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The Reduced Shakespeare Company was in town recently to perform a 2-week run of their smash hit *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare - Abridged*. Faust spoke to cast members **Austin Tichenor**, **Mick Orfe** and **Matt Rippey** for an inside look at the world of professional (but hardly ever serious) acting.



### 1) How did you first get started with the RSC?

**Austin:** I knew the founding members. Actually one of the founding members was at college with me – at Berkeley – and he called me up in 1992 and said: “how’d you like to play Hamlet on the West End” and I thought for about one second and said – yes!

**Mick:** I saw a production of this show (The Complete Works) as a much younger man (ahem!) and then later saw an audition notice and so I auditioned and here I am....

**Austin adds:** When Mick’s headshot came in, there was a post-it stuck to it from his agent that said: “Mick loves the RSC and would kill to be part of your company”. We later found out it was Mick who had written that. (Everyone laughs, Mick stares down at his food)

**Mick:** Actually I knew one of the actors at RSC at the time too so maybe he put in a good word

**Matt:** (with a cheeky grin) Well, mine is the usual tale – wealthy banker decides to give it all up to serve the masses... (everyone laughs)



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## 2) What is your favourite section of *The Complete Works*..? To perform or to watch?

**Austin:** The end when we race through the end of Hamlet. Those encores are tough work but so much fun

**Matt:** I enjoy the audience participation. Going into the audience and pulling up an Ophelia – that's great.

**Mick:** To watch – the encores. To perform – and I hope this doesn't sound too conceited but – the part when I'm alone on stage at the end of the first act.

## 3) Had you done any acting as children?

**Matt:** I act like a child every night!

**Austin:** Yeah, I was always doing shows. Started in kindergarten, did plays all the way through school

**Mick:** I was in a production of Hansel & Gretel in Third Grade. I played Hansel. I had to audition! I remember the kids before me either yelling their line, or whispering it really quietly. And I just said it normally – like a person might really speak – and that's a memory I have of what acting might be about.

**Matt:** I got started at age 13 – in a musical at a local theatre.

## 4) Did drama and theatre help you when growing up? For example confidence, creativity, focus etc...

**Austin:** Yeah. I remember a teacher saying to me that once she knew I was interested in theatre, she finally knew how to get through to me.



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**5) Any war stories from auditions and performances you can share with us?**

**Austin:** I was auditioning for the first season of CSI and the part was a 'grieving husband who's just discovered that his wife has been murdered' – as in, just found out. So I read the lines and the Casting Director's first note to me was: "Ok so, your wife has just been murdered". I guess my performance hadn't conveyed that!

**Matt:** My best story is when I got punched by an Ophelia on stage. I pushed her wrong – this was in the old version when I had to get jealous that she was taking my part – so I nearly pushed her off balance by mistake and she just swung around without thinking and decked me. It hurt!

**Mick:** I was in a production of *A Slight Case of Murder* in college and I had a cough drop in my mouth during the intermission and I forgot to spit it out when I went back on stage. I tried to swallow it and it got lodged in my throat and there I was gasping for air for what seemed like forever – long enough for the other actors and crew to notice something was wrong. It finally popped back up but I literally thought – oh no, I'm going to die right here!

**6) How was the HK audience? Any difference from other countries you've toured? Did we have more mobile phone interruptions?**

**Austin:** They've been great. How are they different? More Asian people. Liz Fitzpatrick (RSC Wardrobe Supervisor) adds: We liked that the audience had British accents when they did the "Get thee to a nunnery." bit!

**Matt:** How are they different? I can't really say that they are any different. Well I've found that it's easier to get an Ophelia to come up on stage here.

**Austin:** Yeah in Singapore too. They just come right up. Maybe the government orders them to participate? (laughter)



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### 7) What advice would you give to our young aspiring actors at Faust?

**Austin:** Find a different profession.

**Mick:** Get a thick skin.

**Austin:** Only pursue theatre if you cannot be passionate about anything else. I mean, it's a tough career to attempt. But it's wonderful if you can make a living off it. There's nothing better than doing what you love.

**Matt:** Listen to this: the more screens that appear – on streets, on buildings – the more screens there are, the more people there are who want to be famous. So the competition is tougher now than it has ever been before.

**Mick & Austin:** That's exactly right.

### 8) How do you feel about the pace and lifestyle in Hong Kong? Do you think RSC's style of reduced time, maximum coverage is well suited to the HK lifestyle?

**Austin:** Yes! Everyone has less and less time. So we're doing a public service. But for a big, fast paced city, people on the streets walk so slow! I expected it to be like New York.

### 9) Favourite actor / actress you admire.

**Austin:** Mick Orfe and Matt Rippy, tied for first place!

**Matt:** I have favourite performances rather than favourite actors. Because everyone drops the ball once in a while, has a few dud films... Juliet Stevenson in *Truly, Madly, Deeply* - I could watch that forever.

**Mick:** For consistency, Robert Duvall. Comedic actor - Gene Wilder. Although I do love others like Steve Carell too.