

## BBC Radio Leicester interview with Richard Armitage, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Interviewer: Emily Anderson

Richard: It's always a little bit intimidating when you take on a role like this. Apart from having to relocate to New Zealand for a year and a half, the scale of the film was huge and the amount of people that are working. I remember walking on to the sound stage on the first day and pulling back a curtain and seeing two hundred people on computers and you think all of these people are going to be looking at you so it's a little bit scary but you do your work and Peter makes the atmosphere very intimate, and of course everyone's focusing on their particular job, so it suddenly becomes less daunting and it's just your workplace.

Emily: You're well known in the UK for various roles such as your role in Spooks and obviously on Robin Hood, but this has put you on to the global scale hasn't it?

Richard: Well I suppose yes, because we've just had the final box office from the cinema release and I think we've hit a billion dollars which is a huge success so it means to me what's important about that is it has had a global reach and many, many people have seen it in different cultures and different countries and that to me is very exciting.

Emily: Now the book and indeed the film has had great affection for many people, particularly children. Is this a childhood dream for you to play this part?

Richard: Well yeah, I mean I read the book when I was seven years old or I think it was read to me in primary school and I remember very clearly the teacher doing all the voices and that memory came back to me when I started reading it again as preparation for the film. I love working from literature and it's always a point of reference so however far into filming you are, you can always go back to that book and remember what Tolkien was talking about and what he was writing. You know I also hope that when people see this film that they might go and pick up the book and experience it for themselves in that way. So yes it really was a childhood dream.

Emily: I think often the problem especially when books are turned into films, people if they've read the book are very cynical aren't they, and they say 'oh you know, it's not as good as the book'. Do you think that the Hobbit translates well on screen?

Richard: I do, and also I think it's sort of based on the book if you know what I mean, and Tolkien talks about certain paths and he goes down them and there are other routes that he chooses not to go down, and Peter's exploring everything, so it's an expansion of the book certainly and he wants to play in Middle-earth again and I really enjoy that. He's not really inventing too much story, I mean he's using the appendices from Lord of the Rings. But yeah, it's a charming tale but it has to be translated into a film which is appealing to a wider audience than perhaps the book was ever intended for.

Emily: Now the part you play in the film, if people don't know, is Thorin, leader of the dwarves in Middle England (sic). How did you prepare for a role like that?

Richard: We did six to eight weeks of boot camp, so it was learning how to fight, how to move, how to interact with each other. It became like a military operation amongst the thirteen dwarves, so we found our hierarchy. We trained with a stunt team so that we were in line with our stunt doubles and yeah apart from the physical work as well, I mean I did a fair amount of vocal work and researching Tolkien, looking at as much of his other writings as I could possibly get my hands on.

Emily: Would you say your role in the Hobbit was a dream role or is there a role you're still waiting to play?

Richard: Yeah the Hobbit was pretty much a dream role and there's always another role out there that I'll hanker for, but I do love working from literature, I love working from history and I always enjoy playing someone that existed in real life.

Emily: We can't get you on BBC Radio Leicester without talking to you about, number one Richard the third, talking of history and I'm sure you've heard about the recent find in Leicester of Richard the third's bones. What do you make of all that?

Richard: It's very exciting. The dig was fascinating and I watched every step of the way and seeing that facial reconstruction as well was also fascinating, but I was named after Richard, my father had a real passion for his story and I was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, which is the day that he died at the Battle of Bosworth and I remember being a little bit cross with my Dad for naming me after a hunchback monster, but of course he was a Ricardian so he believed in something quite different to what Shakespeare was talking about and I've adopted that passion I suppose, so yeah I'm kind of interested in his life.

Emily: So it has a special significance for you, and as we've heard from the originator of the search Philippa Langley, I'm sure you've heard her speaking quite fondly of Richard the third, it looks like history might need to be rewritten.

Richard: Well, yeah, I mean there's not an awful lot there. Any documentation that really was around at the time of his life was either destroyed or just simply didn't exist, so we don't really know an awful lot about him and certainly not any psychology as to why he was perceived in the way that he was. The physical thing aside, with regards to the scoliosis, at the time the idea of somebody who was physically deformed being a malevolent person was actually quite a normal thing and obviously we think differently to that today, so it would be interesting to have another look at his life aside from Shakespeare's fantastic villain, but really it's almost a pantomime creation and I'm interested in looking at a psychological version of that story whereby we try to understand who he was and why he did the things he did.

Emily: There have been various quotes from you and from other people suggesting that maybe you'd be the perfect person to play Richard the third if there were to be a screenplay or a film about him.

Richard: Well, I find that very flattering. I mean I live in a dream world of maybe doing that, but I'm a little bit too tall and perhaps a little bit too old now, but I'd certainly like to be involved in a production, whether that's on stage or on film I don't know.

Emily: So you've not been approached yet?

Richard (laughing): No, no I haven't.

Emily: Well, Philippa Langley has told BBC Radio Leicester she can't see past you, Richard Armitage, for the role and she's writing a screenplay at the moment.

Richard: Yes, I've read her screenplay and I've been in contact with Philippa for a long time. You know I'm so thrilled that she was able to be such an integral part of that dig, as a member of the Richard the third society, so I just want to offer my congratulations to her for that success.

Emily: Have you been to Leicester yet, since the find of Richard the third because obviously we've got the dig site, we've got the visitor centre, a brand new visitor centre opening next year, is it something you could be maybe tempted to come and have a look at?

Richard: Without a doubt yeah, it's definitely on my list of things to do. I think it's a real privilege for Leicester to have that find and I suppose the idea of a reburial is now on everyone's lips, of where his remains should end.

Emily: Can I ask you your opinion?

Richard: I think he should probably stay where he was found.

Emily: In Leicester...

Richard: Yeah I do.

Emily: In Leicester, so next year when the re-internment happens, maybe we could see you in Leicester to come along and have a look for yourself?

Richard: Oh for sure, without a doubt.

Emily: Well thank you very much for talking to me today Richard and if you are ever in Leicester, feel free to pop in to see us because believe it or not we're right next door to where Richard the third's remains were found.

Richard (laughing): I will do, I certainly will.

Emily: So do come in and see us.

Richard: Thank you.