



Douglas Carter Beane needs you to repeat that... DTC's Jacob Cigainero chats with Mr. Beane

JC: How did wives and war turn into cheerleaders and basketball?

DCB: Well, because I'm just simply that shallow. No. I thought what Aristophanes was doing was satirizing what was the problem of his day, and I was going to satirize the problem as I see of our day, which is apathy or sort of embracing the status quo. I thought that should be more fun to attack apathy than just war, which isn't earth shattering, because anybody can be against the war. You can say you're against the war as you watch people go off to war. But to say, actually, I'm against people not caring, people not living life passionately. I thought that was more interesting. And then it's a musical comedy, so what happens is, the first half is about sex and the second half is always about love. Basically, if you weren't having sex with the person you're having sex with, who would you fall in love with? If you take the sexual attraction away, would you really fall in love with them?

JC: Working with composer/lyricist Lewis Flinn, was there a particular song that turned *Give It Up!* into a musical, or did you know you wanted it to be a musical from the beginning?

DCB: I think there was a turning point when I heard the song "Change the World." I really got it. From the beginning we wanted a real pop score. We wanted to do something nobody else in musical theater was doing, which was pop. And everyone was kind of going, "Oh, we're going to do contemporary musical theater. We're going very art house rock with it," in a kind of *Spring Awakening*. And I love that music, but I thought let's go out-and-out, don't be ashamed about it, Lady Gaga, Britney Spears pop.

JC: Admit it. There's really a toga party in your past that inspired all of this, right?

DCB: No. I'm a college dropout. That's why I have any affection at all for college because I was there for such a limited time. I was there only a couple of semesters before I said I needed go be in New York City and be a struggling artist. My family was a big Penn State family, and Penn State is huge in sports, so I was always following those events.

JC: So do you follow sports now?

DCB: I started watching college basketball in the last couple of years. I would go to a couple NBA games, and as one of the characters says, "That NBA stuff is too slick." And I would never feel any emotion but how much money they were all making. Then I started seeing college and it was just so raw. You'd find yourself caught up in that. I love watching the roundup shows on ESPN when they start talking about all the stories. They'll say, "Tell us something about Slippery Rock University." I love that stuff. I'll think, "Ooooh! What's it like at that school? It was founded by who? Oh, exciting!" Or when they talk about the players, you know, "He's getting over his mother passing away last year, and he took off three months but he's back..." I always love the stories.

JC: They've turned televised sporting events into reality television. They suck you into these people's lives.

DCB: Yeah. That's part of it. I love the story. I love it being played out. There is something very theatrical of going to college basketball games. The theatricality of this wooden stage, which is a court, and these girls coming out and dancing in the middle. If you go in a bar, there's basketball on television and then there's pop music playing. They all kind of go together.

JC: This is a very smart, hip musical tuned into pop culture. Why are there no vampires or *Twilight* references?

DCB: You never know. I may put one in yet. I'm interested in making the theater so alive; something very contemporary, and then go off on peculiar cultural points that make no sense for someone to be obsessed with it. I am sure *Twilight* vampires will be in there very soon. And I'm sure we'll come up with a Tiger Woods joke that actually gets a laugh and not a groan. I'm writing them speaking contemporary slang, which I've monitored on the internet; listening to college forums on YouTube, just to listen to the way people are talking. I want this to be so hilariously contemporary. If you speak a lot of contemporary speech, you automatically sound like a loser. It's the most wonderful thing! Only truly a loser would try to be so popular and use all those words in one sentence! It's a lot of me trolling for expressions and asking people, "What did you just say?"

JC: "How do you use that? Explain that please."

DCB: "What's that, what's that? What does that mean!"

JC: "What part of speech is that? Predicate or adverb?"

DCB: Right! I mean, my dream is that 20 years from now when this is done by high schools and colleges, they say, "Oh my god. That is so 2010! Oh, we're in period costumes and we're using all the period expressions."

JC: Give It Up! continues to evolve and change through development and rewrites. Are there any changes you think just knock it out of the park (basketball court)?

DCB: There are levels of development. The first level is trying to get it where it's absolutely working in every way you think it can be working in the rehearsal room. And then very quickly it will wind up on stage, and you want to make sure it will work in every way it can on a stage, and then it's with a audience. Where we are in rehearsals it's feeling really good. Everybody in the cast is on the same page, wants to tell the story, is interested in making the characters real and full and funny. You never really feel completely set. I put new lines in the *Xanadu* tour last week. You always continue playing with things just a little bit.

JC: What do you hope a smart, fun-loving theatergoer will take away from seeing *Give It Up!*?

DCB: I think they going to have a good time. I think what's interesting is to play with the expectation of someone who isn't a theatergoer who comes to see it. Someone who likes pop music or basketball coming into the theater maybe for the first time or first time in a long time just because it's about basketball or cheerleaders, or because it's about them going to a brothel. It's a crazy show. It's a fun, sexy show. Hopefully they'll leave with something fresh. Ultimately it is about being who you truly are, and learning to love who you truly are and not having to pretend to be something other than that. So much of what we're seeing in terms of television and film seems to be saying 'you have to be this image in order to be a success.' Those people who are so pretty on television are all miserable. Trust me. I've met them.

JC: You've written for them. They've worked for you!

DCB: [laughs] They've worked for me! They're all miserable, every one.

JC: What better people for this message to come from than cheerleaders who are typically at the top of the social hierarchy?

DCB: They are! Oh, they are. Yes. But on a losing team. It's about failure, too. It's about feeling the failure, acknowledging it and changing what was wrong and trying to make it better.

JC: Any thoughts on producing a show about cheerleaders in a state where cheerleaders are gods?

DCB: Well, that's Kevin's [Moriarty] particular brand of genius. When I did the first reading of it years ago when Lewis and I were just putting it together, there was a woman who sings around town what they call countryopolitan – old 60s country music, a little more contemporary. She came to see it and when it was done – and she's a real tough critic – she said, "Honey it had cheerleaders, it had basketball players, and they all went to a whorehouse. I'm from Texas, and that's entertainment!" So it's funny that years later we're producing the show in Texas.

JC: One last question – any particular reason you use all three names?

DCB: There was another member of the Dramatists Guild named Douglas Beane, and the first little show I did off-Broadway I got all these cards from Ohio where I guess this guy was from saying, "I always knew you had a play in you!" And I thought, "Just use all your names." But it's a little dated now, a little 90s that I have three names, don't you think? Sarah Jessica Parker and I get together with Mary-Louise Parker and we're just three people with nine names.