

GUEST: ROBBIE TANN

ACTORS' THINK TANK - NOTES

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

BRAND

Robbie's background was theatre and this training did not translate easily to TV/Film. Every actor believes he can do anything, but he realized no one knew who he was. He was not a graduate of Yale or Julliard. Therefore, he had to figure out what he did best. When a casting director brings you in, they have an expectation. Early in his career he had a casting director tell him, "Be high." It was illuminating. In essence, the casting director was telling him, this is where you fit. He had to identify and narrow the field. Then, he brought that to other rooms and he made it his brand. He figured if he could get good at that, he could work. Now, things are opening up to other opportunities.

THE ARTIST WITHIN

To get there acting, he had to play the game. He learned that in order to change the game, you had to play the game. Because his background was theatre, it was through his agent and manager that he shifted into TV and film. It was a slow process. It took 3-4 times for a casting director to remember who he was. Not until he got better, did they start to remember him. (Note: Robbie teaches acting for film and tv to seniors in college. He compares acting in the theatre to figure skating; in film and tv it is like roller derby. Same basic skill, but different execution.)

GOALS

His next goal is what is right in front of him. In the early years, if he had one role on tv, his dream came true. If he had anything ...just a wave at someone, he called it a success. After he got his first TV role, the next step would be a part with 3-5 lines, then the next would be a 2-3 minute scene. Now after Mare, "How do I get a feature role." What is right in front that he hasn't done. If he sets a big dream, it can be overwhelming. It is a tough business and if he wakes up not having achieved the big dream, he would feel discouraged.

His dream role? Perhaps a character which includes dramatic elements with some humor. He loves comedy. He likes character driven roles. He is drawn to empathetic characters, not cynical. He likes people and was drawn to Mare because the show cared about the people.

BALANCE

Because his background was in theatre, tv and film were areas where he was learning as he was going. Always felt he wasn't good enough -- yet. His expectations were realistic for where he was as an artist.

HUMILITY

Humility is super important. To be a good actor, you have to be humble because so much is about human empathy. If not, you can't approach a character with humility.

MARE OF EASTTOWN

The most challenging scene was the river scene because it was shot in 2 parts -- 1) on the river, and 2) closeups were shot on a green screen. It was shot on two different days. The scene was challenging from a technical point.

Robbie's favorite scene was in episode 5 in the house where Mare noticed the beer. Being in the company of those actors with everyone just hanging out was a lovely environment. All were incredibly nice.

To keep the consistency in his performance when there is a break for days or months, his trick is "presence." In Tv/Film, it is all about The Moment. Once the work starts, you are **there**.

To prepare for the role, he looked up grief, specifics, family dynamics. It became part of his life when he was working on it. He wants to experience the person, where the character comes from, what life is like for them, what does it take for the character to live with that. He lives with it ALL the time. He has developed the practice to think about it all the time, but not wear it all the time. He

can get caught up in the character. However, he is not one to seclude himself on set. The exciting part is being with people.

A few interesting notes from Robbie about Mare of Easttown and Philadelphia:

Rolling Rock is actually in the script.

The idea that an ex-husband and wife could live across the street from each other was indicative of how caring people were in the town.

He was in conversation with Brad Ingelsby, the writer, from the beginning. Brad cared so deeply and was super involved. He changed things as the scenario evolved. Now, Brad is one of his very favorite people.

Robbie always had a soft spot for Philly and now it has become one of his favorite places. The city still feels unique. A place where working people live and are incredibly nice. He is glad it is getting its moment because it has such a heart to it.

REEL DECISIONS

His reel starts with him opposite Kate Winslet because there is value to show who you've worked with. Currently, he is including less of his old stuff because he is trying to break out into another direction.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The projects he develops for himself are often self-reflective. Working on a story about a guy who gets divorced. The settlement gives him the parking space in New York. So, he moves into it. Regarding creating content, his relationships and friendships with directors gives him a macro perspective on everything.

PERSONAL

Robbie has Texas roots and recently shot a feature film in Texas. True, he is a Cowboys' fan for life! Texas is who he is and Texas is always with him, but Texas is becoming less and less of what he is.