Remarkable Stories\_Beth Interview

[00:00:00] **Gia:** We are UCL and these are our remarkable stories. My name is Gia Lulic, and I work in the Organizational Development team at UCL. In each episode, I will be in conversations with our UCL guests as they share with us their remarkable stories, experiences, and life lessons.

[00:00:26] **Gia:** In this episode, I'm so excited to speak to UCL alumni Beth Hinton Lever, archeology and classical civilization graduate from UCL, turned West End Actress whose inspiring journey is a wonderful example that when it comes to achieving our dreams, self-belief is what is most important.

[00:00:54] **Gia:** Why don't we start with, a little bit of a background about your personal and professional career, since you started in acting and just a little bit about your journey.

[00:01:06] **Beth:** Yeah, of course. My name is Beth Lever and I am currently an actor, but I was not always an actor.

[00:01:12] **Beth:** I kind of came to my current career in a wonderfully distracted way. So I grew up in Liverpool up north and when I was growing up, I have an older sister who is very into performing arts and acting, and me and my twin brother, because we are very close in age.

[00:01:32] **Beth:** Me and my sister, not me and my twin, we are the exact same age. we, all went to performing arts together. And so my mum would take all three of us, dump us there, and I was always so shy. Just wanted to be with my mum. Didn't really have the confidence to venture out and do the performing like my sister.

[00:01:52] **Beth:** It was quite a shock for my mum, I think when I called her and told her I was going to be an actor. So it's kind of, it's always been in my life acting, but it was never something for me personally. So when, you know, I went through school and I was very lucky that I was quite, academic or at least I really wanted the teacher's approval, so I'd try really hard in school.

[00:02:11] **Beth:** So I applied for universities, but I applied for classical archeology and classical civilizations because I'm very lucky that I have two passions in my life and that is still and will always be another huge love of mine.

[00:02:26] **Beth:** Incredibly got into UCL and, came here for my BA while I was at uCUL and I'm sure my odd lecturers will absolutely, agree with me here.

[00:02:36] **Beth:** I did, if anything, too much acting while I was doing my degree. I was very split. and I loved my degree. I loved it and I loved every second of it, but I was doing so much performing arts at the same time with the UCL Musical Theater Society that, it came to no surprise that in my third year when I was doing my final year of my degree, I choreographed a show, which was a huge time commitment, but made me very.

[00:03:05] **Beth:** So I choreographed Jason Brown's parade, and that's in 2015. That year we got selected the show to go to the National Student Drama Festival, which is like the Edinburgh Fringe, but for amateurs. So for people in, um, amateur societies or, um, who have a mid-drama school but have a theater company, that type of thing.

[00:03:24] **Beth:** So we went there and, all credit to my incredible cast that came with us, who a few of them is now also a professional in the industry, which very cool. I won the best choreography in the UK, which was incredible. And from that's where the professional interest came in.

[00:03:43] **Beth:** I think a lot of people are born knowing that they're going to be an actor or they're going to be in the industry, or at least it's dream. And I was so lucky that I just got plucked out of archeology and put into the industry. But yeah, it was never really an active choice I made to be an actor. It happened and I kind of went, what an opportunity. I'll definitely have a go. I'll do it. And then it's just never stopped. And now I think it's seven years later.

[00:04:14] **Gia:** It's so interesting because I know quite a few people who have been trying to break into the industry for such a long time. It just feels like it was the pathway for you somehow and you mentioned that you were shy.

[00:04:30] **Gia:** How do feel like you overcame that? Is acting something that helped you to overcome that? Or is acting like one of those things that could also be used as you're pretending to be different people? So it's fun to hide behind characters because for me, I did a little bit of theater when I was younger and it was just fun to, let loose and pretend to be someone else in a way that I probably couldn't do in everyday life.

[00:04:56] **Beth:** Yeah, 100%. I hear you. So I was born without my lower right forearm. So I'm currently 28 and I've been disabled for 28 years.

[00:05:05] **Beth:** It's all I've ever known and I think that was one of the reasons why I was quite so shy as a child, to the point where I don't wear a prosthetic anymore. I have a prosthetic still, but that solely comes out for Halloween, I think. But, growing up basically lived in it like would, sleep in my prosthetic. I just really wanted to appear normal or typical or fit in that way. And I think that, for me that was that sat so heavy on my chest in a way that I found it very hard to find something else about myself because I always presumed that would be the first thing people saw or that would be the only people thing people spoke about when talking about me or referring to me or thinking about me.

[00:05:47] **Beth:** So that really made it quite hard as a child, I think, to come out of that shell to find something else about myself. And also I think in the same way as, me being queer, my family weren't, and none of them are disabled either. So it's like no one really raised me to know how to be or what any of it meant or any of that.

[00:06:08] **Beth:** And that's not through anyone's fault, it's not experiences that they've lived through or they understand or know particularly or personally. So I think it was my mum, who is an absolute wonder woman, joined this charity called Reach.

[00:06:23] **Beth:** So I joined them from birth, I'm fairly sure, but at about age nine, you get to go on this activity week, every summer where you get to do rock climbing or sailing or archery. And all of these things that kind of before felt like they would've been insurmountable, impossible tasks because of the fact I was disabled.

[00:06:48] **Beth:** But being with other kids my age who were all disabled but all had very different disabilities, working it all out together, that was probably one of the first times I really started to go, oh, these are just things that I need to think differently about to be able to overcome or achieve as opposed to, there's no way and no one can help me.

[00:07:11] **Beth:** That was probably some of the first times I started really feeling more confident within myself and seeing the pathways through to be able to achieve or to be able to, do things that I'd always wanted to.

[00:07:22] **Beth:** And I think that was a big thing. So when I started really spending a lot of time with Reach kids and other disabled kids and finding that community and that family, that really started to help me become less shy. And that's when I started, going to I guess like the Saturday, Sunday acting classes and performing arts classes and musicals and things like that.

[00:07:41] **Beth:** It became a lot easier to find who I was. And then from that point, I guess coming to a university like UCL helps. There was such a beautiful kind of mix of people here and of every ability, every race, every ethnicity, every religion. It really opened my world up in such an incredible way that I really found it a lot easier to them be the person that I'd found in Liverpool, but be that person that was the only person people knew.

[00:08:13] **Beth:** So when I tell my friends I met at UCL or after that, I was painfully shy. A lot of them absolutely do not believe me, but yeah, I think that all of that helped. And then, becoming a choreographer and things like that where I am teaching with my body and getting used to those, I guess those sticky moments that are going to happen.

[00:08:34] **Beth:** But they don't have to be what I would've thought as a child or as a teenager would've been catastrophic. If I'm teaching something and someone goes, sorry, I don't understand, you just go, oh okay. So on my left it's this, but on my right this is what it would look like. Done. So I think everything's played its role in making me where I am.

[00:08:55] **Gia:** When I was doing the research on you that I didn't mean to be doing. It's got…there's a line in there saying that you're an activist.

[00:09:04] **Gia:** So I'm guessing that, your experience with reach, which is, it's just so beautiful to hear. and I love that after that experience, you landed in London, which is like, you know, the city for all. So of course you were going to come here and you'll see people. All walks of life, from every country, from every background imaginable.

[00:09:25] **Gia:** Was it that experience that kind of sparked your interest in activism and what does that mean exactly?

[00:09:33] **Beth:** It was a shock to me when I read that headline actually, that they called me an activist.

[00:09:37] **Beth:** I think I'd never called myself that. I'm so proud that people think that of me, but I still don't know if I would call myself it because I think in my head I'm not doing enough to claim that, but I'm working towards it and I'll work for the rest of my life to ensure that things are better for the people that come after you.

[00:09:56] **Beth:** No matter if that's from the same kind of community as me, whether that's queer or disabled or whoever it is. I want to make things better. And I think that's the full stop. I've not quite worked out how to do that yet, but I am standing on the shoulders of giants and luckily giants that are good friends of mine and look after me and help me.

[00:10:17] **Beth:** So for example, I, not only within reach the charity who are incredible and really fight for these kids and the parents as well to lead as fulfilling lives as possible, and how to navigate all of these strange systems that have been set up within our society, for people who are non-disabled, able bodied, and not for these children, these kids, these parents, and how to navigate that.

[00:10:45] **Beth:** I was very lucky that one of my first jobs was a tour and of an Ian Dury and the Blockheads musical, which was incredible.

[00:10:53] **Beth:** With a theater company called Graeae Theater Company. And they are disabled led kind of disability focused in their theatricality in their shows. So they will place disabled people and deaf people in many other communities and neuro divergent people right at the center of their stories instead of attacking you on at the end to be a foil to the non-disabled white male lead, for example, so that they look nice because their friends say all of that. They place you front and center.

[00:11:26] **Beth:** And I was incredibly lucky that one of my first jobs was with them. And before that point, I'd always be in the only disabled person in the room in the theatrical context.

[00:11:36] **Beth:** And I didn't know what that meant. And I wasn't sure if that meant I was then the spokesperson, the voice for this entire community. So I had to have all the answers. And that was terrifying to me because most of my life had been spent with non-disabled people. And I didn't know my community that well, not in this context.

[00:11:55] **Beth:** And I had no idea how to articulate for everyone, every starter of this community. and my first job was with Graeae after Drama school and I was so lucky because they taught me how to be that person. And not only that, they taught me how to do political theater, political activism, disability activism.

[00:12:18] **Beth:** But take what I actually held very deep in me was the anger. I think of the disparity of the ableism. Of the negligence. I found it quite hard, but they very quickly taught me how to be exactly who I am, who I hope is quite a happy, joyful person. But still hold all of those, rights and all of those opinions dear to me.

[00:12:43] **Beth:** But, yeah, I'm very proud of being called an activist. And I'd like to get better at it. I think that's important that I also know that the work has never done and that I never know everything. It's just eliciting those conversations to hopefully garner some understanding and change, I guess.

[00:13:02] **Gia:** I think you're doing the most important part of the activism, which is actually just being the example, which is the most powerful thing I think you can do for people of any community, of anyone who feels like they're not able to do things that everyone else is able to do, to be able to be living a joyful life.

[00:13:21] **Gia:** Just to dwell a little bit more on the activism side of things, what development are you most excited about in any area at this point?

[00:13:30] **Beth:** There's a big rise in these amazing things in the industry called Access Riders. So I think we've all heard of, the rider that actors might have. I think it's always been a bit of a joke because riders are something that I guess historically you'd send being like, I want 20 oysters and a bottle of taser waiting in my dressing room.

[00:13:52] **Beth:** Whereas access riders are these incredible things. Just very simply a document that before an audition or before you say yes to a job, you'd send them over just to say, these are the things that I may need. These are the things I expect. Thank you. So that there's no pressure for the person, the individual in the room, to go in and have to explain it to someone that may not have the education or the understanding to actually understand what they're saying or I guess try and hide something that they may need, because they don't want to cause a fuss or things like that.

[00:14:25] **Beth:** And I think they're incredible and they're becoming basically an industry standard, which I just think is needed because it's not just for the disabled community, it's for absolutely everyone. So if you are dyslexic and you would prefer to have any sides or any scripts you're given in a different font or in a different color, that's now becoming more standard that you would be able to just say, oh by the way, I need this.

[00:14:49] **Beth:** And everyone go, okay, no questions asked. And same with, oh, you might need more breaks or you might have an assistant with you. Those type of things. So it takes the pressure off an already quite stressful first day or an audition, which is a job interview, that type of thing. And I think they are wonderful things and they're so simple, but they're making such a difference.

[00:15:09] **Beth:** And I think the more people that understand that you can send them and people want them because it means that they're also then prepared. And I guess one thing, I don't think we're there at all with, but the accessible performances like actual performances. We are now slowly creeping towards a kind of culture in theater where we understand that limiting the accessible shows to maybe one show run isn't good enough.

[00:15:36] **Beth:** And we do need to have more options here. So I think it was the national theater spearheaded these caption glasses and that type of thing. So anyone that wants to use captions can go any performance and wear these glasses that kind of scroll through the captions as you're watching the performance.

[00:15:53] **Beth:** So you're also not having to turn your head to read the captions and then face back and you've missed the action. I know from my friends in the deaf community, they are not perfect, but it's a good I guess start and it's a good gesture to say, look, we know that we need to do better here.

[00:16:09] **Beth:** Through those lockdowns, people really started to pay attention to the needs of society. And a lot of things went online, which for access and accessible performances was incredible. Because it meant people could watch from home if they couldn't necessarily make it into the theater and things like that. So we're starting to have the right conversations, which is, very encouraging.

[00:16:33] **Gia:** I love the fact that you've taken the pandemic and turned it into something positive, because that's another thing that most people don't do. But it sounds like that's just your overriding attitude.

[00:16:45] **Gia:** Do you have some like wellbeing rituals or how do you keep your head so clear? How do you keep so, inspired, positive?

[00:16:54] **Beth:** I'm happy I come across that way, but that is not what's happening on the inside. So I think, acting is probably definitely helpful. Because I have, struggled with mental health, or lived with I should say, for as long as I can remember, it's been an active shift in my head to have to see the good or find the silver lining because I will naturally gravitate towards the opposite.

[00:17:17] **Beth:** And that's just because of my brain chemistry. So I've always actively told myself or looked for the good, which I guess is a funny thing that I've just put a good spin on depression somehow. But I'll always actively look for it. And when I find it, I'm very much a list person and I like pen and paper.

[00:17:36] **Beth:** So anytime I'm learning a script, I'll write out the entire script because that helps my brain. Or I was watching a TV program recently and ir was just a scene with a therapist and I think the therapist said, it was Killing Eve, actually.

[00:17:47] **Beth:** The therapist said to Villanelle, oh what does help look like to you? And I thought that was amazing. I've started asking all my friends that. But I think finding those little things that spark something in your head have hilariously dragged me out of some of the darkest places I've been in.

[00:18:04] **Beth:** I think there's always opportunity to find something and even if it feels impossible it's in the looking where you might find it.

[00:18:12] **Beth:** Whereas if I think you put an end goal on something, so if you say, if I achieve this, that will make me happy. I think that's a dangerous escape to play because then it takes out of your control and you don't have agency over it. And I think that's probably a helpful thing that I do for myself. I try not to put goals that other people have control over. So if my happiness is controlled over a job or getting something or getting an audition that is taking it all completely out of my control.

[00:18:38] **Gia:** I think it's a skill. I think our brain is like a muscle. So if you train it to do that all the time, then it doesn't become a conscious thing, it becomes a reflex.

[00:18:48] **Beth:** Actually, the artistic director of Graeae Theaters company, Jenny Sealey, gave me some great advice once and it was about being disabled because I was finding it and still do, but I was finding it very hard one day in rehearsals.

[00:19:00] **Beth:** And I just really, I couldn't shift it and it was a really heavy fog and I was sobbing at her just saying, I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to be myself, be disabled in this industry. She said, of course it's hard. Jenny is deaf herself, has been since she was seven or eight years old.

[00:19:17] **Beth:** She understands a lot of what it is to be, the other, if you will, in an industry that isn't open to and is not accepting of immediately. And she said she gives herself one day, because she never denies those feelings because they're there and they're real. And I think denying or hiding, just pushes them further into you and entrenches them in a way.

[00:19:35] **Beth:** And she said look, I give myself one day a year if I need more anymore If I don't need one, I don't need one where I just let the feelings out. Even if it's being honest with yourself and saying, oh, actually I'm not that great today. that I think will help. Because if we're always trying to say, I'm fine and you're not, you start believing it yourself that this is fine for you. And I think that's a hard place to put yourself because if you're not fine, that's completely okay. But if you're telling everyone you are and you're not, it's telling yourself that the way you're feeling is the norm.

[00:20:10] **Beth:** And that's fine. We all deserve happiness and light. And I think that the quickest way to deny yourself that is to live in that space for too long and to deny help from other people.

[00:20:21] **Beth:** I just finished a job and I was just post show blues and all of that. And I'd think I've been rejected from 12 things in about a week. And obviously very lucky to even be seen. But it was still, rejections are hard. I just got myself a Domino's and watched Coco and cried for about three hours. I went, okay I feel better now, but you just need it.

[00:20:41] **Gia:** So what is the most exciting thing to you at the moment? Like professionally?

[00:20:48] **Beth:** I am so lucky that I think a lot of my jobs are quite short, like time scale wise. So I get to swap my hat every few months, as it were. And I think that's for me personally, very exciting. And I'm venturing into TV or film, which I've not really done before. So that's all very exciting. Because I think one thing, I love my career because I get to learn and because if I'm filming something in 1940s France, I get to research that period and I get to learn all about what actually happened here.

[00:21:22] **Beth:** And even if it's a fiction, you know, what it's based on and why someone's written it about that and who these people were and their lives. And I think that's exactly why I loved archeology in a hilarious way. I loved that kind of how did people live and what were their kind of societies like and how did people operate within that?

[00:21:43] **Beth:** And also because I'm at this point in my career where, for the last few years I've known what's coming and I'm very lucky that I still do know what's coming next, but there are still kind of time coming up where I don’t know what I'll be doing.

[00:21:55] **Beth:** And I love that because it means that there's just opportunity there. which is another way I think I've trained my brain. I don't see it as, oh, I'm unemployed. I see it as there's an opportunity to learn something new there.

[00:22:04] **Beth:** So, for example, I was doing this show and my shoes looked quite new so they called over someone called a breakdown artist. Whose job is to make things look older than they are. So she just came over and broke down my shoes a bit. So they looked more worn in. And that's what's fascinating to me.

[00:22:21] **Beth:** And I think there's always something to learn. There's always people to learn from. And I think the second I think that I know something, I should be in a different career because there's always something to learn.

[00:22:33] **Gia:** And what's been your favorite project so far?

[00:22:37] **Beth:** I don't think I have one genuinely. There is something in every job I've ever done that has taught me something. And that's the most, precious thing in the world.

[00:22:48] **Beth:** I mean, if you look down my CV, I could tell you something absolutely wonderful about every single one of them. I remember I had a drama school teacher. We were doing a Sarah Kane play. It's quite abstract. And didn't understand why this character was saying this thing, and the sentence made no sense anyway.

[00:23:03] **Beth:** And I couldn't metabolize what was happening. And I was at drama school. I did one year at Mountview, doing an MA in musical theater. And so this drama school teacher came over and he went, well, you don't have to understand it. The character does. You just need to make sense of why the character's doing it.

[00:23:22] **Beth:** Beth doesn't actually have to understand it. You just have to understand why the character's doing it. And it blew my mind a little bit because he was completely right. But it doesn't have to make sense. I just have to make it make sense and trust in that reality so deeply that I can convince anyone of why I'm saying this thing and what I'm doing to someone else with that comment.

[00:23:43] **Gia:** Is there an actor or person really that's had a huge impact on you or that you think about in relation to your career or your life, or a big influence, like you mentioned your mum.

[00:23:55] **Beth:** Yeah. Oh, my mum, my mum, is the type of person that, always did everything to help me, but would never, intrude on my learning. I guess is the best way to put it. So I have a twin brother who is able bodied.

[00:24:08] **Beth:** But I think having a twin and watching him learn to do things like crawl. I would immediately watch that and go, okay, I'll try. And because I don't have a lower right forearm, it would just whack my head on the ground and then learn, okay, that wasn't great, so I'm going to change it.

[00:24:23] **Beth:** But if my mum had stopped me from trying those things, I guess it would've, changed the way I grew up, or at least, made me scared to ever try something and fail.

[00:24:33] **Beth:** Whereas she would very happily watch me try something and just go, try a different way, try a different way, or at least show me once and then go work. I was thinking about it the other day we went out to a restaurant once and I must have been a teenager or at least pre-teen and, you know, salty in some way. And I think I got a steak. And she'd always cut it up for me at home. She just always did. I remember it was the first time she went you need to learn…in a restaurant.

[00:24:59] **Beth:** I was like, oh, this is not the place.

[00:25:01] **Beth:** I was bright red and hot tears in my eyes and getting choked off my throat. And I worked out how to cut off a steak. And then I remember a few years later I mentioned it going, that was quite cruel. And she went, you're going to need to do it on a date one day.

[00:25:13] **Beth:** So she always, you know, she pushed me to work things out, and she's always been the biggest supporter, I think. When I told her that I was moving from archeology to acting, she kind of said, well, only you could find the only other career with no money and no jobs, she's always fun. But no, yeah, my mum is…my mum is fantastic. really fantastic and I think career-wise, I guess Jenny Sealey, the artistic director of Graeae.

She bolstered me for the industry in a wonderful way of, she was never unrealistic about what I was going to face with ableism and with access and things like that.

[00:25:47] **Beth:** But she also gave me the tools to be able to navigate it. And I think that's an invaluable lesson. I hear her voice in my head sometimes when I'm thinking about, um, playing a role. Because any role I ever play will be queer and disabled because I can't splice that away from myself.

[00:26:02] **Beth:** So sometimes if I'm reading a script and thinking about whether I'm going to say yes to a job or audition for a job, I will hear her voice saying, what is it saying? Is it a good story to be telling? And if it is a good story, amazing. If it's not a good story, what's the merit of.

[00:26:16] **Beth:** Playing this role this way, or you personally playing this role? And I think that's a good kind of barometer in my head to have, to check in with myself and think about my community before I do something.

[00:26:29] **Gia:** And have you ever turned down a role?

[00:26:31] **Beth:** Yeah. I think if I disagree with the politics of the piece or the vision, what the character says, the language within it, and I don't think there will be room for push and pull or change, in the production or in the show.

[00:26:47] **Beth:** I'll say no because I know that having a physically disabled performer in the show can sometimes look like I am agreeing with the politics of the show. Or to put it really bluntly, the optics of hiring a disabled person, a physically disabled person that you can see from publicity images, is quite good.

[00:27:08] **Beth:** But if the company itself has absolutely no structures available for, inclusion or inclusivity or access or mental health or pretty much anything, I will say no because I know that they are gaining a lot of good points for the optics of hiring me, but are doing nothing to actually help my community.

[00:27:27] **Gia:** Have any of them turned around and said, what do you need? We'll accommodate?

[00:27:32] **Beth:** Yeah, I've also got better at articulating exactly why it is that I'm cautious or worried. For example, in a musical called A Chorus Line, big kind of new UK revival or new choreography, new vision that had never happened before. It's always been the exact original production. So I was the first ever disabled person to play that role or be in the production at all.

[00:27:57] **Beth:** And the character I was playing rather beautifully was singing about being different and seeing no one like her in the industry. And I thought that was phenomenal, that they were trusting a disabled person with singing that and with telling that story on a stage.

[00:28:17] **Beth:** And, we were doing something called table work, which basically sit around with the scripts. Every director has a different way of doing it. But we were reading through the scripts and then we'd discuss, what we'd just read or heard or how that affects us as people. And so I read my verse in this song, beautiful song. And I kind of said afterwards how important it was to me as a disabled person to be playing this role in saying this and really standing up for the rights of disabled people.

[00:28:42] **Beth:** And the director, I love him so dearly went, I hope you know, that's not why you were cast. You were cast because you're brilliant. It just so happens that you're playing this role. And I had really convinced myself that the only reason I was there was because I was a disabled actor.

[00:28:57] **Beth:** So I do sometimes have to check myself as well and say, actually, it's not the only reason people hire me or interested in me. And I think that's such a privilege to be an actor as well, to kind say.

[00:29:09] **Beth:** I get to change something here and I might change how people see that word.

[00:29:12] **Beth:** And I feel like there's a huge responsibility there, but there's so much opportunity. Kind of even if it's once in my life, in my entire career, where someone either sees themselves represented or hears something that they've never heard that way or gets to. I mean, hopefully say that's what I want to do and now I know I can do it because I can see someone with similar lived experience or someone that's different or not the norm or whatever it is doing it.

[00:29:42] **Beth:** And kind of…that’s the most precious thing. And I think as much as all the bad comes with it. And as I say, I don't think we're anywhere close to parity, to be honest in any industry that I'm part of. But as long as we're working our way towards it, it's an exciting place to be. And I'm just going to keep going because the opportunity to be a spokesperson or an advocate or an activist or a person that shows someone that it's possible, that's what keeps me going.

[00:30:12] **Beth:** And I think I'm very lucky for that. Because I think if I was going, if I was in this industry, For the career of it, which I'm also am of course, I would burn out very, very quickly because it's, it's a tough one to be in. But the fact that I am very lucky to have more. And I think I'll always say that when, if I'm going into a drama schools chat or whatever it is, I'll say, find something like, find your voice first.

[00:30:43] **Beth:** Find what you want to say with your job, with your career, what you, what you want to say about yourself. Because if you are, if all you want is to work, which is, which is amazing. Because all I want to do is work as well. It will be hard to face the rejections. But if, you know, actually this is what I want to say with my art, with my career, with my body, with my voice, with this accent, whatever it is, sometimes that doesn't meld with people.

[00:31:08] **Beth:** Or sometimes you find your family and if you can't see yourself or hear yourself reflected in, you know, the fabric of the industry, that's not the industry not wanting you. It's the industry needing you in there and needing that voice. And if you can't find, um, maybe it's a show or a producer to help you with that.

[00:31:29] **Beth:** Do it yourself, make your own. And yeah, it's an exciting place to be. And I think the longer I'm in the industry, the longer I realize that as much as it is London centric and it is West End centric, there's so much happening. And I think, yeah, the more we look and the more we're excited by the possibilities of what this career is and the people within it, because they are fascinating people, really amazing people.

[00:31:53] **Beth:** And those conversations will lead somewhere else. And you know, I never, I never saw acting coming. I never saw this career coming, but I can't imagine my life without it now. And the only reason it really happened. It was because I said yes to choreographing something that I had never choreographed in my life.

[00:32:08] **Beth:** I really didn't think I could do it, but I had a go. And I guess that's it. Like there's, you know, there's nothing to lose, everything to gain, which is another, I guess, good way of looking at anything we do in this life. You know, every time we put ourselves out there or try something that we know is going to be difficult or, you know, you're not putting yourself at a disadvantage, you know, you're never losing anything because you never had it. It's just everything is a gain. And if that doesn't happen, that just wasn't the right thing for right now. And maybe it will circle back round or maybe that was for me anyway, completely the wrong direction and you know, I've ended up somewhere completely different.

[00:32:45] **Gia:** Did you ever hit like a peak where you were like, oh my God, this is too overwhelming. I need to like, turn around the other way and run. Because it's all too much, it's all happening too quickly. I'm being asked to do things I'm not necessarily prepared for like, acting wise or as an activist.

[00:33:01] **Gia:** And if so, have you ever turned down a thing because it was just too much for you would just be too public or?

[00:33:07] **Beth:** I think I'm quite lucky that, because got over that fear of asking for help and I realized that sometimes you don't have the answers and that's completely okay. Or sometimes I physically can't do something and of course that's okay. And asking for help isn't somehow admitting to your feet. It's just helping me get to where I want to be. I've never turned anything down because it felt too big or I didn't understand it.

[00:33:34] **Beth:** So my first ever TV job, was very recently, actually. It was only last year. And I had absolutely no idea what I was doing. Never been step foot on a TV set before theater. I do feel I'm comfortable in theater. I know how to hit a light. I know how to use my voice in a certain way to hit a note. I feel more comfortable there.

[00:33:55] **Beth:** TV completely different, nothing is the same. And I went onto the set, got my own trailer. It was all very new. Did the costume fitting. They were like, you can go now. And I was about to start filming. This was a Friday and I was about to start filming on Monday. They were picking me up at about 4:00 AM I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, so I just grabbed anyone I could find before I left and went, I'm so sorry, but could you explain what I'm doing like, what, what's expected of me? Where do I look, what happens if I accidentally look down the lens and just blurted out all these questions.

[00:34:27] **Beth:** And they were so lovely. Just went, oh, is it your first time? Oh, no worries. Do you want to come watch them film? And then I spent about six hours for the rest of the day watching them filming some scenes and I was sat in different places.

[00:34:39] **Beth:** And so it took a lot of the fear that I knew that if I spent two days stewing, I would've turned up on that Monday and not been out to work because I would've been so in my own head about trying to pretend like I knew what I was doing, even though I had no idea. And then from that point on, I've just realized that it's better to ask.

[00:34:56] **Beth:** But yeah, I think always asking. I try not to ever say, I can't or say that won't work, but can I offer you this instead? And I think that makes everyone in the room feel better. You're never really giving anyone a negative, you're never really shutting anyone down. You're just saying, for me personally, that's not the best solution.

[00:35:16] **Gia:** Another great lesson to apply anywhere really in to any job. Just to go back to your family, you mentioned that you had a twin brother. What's your relationship like with him and what was it like growing up with a twin?

[00:35:29] **Beth:** He's wonderful. He's got the best soul in the world and it's very gentle, very calm, still quite shy, I'd say. So we're very different now and I think he comes to come see me in quite a lot. He really likes musicals, but will never really tell anyone. So whenever I'm in a musical, he gets really excited and he'll come to come see me with my mum usually.

[00:35:48] **Beth:** My mum loves it. My mum loves coming backstage and meeting people. But James, my twin is, reserved or at least terrified of actors because we are the most in some ways larger than life loud, open people. So I've usually mentioned the fact I have a twin. I'll usually say, oh, my twin's in tonight.

[00:36:07] **Beth:** Everyone gets so excited. So everyone, as soon as they see this very tall, very gentle man run up to me like, Hi you must be James. It's so nice to meet you. Hugging him. And he's obviously just bit taken aback, so I think, yeah, he's wonderful. But I'm happy. I'm really happy, if anything that we've settled in very different careers.

[00:36:26] **Gia:** So just one last question like, is. In terms of like activism or your professional career do you have an actor that you are like, I really want to work with them or be more like them or?

[00:36:39] **Beth:** I have so many actors that I look up to and respect. So many, and they're not necessarily famous people. They could be, friends who just graft, really graft and try and make themselves, more available for, learning, Because I think that's the best. I think the best actors are the most truthful ones and I think they are truly phenomenal.

[00:36:59] **Beth:** The one thing, I think it's Jenny Sealy, and I'll always come back to her because I think she did, she raised me in a sense, um, especially professionally. I think there's a fearlessness with her that I completely aspire to. And I know that she has doubts because she's told me she has doubts, but you'd never know.

[00:37:19] **Beth:** She is so fearless in her responses and even when she articulates, being able to be empathetic and gentle and encouraging, yet still meticulous and, hardworking and truly knowledgeable as well. That, is kind of who I aspire to be, even though she's not an actor.

[00:37:35] **Beth:** And I think there's all of these incredible people, but acting is one of those careers that you are you. Because I think it's so intrinsically about who you are and your experiences and your life. Because that's everything you bring into a character. And then via you vicariously through that character lives a lot, in tandem with you.

[00:37:56] **Beth:** Because if I turn up to work, I can leave my baggage at the door. And I disagree with that. Because I think that's impossible. if you've just had a call that changes your life for the better or the worse you are thinking about it. And it will be untruthful to say that you're not. And I think that's the biggest killer of any sort of magic in theater, is when you are not being truthful.

[00:38:15] **Beth:** So I think bring it with you, stay safe, be honest. If it's too much, it's too much. And you need to tell people because acting can unlock things that we weren't expecting. And I think, you can very quickly find yourself in places you didn't expect to be or want to be. And you need to keep safe within that.

[00:38:30] **Beth:** But there's something beautiful about any acting. Where it is, you're bringing so much of you into it that why would you try and ignore something about you that's current? And I think it is the most important thing about being honest, saying, oh, so this has just happened. That's going to be with me.

[00:38:49] **Beth:** And I think it's that kind of keeping true. Because I think when you're looking into someone's eyes, you can tell in a strange way when there is something else there and then that's where I think a lot of the really interesting things come from.

[00:39:02] **Gia:** You mentioned that you definitely would not want to be famous.

[00:39:06] **Beth:** No, I don't think so.

[00:39:07] **Gia:** But it is a possibility especially given how quickly things have unraveled. What's the thing that's uncomfortable about that?

[00:39:18] **Beth:** I think I would like to be known for my work and for my activism, but it's that sort of, I guess use a trope that I'm not completely sure is true, but that kind of soap star who they're dating at the moment and that type of thing, I feel that would detract.

[00:39:37] **Beth:** And that kind of scares me. I want, all my friends and family to be able to carry on with their lives about anything like that happening. But, um, I like to be liked for my work, but equally I like it when people. I do like it when people disagree with a choice or want to talk to me about a choice or about a way that I've done something.

[00:39:54] **Beth:** I find that very, exciting. There is downsides that come with fame that I would not be personally a fan of especially, I guess being from some marginalized communities, I can see that that would, turn sour.

[00:40:07] **Beth:** But, if anything I think it's hugely exciting that I'm in the position I currently am and hopefully will continue to be here. I think anything that can make someone feel seen or heard or believed, or accepted. That's phenomenal. So if it was that amazing, but there is that constant little fear going in the back of my head that I need to be the best version of myself or do the best show and things like that. But I guess that fame is not what's scary. It's that loss of agency I guess is what scares me a bit. But I could also be completely wrong,

[00:40:45] **Gia:** I think you're perfectly fit to handle it. So for what that's worth.

[00:40:49] **Beth:** Thank you.