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Episode 69 - Jemima Foxtrot (May 2016)
Transcript by Christabel Smith

Host: David Turner – **DT**
Guest: Jemima Foxtrot – **JF**

Conversation:

DT: Hello, my name is David Turner and this is the Lunar Poetry Podcast. Today I am in Peckham, South East London, with writer and performer Jemima Foxtrot.

JF: Hello

DT: Hello Jemima, how are you doing?

JF: Not so bad. How are you?

DT: Good. It's a bit of irrelevant information for an audio podcast, but it's finally sunny outside.

JF: It's beautiful, yes, glorious.

DT: Jemima and I are full of Spring cheer.

JF: Absolutely, it's really nice.

DT: I'll start with the first question. Why poetry?

JF: Why poetry? I delight in language basically, I'm interested in what poetry has to do, especially in terms of sound. I like the sounds of words, I like assonance, I like rhymes. What I like about poetry is how you have to condense all this thought into a very short space of time. I like how, because of that, every single word counts.

And I like that sort of process of honing something down, shaving bits off it and making sure that every single thing you say matters and adds to your point. I think it's really an amazing thing as well, something I really enjoy, is when people say to me, oh that's so how I feel, you so expressed so well how I feel. I really like being able to articulate other people's feelings as well as my own, as I think we all go round with so much stuff going on in our heads and I find it really, really nice when I hear a poem or read a poem and I think, yes.

DT: So you're attracted to the discipline of the form?

JF: Yeah, I think so and I think that even in some practical sense, one of the reasons I got into it was because I find things like plot very, very difficult. Obviously, you don't have to have much of a plot with a poem particularly. I'd be interested in writing a novel maybe at some point, but the thing that puts me off is that I don't know how to work out what happens or where to take the story. I like poems as these little insights and snippets, like little windows into something bigger. Tiny little moments, I kind of like that idea.

DT: I often compare poetry to paintings in galleries and people perhaps feel a little bit silly as they don't understand what it means. But I always try to remind people that there doesn't have to be a great truth lying behind it. It can just be these tiny moments, can't it? I agree, I think it's really nice if you read a poem, especially if you're out in public and someone comes up to you afterwards and says, you were saying exactly what I was thinking, I just couldn't put it into those words.

JF: Yeah and I always feel that it's a nice thing to be able to do. When I read a poem I feel like that, and that's when I really feel passionate about poetry, when I connect to a particular piece, and I think you are completely right. I quite like some quite abstract things and things where you don't have to know exactly what's going on the whole time.

I think poetry is quite magical in that way, that you can read something and not really understand what's going on, but still take so much joy in it or so much pleasure from it. It can affect you even if you don't know what the person is necessarily talking about.

DT: Also another thing, people forget often that you wouldn't necessarily listen to a pop record and demand to understand. You can enjoy the sound of it, you can enjoy the general emotion without worrying too much. If you do analyse lots of them, they don't make much sense, but that's not the point, is it? Is that what attracts you to playing around with the sound as well, when you are performing?

JF: Yeah, I like the idea of bringing in snippets of other people's songs and one of the reasons I do that is because some people might recognise that song and have a particular emotional connection to it, some people may have never heard it before. I like the idea of different people having different experiences because of course everybody does react to a poem completely differently.

I like some of my poems to have intense patterns of sound, internal rhymes and things like that. I find a real joy with working with the meaning, but then also the sound so… I went to Stanza Poetry Festival recently and I heard quite a lot of poetry in other languages, I heard some poetry in Swedish, some poetry in German, and it's actually really, really interesting listening to poetry in a language that you don't understand because it's completely stripped of the meaning, but you can still actually find it really enjoyable.

It's almost like listening to a piece of music and that made me think quite a lot more about the relationship between the sound and the meaning. If you listen to a poem in another language that you don't understand, it can still be really amazing even though you have no idea what it's about at all.

DT: I was lucky enough to interview a poet called Mosab al Nomairy, he's Syrian but I interviewed him in Istanbul when I was over there. He read to me in Arabic. I didn't understand anything, but it was just one of the most powerful readings I have ever experienced. I am lucky in doing this podcast, I get a lot of people reading to me in private. It's something that most people don't get to experience.

I've sat down with 50 or 60 poets and they've all read me their work and I've just been on my own with them in a room. It's been really nice. People have read to me in German, in Turkish, in Arabic, in Swedish and you don't lose as much as you might think from just not being able to understand the text.

JF: Absolutely. I find that really interesting. That shows how sound is so important, basically, in poetry.

DT: So, as you mentioned, you introduce snippets of songs from other people. Is the singing an embellishment of the poetry or are the words just a framework to hold the tune? Does that make sense?

JF: It does make sense and I think the answer to that is that it really depends on the poem. I started putting the songs in sort of instinctually I think, because I like singing and music means

a lot to me and singing makes me happy and some poems have come from hearing a song, or being taught a new song or having a song in my head and building a poem around that and that song being the inspiration for that poem.

Sometimes it's the other way around. Sometimes I'm writing a poem and obviously, we all have a huge store of songs, all the songs that we've heard and all the songs that we like, and all the songs we know in our head. Sometimes I write a poem and think, that song perfectly expresses what I'm trying to say in this poem.

So it sort of does vary, which comes first, and therefore, I think, the purpose of them. On a very practical level, when I first started doing it, I started sets with singing, because especially in long poetry nights, it just gets everybody's attention. In a practical way, it's good to get on stage when everyone's just listened to six poets reading poetry. If you get on stage and start going ba-da-daaa, then everyone's like fucking hell, alright! And that's kind of one of the reasons I started doing it.

But as I continued, and I started writing more, I started realising that there are so many more interesting ways you can use it. Some of my poems still have a bit of song at the beginning and a bit of song at the end and the poem in the middle. But more and more, I started putting different songs in, scattered throughout, and they are really useful sometimes to indicate terms and change the tone, just sort of break it up, and distort the line of the poem in an interesting way. And now I've started writing more of my own songs, to put in as well, because I enjoy doing that.

DT: I cannot remember where I heard this conversation, whether it was in private or on another podcast, but talking about open mic nights and how exhausting it can be listening to poetry all night, I think it's quite natural not to have that level of concentration all night. The discussion revolved around, can you add interludes or breaks that aren't just going to the bar? How can you just lighten the mood slightly?

I think a lot of open mic nights are reluctant to get musicians because sometimes they get too warmly received and take the attention away from the poetry maybe. But it's an important thing to remember if you're reading all night, especially if you're claiming to be a performer. Not all poets claim to be performers, they're just there to recite their work, and that's fine, but that's another debate for another time.

But it can be a very exhausting night and it's a very valid conversation if we're all going to try and attract more people to poetry events. You have to remember, if your first event involves two and a half hours of poetry, it's quite exhausting.

JF: It absolutely is. Even with a break, you have to listen, you have to listen and concentrate, and good poetry should basically send your brain off into loads of different directions. Someone should say a metaphor and a line that should get you, that should get you thinking about something else for the next 20 seconds. And then one of the things I think makes good poetry as well, or makes those nights good is when... I can almost guarantee you, that not a single person in that audience is completely concentrating and completely getting every single word that is said in a two and a half hour poetry night.

You should be able to zone out and zone back in and still be able to latch back onto it. I'm getting more and more interested in these people who are using other forms. I still haven't seen the full show, but Maria Ferguson has done this show, Fat Girls Don't Dance. I saw a half hour scratch of it last year and it's just so interesting to have dance and poetry and that works. If you do it well, and she does, it works. But yes, in terms of poetry nights I don't really know what the answer is.

DT: It might be a little distracting to talk about that today, but since you mentioned it, I thought it does resonate with a lot of people who run nights. It resonates a lot with the issue of trying to get people to come back to nights. People already invested in going to poetry events are a captive audience. Having run a night myself, or co-run a night with Lizzy, there's no shortage of people coming to read, but the night needs audience members as well.

Sometimes, and I've been guilty of it myself, people who know they're going to read can be very nervous before they go on and they don't make for very good audience members. You need committed audience members and you need to look after them more I think.

JF: Yeah, who are there to listen.

DT: Maybe we'll get onto talking about audience members as we have a solo project to talk about a bit later on. I suppose what I am also wondering is how the musical side of your work translates to the page, to printed work.

JF: That is an interesting point. I have just finished last month putting together my first collection, which is very exciting, and the song lyrics I've used I have basically put in italics. I put in a little note at the beginning of the book saying. all text in italics is sung. Some of the songs are probably so blindingly obvious, you would have to have been living under a rock for most of your life not to have heard them, such as, I don't know, 'I get too hungry for dinner at 8'.

Everyone is going to know what that sounds like, or what that tune is like. Less so with lots of the other songs, but of course I'm going to reference them all and give credit to the original people. So it's interesting because, if you know the song, I think when you read it, you will sing it in your head. If you don't know the song, for instance if it's one of my songs, and you've never heard me perform that poem and don't know the tune, you're kind of fucked because you're not going to know how it goes.

But I find that quite interesting, like maybe people can just make up their own tune, maybe they won't bother, maybe they'll just read it. If they don't know the song and it's by someone else, they can Google the song and listen to it on YouTube or whatever. If they don't know the song and it's my song, I find that quite interesting because I think, maybe they'll just make it up, maybe if you're reading it in your head, you'll probably just say the words to yourself in the way that you do when you read in your head.

It was something I was quite resistant to, originally, because I'd say at least 60% of my work has singing in, and that's just not going to translate to page, that's just not going to work. But I've sort of come around to the idea and I've also used the book as an opportunity to write a few more sort of page-focused poems.

DT: There could maybe be a little YouTube video of you doing the song. The singing parts of chapters could work, could be interactive, people could get an idea of the tune and read the poem alongside you singing. That would be really nice.

JF: I had actually thought of doing something like that.

DT: What I really like is the fact it's just put in italics, as it allows for the reader to be intelligent enough to interpret. We don't need to put everything on a plate for people that are reading, that's not necessary. I think for your work, it does need to be made clear that certain sections are sung because that's a major part of the work, but maybe as a little aside, it might be fun.

There has to be an access point for people. Of course there are the well-known songs by other people, people can research that and find it themselves, but for your own work maybe it might be nice. We should say first of all that the book will be out in the summer through Burning Eye Books and it's called …

JF: It's called 'All Damn Day'.

DT: So, the release date at the moment isn't finalised but we'll give blog details at the end for Jemima, Burning Eye Books and obviously my Twitter account @Silent_Tongue for the podcast, so there'll be lots of information as and when it's released. But now we'll have a reading I think.

JF: I'm debating which one to do because I have a lot of newish ones that I'm in the process of learning for performance. I will do this one I think – well have a crack at this one anyway.

This is the last poem in the book, and lots of the poems, none of them have titles, as I don't like titles. I like the idea of the book being a sort of sequence of snippets, of thoughts, and as we were saying before, like little windows into certain moments or certain feelings. I thought not having titles would aid that feeling and lots of them are sort of dedicated to people, or for people, so this is for Olivia and Sammy.

[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]

DT: Thank you very much. So you mentioned that's going to be the last poem in the book. How do you come to decisions like that? Have you had assistance in the layout of the book?

JF: No. It wasn't that long ago I was thinking fucking hell, I don't know what, because it's got some poems in there that I've probably written about six years ago. It's quite a long time. It's really interesting, it was quite enjoyable going through everything and one of the reasons I'm calling it 'All Damn Day' (and that poem actually came after I thought of the title for the book), is because I was going through my poems and I noticed that probably about three quarters of them have references to some sort of time of day.

Like, it is a Tuesday morning, or it is 3am, at dusk, or whatever, so I thought, well this is kind of interesting, this is something I've done without realising or without deliberately doing. Sub-

consciously all my poems seem to be set in a very temporal space in the day, so the book is basically split up into little sections and little chapter headings.

It basically goes from, it's 3 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock in the morning, which normally consists of staying up too late and what happens when you do that. Then there's a whole section about the morning and a whole section about the afternoon and then there's a whole section about the night, and then the final section is called All Damn Day.

That's where I've put a lot of my political ones. Basically, things like what the fuck is 'ladylike', or capitalism, and these ideas and issues that are not and cannot be confined to a particular time of day. They happen All Damn Day. The reason I put that one last is because it's sort of the title poem, because it has the phrase All Damn Day, I thought it would be a good finisher.

DT: Do you think because you're attracted to this idea of using snippets of information, that it's handy to perhaps have a tool where you at least have a starting point, and if that starting point is 3 o'clock in the morning, that's enough? You don't need more of a set-up, it's clear. It's quite a strong tool isn't it? If you tell someone it's 3:30 in the morning, they sort of know what frame of mind you are in.

JF: Exactly. You can very, very quickly set up what is going on. What I have probably done without realising over the past several years since I have been writing poetry, is setting or using poems as ways to shed light on or give insight to particular and specific moments and experiences that happen there.

DT: It seems to me that there's a strong link between setting a poem at a particular time of day and using a song, as bookending or to start a poem because you are setting the mood without necessarily having to build up a narrative which perhaps exists in other forms of poetry. Perhaps it seems like quite a good way of saying here's how I feel and now the poem starts, and don't worry about anything else.

JF: It sort of gets everybody on the same page as you, I think.

DT: So, you've got some exciting news.

JF: I have got some exciting news.

DT: It feels a bit naughty talking about it, because today's a Thursday and we're not supposed to be talking about it in public, but this isn't going out for a few days... But you've been nominated for not one but two Saboteur Awards.

JF: Saboteur Awards, yeah. I'm really quite shocked, to be honest, and very excited, as they're interesting, those awards, they are all done by votes. I put a couple of things out like, 'oh if you want to', but I never really expected that anyone, or enough people, would and they have, which is really good. I've been shortlisted for Best Spoken Word Performer and 'Melody', my show that I'm currently touring and that I took to Edinburgh last year, is up for Best Spoken Word Show.

DT: So, a very quick explanation for people wo don't know what the Saboteur Awards are. There's an online blog called Sabotage Reviews and they have reviews of independent

literature, but they do a lot of poetry stuff and have a big section of reviews on spoken word events and performance poetry.

Is this the fourth year of their awards? They are growing every year. This year there are more categories than last year, and it's an ongoing process. You are nominated by the public aren't you, and then you are voted for by the public, after the shortlist is compiled. So if you want information about the Saboteur Awards, go to Sabotage Reviews. Google that because I can't remember the exact address, whether it's .org or .com.

So excitingly, the solo show that you're touring at the moment, 'Melody', as you said has been nominated. Bearing in mind that this will probably go out on the 2nd of May, are there any notable dates when people can check it out?

JF: It kind of depends where people are because I think... I've got no other plans to do it in London. I just did it at the Clapham Omnibus a couple of weeks ago, we developed it, so huge thanks to them for giving us all that free space. I'm doing it at Latitude festival, which is really, really exciting, and I'm doing it in Oxford at a place called Offbeat Festival.

I'm going to Leicester tomorrow, but this will be out after that. Where else? I'm going to Aldeburgh to do it at their alternative festival now that the Poetry Festival's not there anymore. They've got an artsy fringe festival. I'm going to Exeter. I've basically ended up accepting dates to do it right into November which wasn't really the original plan. But I'm happy with it, so I'd like to share it with more people really.

DT: We're going to talk about it a bit more in-depth, but maybe we could have a reading, to get a bit more of a taste first?

JF: OK. I'll do a little section.

[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]

DT: Thank you very much. So, tell us a bit about the show.

JF: OK, so, the show is a one-woman show, as in there's just me on-stage, but I actually made it with a really good friend of mine, Lucy Allen, who is one of my friends from university. We were on the same course and she has directed it and co-written it, in that she's very responsible for the shape of the piece, otherwise it would just be me rambling on for hours.

Basically, it is an exploration of music and how music attaches itself to memories. It starts with me missing a bus home from work and I hear this song playing from a fruit stall and it's absolutely amazing and I start dancing to it and it makes me happy and I decide because of that, that I'm going to walk home. So the whole show is a journey home and what happens is, as I go home, I hear different songs like a song playing from a car or something playing from someone's window, like a cookery programme.

The idea is we have various noises and sounds which are piped through the PA, which is me hearing those things and I react and get sent off in reveries and reminiscences of these various things that have happened. It's pretty autobiographical.

DT: Did you have a narrative in mind as you started compiling the piece or did you have a collection of work that had a common theme?

JF: Definitely more like the second one. Lucy and I started working on it quite a long time ago. It's really been whittled down in that way that I was saying I enjoy about poetry. I basically gave her almost everything I had ever written. I gave her like 50-odd pages of stuff, and we sort of tried to organise it, and I think she actually came up with the idea of it being a walk home.

So, we didn't go into it like, right, we're going to make a show about a walk home. I wanted it to be about music because it plays quite an important part in my work. But I think it was a good idea to make it about a walk home, and it was more an idea of seeing what we have and there are some set pieces. There are some pieces that people have seen me do before at gigs, but our challenge was to weave that seamlessly into this narrative, so it made sense, so it wasn't like, and now I'm doing a poem.

DT: I suppose the theme of sounds and songs evoking emotions and memories plays through all of your work anyway, so it's a natural way to go into it, that way. So I suppose setting it on the walk home puts it at a certain time of day as well doesn't it? Actually, a friend of mine who's been on the podcast, Liv Wynter, recently did a project called Headfuck, and it was basically a one-to-one performance via Skype.

You could enrol into it and no two performances were the same. It's a really interesting project but it was very much linked to coming home after an evening. I know a lot of people who write on night buses home. There's obviously a lot of inspiration when you're out with friends and you're talking about feelings and stuff, but there's something in that. It's quite lonely isn't it, that journey home?

JF: Yeah.

DT: And it doesn't necessarily have to be, but a lot of people turn it into quite a dark thing. There are issues as to whether you are walking home on your own or if you feel safe or not. That's perhaps a distraction from what I mean, but it's interesting how people interpret that loneliness.

JF: Yeah, is that a liberating thing? Or is it a sad thing that makes you feel smaller? I think it's interesting that you think of home as your destination, which is very different from setting out for somewhere. The setting, on your way home, and the way it's framed in the piece is very much like, hooray, I don't have to hurry home, I can just…

There's a line that's like, I'm going to lounge in the almost too-long walk home and let songs play, so it's sort of revelling, and I think some of the times I'm happiest really is when I am walking alone. So, it's got that vibe at the beginning like, this is a positive thing. Then throughout the play some pretty grim things happen, and I think we take the audience to some pretty difficult places, but then of course, because you're walking home, we're sort of redeemed a bit. I'm redeemed by getting home, reaching my destination and getting somewhere I'm happy and safe, I suppose.

DT: So, is this way of writing for solo performances something you would like to develop further?

JF: I think so, yeah. We're actually in talks about developing another one, we've got about a week's rehearsal where we're looking at it.

DT: Would you work with your friend Lucy again?

JF: Yeah, I think I will, because I really trust her. She's a fiercely intelligent woman, she knows what she's doing. I'm going to try and get some money for us to do it. Maybe get an Arts Council grant. We don't need much but we did the last one with very, very little funding. I got a grand from an award I was shortlisted for and I used that, but I wasn't paying her, and I wasn't paying me.

Yeah, I want to do another one. It's funny because if you'd asked me four years ago if I thought I'd ever be doing a one-woman show I'd be like... Because I'd seen a couple of good ones and I was so in awe of how someone could be on stage for a whole hour by themselves, and still keep an audience engaged, I just never thought it was possible, but I think we've done it. Yeah, I'm hoping to do it again.

DT: Obviously, this particular show has been a very positive experience for you and you've had a lot of really good feedback, which is great for your first attempt at something, and it's not often when you try things for the first time that they work out so positively. Do you think in general that a lot of poets, and people who would consider themselves to be spoken word artists, whatever that means – do you think people are under a lot of pressure to take that step? As though it's almost expected of them to go to Edinburgh and, when are you going to write a longer piece?

JF: I think so, yeah. I think that's changed quite a lot. When I was at Manchester Uni however many years ago, spoken word wasn't really a thing. Maybe I was being ignorant, but from what I knew I was one of the few people in the city doing it, and certainly one of the few students doing it.

And of course, now it's really, really, really blown up. I think if you want to take it seriously and make some sort of career out of it **-** it was something Luke Wright told me, actually - you need to have a show. I don't think there is necessarily pressure to do a show that's held together by a narrative, you know. Our show, Melody, is basically theatre, really, it's a theatre piece, as is Luke Wright's What I Learnt from Johnny Bevan.

It happens to all rhyme, but it's got a through narrative and is a theatre piece. I don't think there is necessarily a pressure to do that. Those anthology shows, where you do a poem and everybody claps, and you do a bit of chatting in between, do that for an hour, fine, but it's useful to have an hour-long thing that you can tout around and do your own night.

Most of the dates I've got for Melody are just me that night, whereas, of course, lots of other gigs you do, you do 20 minutes and then there are three other people. So, I think there is some pressure, but I think it's probably a good thing. I think it's probably quite wise if you want to develop. It was a really great experience for me, doing it and I would advise anyone,

if you can find someone good to work with, to work with someone doing it but it really taught me a lot with Lucy saying, I don't like this bit, it sounds a bit clichéd, and crossing it out.

Or, we've not had anything about you and your mates yet, can you write a section about you and your friends? The she'd go off and have lunch or whatever and I'd sit there for half an hour and write a bit. Just doing that sort of thing is really valuable, I think.

DT: What sort of workshopping was involved. Did you do a lot of scratch events?

JF: Yeah, so we did...

DT: I just need to say, I always promise myself that I won't just say things like, do you do scratch events? Some people won't know what scratch events are. Basically, scratch events are, with anything from 7 minutes to 20 minutes, it's where you get to go and do a summary of your show or certain sections of your work. Google it, there are lots of events, if you want to find any because it's a really good way of developing. If you are a writer just starting out and you don't know where to go, you don't have to go and do 45 minutes of something. You can go and do 10, 15 minutes of something. Was this a big part of the development?

JF: Definitely, and a really good thing about them is everyone is really, really friendly and welcoming, there is a really good understanding that this is the first time you are trying it out. There is a real emphasis on trying it out, which is really, really nice and we found them really useful. I'd say to anyone thinking of putting together a longer show to book in for some scratches because the first one we did was actually at a smaller theatre space at the South Bank and I applied to it like two weeks before, thinking, oh I probably won't get it, got it, and we were like, fuck, we don't even have anything. We've got absolutely nothing.

So then over the two weeks, I desperately wrote it all and Lucy came round and we cut bits out, and then it went really well and everyone said it was really good and that gave us the confidence. So then we basically did two scratches, a 10-minute one at the South Bank and then a 15-minute one at Battersea Arts Centre. Then we thought, great, we've got 25 minutes of the show now. In the end, only about 5 minutes of those 25 minutes we wrote at the scratch ended up in the show.

And we've changed the show since Edinburgh, we've gone back into rehearsal and changed it. And then we had this thing that I can't recommend highly enough, which is at the Clapham Omnibus, which is a great theatre, a really, really nice space, great people and they have a thing called the Engine Room. Basically, after you've done a couple of scratches, they give you the chance to do what is still a scratch, but it's your full-length scratch.

So they gave us, amazingly, rehearsal space for three days, absolutely free, and at the end of it, we did this sort of sharing scratch of the very first version of the 50-minute-long show. It was terrifying, you know. We only finalised the script the night before the show and I was desperately learning my lines. I had to ask for lines, I had to ask for prompts from Lucy a couple of times.

But just being able to like, share it in that space and work out what works... you discover things like a line that you didn't think was a comedy line, but everyone is like 'ha ha' and you are like oof, alright!

DT: I have that all the time, if I do something really emotional, and people are laughing.

JF: I know, and you are like, oh right, great!

DT: I have got quite good at unintentional comic timing, which can be a flaw when you are trying to tear your heart out. I have to say, I haven't attempted to write anything longer, and I'm not sure I want to, but I have learned a lot from attending read-throughs. Script-in-hand performances where people are actors or performers, learning the script as you're watching.

They've got the script in their hand if they need to call back on that, so it's a very informal procedure, but what it does is give you a lot of confidence in knowing that you don't have to get it right immediately. The whole point is to try it in front of an audience and work things out. I think there is a lot of pressure on people when they first start sharing their poetry or first start going to spoken word events.

Everyone looks so good. Everyone looks brilliant, but you don't know that they've read that piece 25 times. And it might be the first time they've ever got it right. They've just lucked out in front of you and it can be very intimidating. You made a very good point that from 25 minutes of material which at that time may have felt really strong, 20 minutes of that was gone.

It doesn't mean 20 minutes was rubbish, just that it wasn't right for the development of the piece. I will say, I don't know anything about that as I've not written anything longer than seven minutes. Perhaps we should have another reading from the show.

JF: OK.

[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]

DT: Thank you very much. Time is ticking on, so we might just finish with one last question. I don't really know where this is going, it's something I'm trying to work it out in my head at the moment. If you are putting on a solo spoken-word show, is that theatre? Do you think that automatically equates to theatre?

JF: I think it is theatre, as it's a live performance, it's something that requires there to be an audience as it happens. Actions happen in real time in front of them and it's got that sort of immediacy. I think it's automatically more theatre if it has a story line, which links together, because some of these anthology shows, they can almost be more like stand-up comedy, really, because it's like, here's a poem about this, and then chatting, making people laugh and often a lot of those are scripted still. But yeah, I think it is theatre.

DT: I think mainly the reason that question exists in my head is I get very confused with the way that shows are advertised. And people, for some reason, still hang onto this idea that, it's a spoken word show, it's not theatre in the way that a play is theatre. But if a play had one person in it, it would still be theatre. It would look exactly the same perhaps as a spoken word

show. There's no predetermined factor necessarily is there, that a spoken word show will rhyme? That doesn't define it as spoken word.

I don't know if you saw it, there was this fantastic show, 'This is How We Die', with Christopher Brett Bailey. It was really fantastic, he won a lot of awards, and clearly, though he might debate this, he seems clearly to have been influenced by a lot of 'true' spoken word stuff. In that, clearly people are rejecting normal narrative in plays and theatre. But it's presented in a way that's completely theatre. With the way that lighting is worked into the whole piece, and just because he is on his own, reading from pieces of paper, that doesn't make it any less theatre.

I've not quite got it worked out in my head. Maybe it's because people don't know how to promote and advertise spoken word properly and the poetry element is maybe still stuck in the idea that it's different. Because you're a poet, first and foremost, and not involved in theatre. I don't know if that just exists in the mind of promoters.

JF: Yeah, you're right, lots of those things. They still have so many theatrical elements and I did actually think... I'm not going to take a show to Edinburgh this year, but next year I probably will, this new one. I'm probably going to put it in the theatre category, actually, partly because it's an easier sell. Going up to Edinburgh and handing out fliers saying it's a poetry play and they go, oooh no, even though spoken work is really on the up. I think it's probably quite useful to categorise it sometimes as theatre.

DT: I definitely need to think about it a bit more, but it probably will be a subject for another discussion, another time perhaps. But on the podcast I do quite like the idea of ignoring Edinburgh [Fringe Festival]. But perhaps coming up to it. I just mean, it gets so much discussion, I don't know if I can add anything to it where people are doing enough. But if we can wrap up there, where can people check out your work and dates?

JF: So, I have a website which is Jemimafoxtrot.co.uk. I also have a Facebook page which is called Jemima Foxtrot Poet and I have Twitter which is @JemimaFoxtrot. Handy having an unusual name.

DT: Links to all of those access points will be in the description, however you listen to this, wherever you are, and also follow Burning Eye Books. There's a lot of interesting stuff happening there, and obviously as we have mentioned Jemima's book will be out sometime in the summer. Just look out for updates. Thank you, Jemima.

End of transcript.