Trump once again has managed to make, even through his arrest, his arrest again for the fourth time.  
He makes the entire American political news cycle, let's be honest, the world news cycle once again about him.  
There are seven, eight billion people in the world, and once again, on another day, we're talking about Trump.  
And okay, he's having to make the best of a bad situation in the sense that what else is he going to do?  
He wants to run, as you say, the stakes could not be higher for him.  
It is either ending up in prison or ending up in the White House, and who knows, maybe both, depending on how the timelines go.  
But there are lots of critiques, and sometimes I think people say to us, and certainly they say it to the American networks, why do you keep talking about this guy?  
You know, you're giving him exactly what he wants.  
The truth is, is that such is the nature of what he does.  
Such is the sort of political tsunami that he is.  
He's now having blown through the American political system, now blowing through and destroying so much of the American justice system.  
He is inescapable.  
He is simply inescapable, even if we want to, over our gaze.

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Because the Republican candidates did the other night, they were desperate to talk about anything else, and yet they couldn't avoid him.

They couldn't escape his gravity.

Donald Trump totally owns the Republican party still.

The idea that it can move away from his shadow is frankly fanciful.

And there was one moment in the debate the other night from Milwaukee, which I thought spoke volumes, and it spoke volumes without anybody speaking, because all the candidates had to sign a pledge beforehand that they would back whoever emerges as the successful candidate to be the Republican nominee for president.

The presenter, the facilitator, moderator, whatever, said to the candidates, please put up your hands if you will support Donald Trump if he is convicted.

And Vivek Ramaswamy's hand shot up, and then slowly, everyone reluctantly, kind of awkwardly, put their hands up as well.

And you thought, my God, even these people that stand opposed to Donald Trump, like Nikki Haley, like Mike Pence, uncomfortably put up their hands to say, yeah, we'd back Donald Trump.

That's astonishing.

You would back a convicted felon to be the next president of the United States.

The United States of America prides itself on American exceptionalism, the shining city on the hill, born of the founding fathers out of the furnace of the Enlightenment.

And this is what it's come to?

It was an amazing moment.

And also, the other thing that you just increasingly think about American politics and how lost it is in so many ways, is the way, and so much of this, I mean, it's not entirely down to him, but God, he's accelerated the process so much.

American politics is now, if you take a step back and you were a political scientist, you would look at American politics and say, my God, so much of this is exhibiting the components of being a failed state, because politics is no longer about the bread and butter of politics anymore, about X party's ideas versus Y party's ideas, about this candidate being better than the other candidate.

It is about the idea that both parties are looking at the other and saying, they are out to destroy democracy.

They're going to destroy it.

If they get in, this country is existentially done.

And when Trump's case, look, there's a lot of legitimacy to that when the Democrats say it.

A lot of Republicans feel it in the other direction when they look at Biden's less legitimacy with that, because you can see Trump's record.

But increasingly when, and this is the effect of Trump, Trump, as I say, was a tsunami through the political system.

He destroyed so many political institutions.

He is now doing the same with the justice system, because once upon a time, within reason, American

political figures would more or less accept the workings of the justice system.

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They might contest it.

They might not like it, but that they would more or less, there would be certain lines over which they would not cross.

Trump goes way across every single line.

And the trail of destruction that he leaves is massive.

I've heard the argument put that it's been a total miscalculation of the legal establishment to bring these indictments against Donald Trump.

Because look what's happened.

Donald Trump has grown more popular in the polls.

And it's true, he has, since that first indictment in New York, now until this indictment in Georgia, the fourth one, you have got these four indictments and Donald Trump step by step by step has gone up in the polls.

And therefore the argument goes, it would have been much better not to have brought any legal case against him because you've just made him more popular.

And that has come from Trump detractors and Trump supporters alike.

I think that is the ultimate politicization of the judicial process, the idea that you don't charge somebody because they might get more popular.

If you've broken the law, whether your name is Trump, Joe blogs, Fred Smith, Lewis Goodall or John Soaple, we are all equal before the law and no one is above it.

And so I think you've got to go through.

If you have found evidence of wrongdoing, you have to proceed the case.

And the idea that you can just ignore it because Donald Trump might get more popular as a result of it, I think is a ridiculous argument.

You said you weren't going to bring up our legal cases.

That's for the court, John.

It's for the court, but the court shall decide.

Yeah, but that is the thing.

And particularly on that point, it's particularly difficult when you have literally, as we heard, a tape like there is with Georgia, when I mean, what are you supposed to do?

Because also there is a point of the law, which is to say, well, don't do this.

There will be punishment if you do stuff like this.

And if you let something like that slide, it's an almost problem.

Why shouldn't other future political candidates do exactly the same thing?

Before we leave Donald Trump entirely and we can never leave him for long.

The one thing you can't exaggerate about Trump is his obsession with how he is projected and his image.

And two stories, the one which was caught on tape, which is when Donald Trump was doing an interview in the Oval Office, I think for ABC or one of the networks.

And his chief of staff is in there and coughs and Donald Trump goes ballistic and kicks him out of the Oval Office because he's ruined the recording by coughing and treats him like this piece of scum, just says, get out, you get out, you ruin this.

And then he says to the cameraman, look, if we're restarting, I think you should come a bit lower down with me and then come up.

And, you know, this is the former host of The Apprentice.

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He's also thinks he's the best film director there's ever been.

He thinks he's Martin Scorsese too.

And so he's directing the camera about how the shot should be constructed to restart the interview and when it should go out into a two shot and talking the language of TV in a way that shows that he's worked a lot in TV.

The other great story I heard and this is what I heard from someone at the White House, which was when they were flying to Singapore for the first summit with Kim Jong-un, an enormously risky piece of diplomacy for Donald Trump and for the US to be meeting the North Korean leader there.

And on the plane going over, they've got files of stuff about what does denuclearization look like for the Korean Peninsula, what assurances need to be put in place, the military bases that need to be closed.

What would happen in return?

Could there be any reopening of diplomatic relations and they could only get Donald Trump to focus on one thing and one thing only, which is where's the handshake going to take place?

What are the camera heights going to be?

Am I going to be shot from below or am I going to be shot from above?

Are we going to come out on either side and meet in the middle with the flags in the background? What will be the backdrop?

That's all he cared about.

And that's the thing with this, right?

It's an episode of TV.

Like everything else, right?

It's another season finale on top of another amazing season finale.

And this, which is all going to reach its climax in November and December on some level, you always get the impression he's not displeased about that, right?

Because again, going back to what we were talking about, about his dominating everything, I remember us probably about when we were about to start the show or just after we'd started this show.

So, you know, October November last year, I remember us having a discussion, particularly around the midterm saying, gee, Trump, he feels quite distant now.

He started to obviously Biden did well in the midterms.

He had started to really fade.

And yet this process, and I agree with you, I don't think you can say this process shouldn't have happened because it's revived Trump.

I don't think you can operate justice like that.

But nonetheless, he has clearly derived tremendous energy from it.

And again, to compare it with Biden, the inverse it feels has started to happen to him, that his political energy, and let's be honest, actually his overall energy, a guy who's now 80, you can sort of see it, has started to quite visibly decline at times.

Now, maybe as we get closer to the election cycle, he himself will gear back up again.

But there's no doubt, even though there is a weird thing about Trump and Biden,

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right, because actually they're almost, there's not much difference in age. I mean, what, Trump's 77 through four years younger than Biden. But he does have a weird vitality, a weird energy, an energy which itself seems to become more intense when he is at the center and when things are at that most catastrophic.

As long as he is center stage, that is where his energy comes from. And so that is carrying him, that momentum into this election cycle again. And they are both, let's not forget, the reason this matters is Trump is not just some, you know, now some academic interest.

He's tied with Biden and the polls.

Despite all of this, he's still more or less give or take a few points here, a few points there, nationally tied with Biden in a potential matchup. Lewis, you and I spend far too much of our lives thinking about politics and not all the rest of the wonderful things about life that go on.

But yet, and I think we understand where political gravity kicks in, what drags you down, what propels you upward.

Joe Biden has had a really successful time in legislation.

The economy coming back, inflation down to three and a half percent, good jobless totals, the inflation reduction act that he managed to get through. All these things are huge success stories for which he is receiving zero credit.

And Donald Trump is facing 91 separate charges and a mugshot now, which you think would sink him without trace, that he would just be going glug, glug, glug, glug down to the bottom of the ocean.

And instead of which his poll numbers are rising and rising and rising.

And that, again, shows Donald Trump's ability to defy political gravity when everything would point in the opposite direction.

Even though we should say he does remain very unpopular.

I mean, the polling does show he's a very unpopular guy.

He was very unpopular in 2016.

He was unpopular in 2020.

He's unpopular now.

But so is Biden.

And so is everybody else.

If that is the choice that the American people have got, a dodgery old Biden who can barely lift his feet off the ground, whose voice is sounding hoarse and whispery as he goes on, or an energetic Donald Trump, even with the legal difficulties, it doesn't become quite as clear cut as it was in 2020.

When that choice seemed a lot simpler.

There is, of course, one other element.

I mean, in terms of the lies, which just come thick and fast with Trump, there was another little tidbit yesterday, of course, which is the part of the arraignment process.

This is our favorite bit of the whole day.



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Part of the arraignment process, as well as the mugshot, you have to go and tell them what your weight and your height is. But I think I didn't realize this, but I thought they would literally weigh them and measure them. Like you see those sort of like rulers that you have. No, no, apparently the team, their legal team, provide the information. So the legal team provided this about Trump. They said that he had blond or strawberry hair. Well, that's fair enough. Yeah, just about, I suppose. Six foot three height, which give or take, and his weight of two hundred and fifteen pounds, which is ninety seven and a half kilos or about fourteen and a half stone, which we were looking up earlier. It turns out that that is almost exactly the height and weight of Muhammad Ali when he had his famous rumble in the jungle with George Foreman. Are you trying to suggest, Lewis, that Donald Trump does not have the same toned physique as Muhammad Ali? It's better, Jan. It's better. I was I could take that guy. Honestly, it's ridiculous. I just can't stop lying. I was everything. I was in the White House briefing room when his physician, a guy called Dr. Ronnie Jackson came in and gave a briefing on Donald Trump's health and said that he I think he might have been a bit over that two hundred and fifteen pounds then, but it was just magically three pounds under being clinically obese. And you just thought, how did they get to that number? But he was really flattering about Donald Trump's health, despite what he ate and all the rest of it. And as a result of that, Donald Trump then says, I want to make you the head of the Veterans Association, the VA. And that's the biggest spending government department after the Pentagon in Washington. And the reason he wanted to do that, because he wanted to give this doctor who'd never run anything in his life command of something because he's been so flattering to Donald Trump about his weight and his health. I think that two hundred and fifteen pounds, six foot three. You must be joking. You're having a laugh, Donald. You're taking the piss. You're taking a piss. So, John, you were you actually talked about political choreography a little bit earlier. This is going to be a so poor, worthy segue. Wow, I can see that.

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We've actually got a choreographer coming up next.  
An actual choreographer, probably Britain's best choreographer.  
Yeah, this is going to be a bit of a handbrake term, but it is the weekend  
and John's going out the studio.  
So I'm going to have to do something.  
We're going to be talking to some Matthew Bourne.  
Brilliant.  
Britain's best known and most successful master of dance and choreographer.  
He's going to be coming up next.  
This is the news agents.  
Well, we're joined now by someone I think we can safely describe as the king of dance  
or at least a king of classical dance.  
Maybe maybe not dance overall.  
Some of our colleagues at Capital Dance about something to say about that.  
But Anton De Bec.  
Anton De Bec, yes, that's true.  
He's next in his shows have garnered him record breaking nine Olivier Awards.  
The only British director to have won the Tony Award for both best choreographer  
and best director of musical 19 2016 for his services to dance.  
This is Matthew Bourne.  
Thank you so much.  
No, so nice for you to come in.  
I'm fresh in from seeing your show.  
Ramon and Juliet.  
Fabulous.  
We just start with that production first since it is on its own  
until the beginning of September, isn't it?  
And it is an amazing production, a very young cast.  
And obviously Romeo and Juliet has been done a million and million times.  
What drew you to it?  
I mean, you've done so many others.  
Did you feel it was just time you had to take on this kind of that?  
I didn't really want to do it.  
You know, for many years, it was one of, as you say, one of these things  
that's brought up a lot when you're going to do Romeo and Juliet.  
It's one of the stable ballet dance and that famous coffee opening.  
Yeah, amazing music, which everyone loves and it's great music to work with.  
But it's the story really.  
I just thought it is overdone and could I find something new in it?  
But it being dance, of course, it's nonverbal.  
So there's no words.  
So that's sort of helpful in some ways.  
So people have a vague idea of the story and it just sort of made me  
much more sort of cavalier about what I did with that story, much more easy.

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Could you change quite a lot of the sort of core elements of it, don't you?

Yeah, even the concept is different.

It's not unexpected.

You know, so I think it's going to see a good movie that's got twists and turns in it that you don't expect.

And I think that's what I try and do.

And there were even sort of changes in terms of the relationships there in it as well.

Yes, there are gay relationships as well.

Yeah, that's so interesting.

I do it in most pieces.

I have sort of gay relationships in vast majority of pieces I've done.

It's an interesting one that because it's still extremely rare in dance, in dance narrative.

I mean, I started choreographing 35 years ago now, nearly.

And it's one of the first things I did, like all artists, you know, you put your life into your work standard, you know, it's there's nothing surprising about that.

But I did do that.

I put gay stories, gay relationships and sometimes as well.

Yes, gender fluid is a more recent thing.

Yeah, is this the first time you've done that or first time we've done it?

Yeah, I think so anyway.

Yeah, but I think when I first did it, it was just a natural thing to put on stage, something that was important to me.

But honestly, 35 years later, it's still the same situation.

We're probably the only big company that does work, that does represent.

I suppose the classical dance world, the ballet world is still very conservative,

I suppose, right with the small C. It's sort of.

Yeah, I hate to say it, but I think it's still true to a certain extent that that is the case.

I know there are people within the classical ballet world who would like to do this.

So there's a nervousness, you know, about reflecting society as it is now, or even the individuals who are making the work and reflecting their own lives.

I think it's still a bit taboo.

I mean, we already touched on that you have included,

I think you said for the first time, you think, a gender fluid.

Yes. What made you want to do that?

Well, I wanted to represent not just on stage, which is important, but also I want to represent the performers that are working with me.

And Enrique, who's the dancer you're referring to, came to me and they wanted to represent themselves, not exactly themselves, but as a character that is non-binary and gender fluid and could we explore that?

And I thought, brilliant, perfect piece to do it.

You know, all these young people are very individual.

So it came from within the company, but also a desire to represent on stage as many people as possible, including, you know, a non-binary character for the first time.

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It's such an increasingly controversial subject, isn't it?

It is, yes.

More and more than perhaps it was even 10 years ago.

Do you ever feel any concern or worry about entering into this sort of...

Well, I don't worry about representing it.

I do feel that once something is out in the open a little bit more,

I've gone through the whole sort of change in attitudes to some of the gay stories we've told and being gay actually, you know, when I first went on a gay Pride march, people jeered at you on the sidelines.

You felt very strong walking down the street because you really were.

It was about pride, but people shouted abuse at you as you walked down the street and now it's a party, you know.

And I think it's kind of what trans people and gender fluid people are going through at the moment.

It's the more it's in the news and the more it's talked about, which is great, in one sense, it also makes those people a target for more bigoted people, I think.

And it draws their attention to it.

Do you think they are being targeted by...

Very much so, I think, at the moment.

Yeah, I think so.

And not just discourse, but violence as well, you know, towards an easy target.

And it reminds you of what happened in the Aces before and with gay people.

Yeah, I think it's going through that same sort of process now, unfortunately, yeah.

Obviously, we're now...

What are we now? We're sort of a year, 18 months or so, since the restrictions from the pandemic really ended.

Yes, it feels so much longer ago, but it actually isn't very long ago.

And obviously, the theatre world, the dance world, the performing arts, generally suffered enormously during that period.

Do you think that that damage is now in the past that we're back to, quote unquote, normal or are there lingering effects?

We're nowhere near normal.

I think things have changed maybe forever.

I don't know, they gradually sort of go back to where they were, but the way people think is different.

We're still discovering the after effects of it, I think.

People's attitude towards work is different now.

I think people are much more conscious of how they feel about working, like we're talking about mental health and how they're affected by the work.

And, you know, we're still seeing shows canceled at the moment for various reasons. Pre-COVID, that never happened.

It's not to do with COVID, it's not to do with illness necessarily.

It's kind of different stresses and different reasons why people can't perform or don't want to perform.

And during the pandemic, did you feel that the arts got what it needed from the government?

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Because that's still going to have a lingering effect, isn't it, in terms of...

Yeah, well, some did. We didn't.

We didn't really...

Didn't the government got it?

I mean, it was panic stations, wasn't it,

trying to find a way of dealing with something that was so unexpected?

Maybe we could have been better planned for such a thing,

it was going to happen at some point.

But I think for my company, they're mostly freelancers,

and this was an enormous gap in their support, actually,

for most people that I've worked with.

Do you remember there was the ad that was put out

that said that Fatima's next job could be in cyber?

She just doesn't know it yet.

And Fatima was pulling on.

She was obviously a dancer.

What did you think of that? Did you see that at the time?

What did you think of that?

It was very misguided, very misguided,

as though, you know, this was something frivolous

and something that, you know, you'd think again,

you could be doing something that actually means something,

you know, this was more sort of what it was saying,

or something of greater value.

It was to make your heart sink inside there.

Completely. I mean, there's so many things about it were wrong,

to be honest. The whole thing about tutus and pointe shoes

is annoying as well,

because dance is a much bigger thing than that.

It'd obviously come from someone not particularly informed,

but I mean, the funny thing was that it's, for me,

because I got into dance very late,

I was 22 when I started training,

which is incredibly late for dance.

I was almost the other way around, you know.

You could have been a cyber.

Yeah, I could have gone into,

I was pushed into some of those areas

as well as I'd been pushed by, you know,

I could be a dancer.

I could dream of being a dancer even at that point,

you know, and that was a big deal.

And it happened, you know, so it's crazy.

For people who are listening to this,

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you just sort of pushed your hand away in frustration.  
I mean, it does reveal something, right?  
A part of that conversation,  
because obviously, I mean,  
it wouldn't have been a minister who designed that,  
but it would have been some civil servant  
or someone, some graphic designer.  
It reveals something about the mindset of government.  
Somebody thought that the public would find that appealing  
and they'd find that like, oh, yes, of course, you know,  
why would I waste my time doing something as frivolous  
as dancing?  
Did you find it quite insulting?  
Completely, yeah.  
I think a lot of people found it insulting,  
even if they weren't dancers or performers.  
I mean, in general,  
the government has a tremendous emphasis,  
as does Rishi Sunak, on maths, on science, and so on.  
What do you think of?  
I mean, even in terms of degrees, we're seeing as well,  
sort of the number of non-science degrees,  
universities cutting back on them, and so on.  
And what do you think of when you hear that  
and when you see that emphasis from ministers  
and from universities?  
Well, politicians are famously don't seem  
to be that interested in the arts.  
It's very difficult to get anyone along  
to a performance of anything, you know?  
Is that what you invite them in?  
I've seen that over 30 years, you know?  
Occasionally, once in a while, someone will come along,  
but it's rare, and even culture ministers  
don't seem to go to the theatre or read books  
or do anything, so particularly artistic.  
It's a bit of a sad indictment, if that's true.  
But it's terrible, because I feel,  
I mean, maths was something that I've avoided.  
It's hopeless, you know?  
And I was starved even at my age at school of the arts,  
a particular school I went to,  
which was an old boys' school in Walthamstow, East End.  
All my interests were outside of school.

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You know, I found my life, in a way, myself.  
It wasn't something I was introduced to at school.  
So, in a way, you know, if you want it, you find it.  
But that's not the answer.  
But I think it's such an important part of our lives.  
Going through the pandemic, as you said,  
there was a point early on where I felt that we weren't...  
What we did wasn't particularly important.  
I was made to feel that what we did  
wasn't particularly important as artists.  
And that was rather depressing.  
But it is weird, isn't it?  
Maybe the arts itself, collectively,  
has to take some responsibility for this,  
because the arts is such a big part of our economy.  
It's one of our most successful exports.  
Yes, and we're so good at it.  
And income earners, and we're so good at it.  
And yet, where is that story?  
You know, you don't hear that story being told by ministers.  
You don't hear it in the media.  
And to be honest, you don't always necessarily hear it  
from the arts world itself.  
Isn't the arts quite bad, ironically enough,  
narrating its own story, politically?  
Well, you do need the spokespeople.  
Yeah, I'm not particularly good at it.  
I usually find it, I can only speak for myself, in a way,  
which is fair enough, you know?  
But there are people like Nick Hightner,  
who's brilliant, you know,  
from the extra director of the National Theatre,  
and he's a very good spokesperson.  
But I do think, yes, it's not a narrative  
that's talked about much, and it's certainly,  
we are, for such a small country,  
we're sort of world-class.  
Well, well, class.  
I mean, maybe one example around that is Brexit.  
Because, as you know, the deal that we currently have,  
it's not good for the arts,  
particularly for touring performers.  
No, touring is...  
How have you, I mean, both yourself,

but also, obviously, you'll be very well connected within the wider industry.

What is the situation like at the moment, with regards to Brexit and touring and so on?

Touring around Europe has been made much more difficult, much more expensive, I think.

A lot of companies are discouraged now from touring around Europe.

They're being discouraged?

Well, financially, it's just can't afford it.

It's not worth it, you know, it's not worth the effort.

There is a suggestion, I mean, some people in the arts want the government to look again at the Brexit deal.

So, it can be addressed for the arts, for that reason, to make it easier for touring.

Is that something that you would like to see?

I'd love to see that happen, you know, but I just say, I don't think there's the groundswell of support for that within government.

I don't think it's top of the list.

What he means sort of doesn't get talked about.

I don't think people are passionate enough about it in government to want to do anything about it.

Which, again, is extraordinary, really, when you consider how much, what an export earner it is and how world-leading Britain is at this stuff.

And in terms of the wider funding situation, obviously there's the Arts Council and everything that is going on with the English National Opera and encouraging it to take more production out of London and all this sort of stuff.

Why do you stand on that on, say, like the English National Opera and it being asked to move to leave London?

Well, I think they were treated terribly, you know, with no notice.

I think if the Arts Council has a plan for a company as big as that, they should start discussing it several years before they want them to move, which has happened with other companies in the past.

That seemed a ludicrous situation for any companies we put into.

So that aside, we are Arts Council supported, you know, as a company to tour and do the work we do and very grateful for it.



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Obviously, the government heading up to the next election, both parties, money's tight, always the arts has to kind of constantly brush up against a sort of wave of other demands on public spending.

What is your, and there will be people listening to this and you will be familiar with these arguments all the time to say that in an era where funding and public money is very, very tight, we just can't afford to subsidize the arts in the way that we do.

What is your answer, the Matthew Bourne answer to that?

It's a big one, but for me, it's such an important part of our lives and because it's not tangible in that way, but it's what makes us who we are, it's what gives us our passions and our loves and our drives and our inspirations to live.

You know, I mean, it's so important to everyone, I think, whether it's music or it's theater or it's reading or any of those things, you know, it's central to who we are as human beings.

And I think that's why it's never gonna be at the top of the list, but it should be on the list, at least.

Just thinking about politics more widely.

I mean, how important is politics to you and to your performance and to what you do?

How much do you think about politics?

What do you think about the current state of our politics?

I mean, you say you've been around a long time, you've seen ministers come and go, culture ministers and all that sort of thing.

What do you think about where we are as a nation politically?

I do sort of engage in terms of trying to keep up with what's going on.

It's not something I sort of put to one side, but I do, I've always, it's funny, if I always used to say my work isn't political and I don't have a political agenda in my work, my work is about other things, but I sort of do in a way because you realize that what you're reflecting is a political statement.

Everything's political.

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Yeah, exactly.

And I would say differently now.

And I think probably, you know,  
the sort of things I pull on stage,  
which have seemed natural to me  
and were a political statement,  
was quite sort of unusual at the time.

And certainly with something like Swan Lake,  
people, you know, it's gone through a whole time period  
where people used to walk out of it when we first did it.

Men would get up and walk out  
when two men danced together and things like that.

To now it's sort of family Christmas show,  
it's Adler's Wells, Bring the Kids, you know,  
it's gone on this massive sort of journey.

Do you think our politics is treating gay people well now?  
Or do you see the glimmers of potentially a backlash?

I mean, there have been things in politics recently,  
things that certain politicians have been saying  
that some people have argued,  
starts to represent something of a reversion  
in the way we treat gay people.

We certainly see it in America.

I don't think it's going to get that bad here.

I hope not.

But the reversal of a lot of things in America  
made me feel actually the piece we're doing at the moment,  
Romeo and Juliet, which was made four years ago,

I see it now as definitely set in America.

Suddenly it just seems that's what it's about  
with all the reversals of things that are happening there  
and the persecution of different kind of groups out there  
and women's rights and gay rights  
and all these things changing in various states.

There is a feeling that that is starting to swell up again.

So all the benefits that have come in the last 20 years  
seem to possibly could be eroded.

And that is very scary.

So, Matthew, thanks so much.

Thank you.

This is The News Agents.

Right, we better go before Trump gets another indictment.

Remember, you can catch up on all our shows  
from this week on Global Player

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and send us story tips and feedback  
to newsagents at global.com.

Thanks, as always, to our production team  
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John, glug, glug, glug, soaple,  
and me, Lewis, Google Me Goodall.

We'll see you on Tuesday.

Have a lovely Bank Holiday weekend.

This has been a Global Player original podcast  
and a Persephoneka production.