



CITADEL THEATRE

ONCE



Emily Dallas



Lawrence Libor

Emily Dallas, who plays Girl, and Lawrence Libor, who plays Guy, sat down with us to discuss their roles in *Once*, an unconventional romantic musical.

Citadel Theatre: What characters are you playing and how would you describe them?

Emily Dallas: I'm playing Girl and I would describe her as very prideful and very by-the-book, so I think that when she falls in love with Guy, it's very much a shock to who she is. I think she's a loyal person and a virtuous person. She's also a mother and a wife, so I think up until this point in her life, she's followed the rules, and now everything is sort of uneven for her and confusing.

Lawrence Libor: I'm playing Guy and he's a troubled soul, I would say, especially in the beginning of the show. He's lost and directionless because a lot of loss has happened in his life recently - his mother's passed and he had a really, really bad breakup. So he's just like 'What's the point anymore?' It's meeting Girl that is the catalyst for him changing his life. Before, he's kind of adrift.

CT: What is the relationship between Guy and Girl like?

LL: It's constantly shifting. Doing scene work, you realize that each scene has its own development and we're trying to suss each other out a lot of the time. I wouldn't say it's a normal romantic story. The way that we interact a lot of the time is more comical than anything, really. Girl is very straight-to-the-point and there aren't a lot of niceties, which takes my character off-guard a lot of the time.



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ED: I think the main thing that they share is their music. Reza has this line where she says ‘He has the same soul as you,’ and I think that’s very true. I think when they meet it’s like when you meet that person that, for some reason, just checks all the boxes of who you are, as well. And I think they’re kindred souls even though they can’t be together.

CT: What instruments will you be playing in the show?

ED: I’m playing piano in the show - and only piano, which is a letdown because I don’t get to switch instruments like all of the other actors on stage. I don’t play very much at all but the stuff that I do play, I get to play in a band, which is fun because it’s been awhile since I’ve done that. I played when I was a kid and then I forgot how. Then, when I was at college, I had no friends so I thought that maybe I should learn a skill, so I taught myself.

LL: I play the acoustic guitar. I have the same feelings - you get to see everyone jump around and play lots of different things, which I love to do also, but I get to do a lot of really fun guitar playing in this, so I’m not complaining. I do a lot of open tuning and things, which is really fun to play. Also, it’s a musical that I’ve known since I was 14. When the movie came out, I fell in love with it, and that was kind of when I was starting to play guitar, so it has a lot of meaning to me to be able to play this stuff now as an adult. I’m having a very good time.

How would you describe *Once* to someone who’s never seen the movie or the play?

ED: I would describe it obviously as a love story but more of a celebration of music and of art and of life. I feel that it’s a very celebratory piece and I think the biggest love story isn’t just between [Guy and Girl]; it’s between all the characters and their love for music. And I think that’s really beautiful.

LL: Heartwarming but at the same time, an ambiguous love story. It doesn’t tell you how to feel, especially at the ending. It kind of leaves you to decide yourself whether you’re an optimist or a pessimist, in a way. Do you have faith in pure love and in the future do you think this is going to work or not going to work? But the music itself will leave you a lot warmer than how you went to the theatre.

CT: What has been the most challenging part of rehearsals so far? Or the most fun part?

ED: Working with [Lawrence] has been the most challenging part. It’s just been an absolute nightmare (*laughs*).

LL: Playing the music has been so much fun. Most of us have known the music for a long time. And with such amazing musicians, you can just pick up and play this stuff so quickly and effortlessly. And the script works so well. It’s one of those amazing plays, where, as an actor, you don’t really have to put in the grindwork to make ... like, the pace of the script going into the songs just works so well. We had the first couple of scenes we did where we had this moment where it was like this is just so satisfying as an actor to do both the music and the script.



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ED: I think it's an incredibly well-written script so that's always fun when you get to do a piece of writing that's amazing. I think the cast and the creatives - the whole team behind it - are people who are very kind and very open, so I think we have gotten to a really good place really quick and we're all the best of friends and that's the best part.

LL: And the cast is so funny. There's so much humour in this show that you wouldn't expect. As the sort of lead characters who do most of the romance, we get to just watch, most of the time, all of the humour that goes on. We get to experience these crazy, wild characters which is a lot of fun - challenging sometimes because we're trying not to laugh - but very, very fun.

CT: Do you have a favourite song or scene from the show that you're really excited to work on?

ED: My favourite song is *Gold*. I don't get to do anything - I just stand there - and it's the song where Girl falls in love with Guy. Right at the end, there's a beat where there's a stage direction that she's fallen in love with him. That journey is really fun to go on. The whole band is playing and everyone sounds so lush and beautiful and I just get to watch and enjoy it.

LL: *When Your Mind's Made Up*, which is a song we rehearsed today, actually. It's the first time Guy plays his music in a studio and he has all these rental people that he's brought together to play his song. It's one of the most full accompaniments to a song - it has a full drum kit and everything. It just feels very cool to me. It's set in the studio and it just feels like you're actually in a studio, playing the song. It's a really interesting, amazing song to sing. As well, it has such huge build, so you can put a lot of passion into it. It's really fun to do.

CT: What do you hope the audience will take away from seeing this show?

ED: I think the whole moral of the story or the thesis statement of the show, if you will, is that life is worth the risk, so I hope people leave feeling bolder and more willing to risk things.

LL: Life is short and therefore, always be loving and generous. I think a lot of the standup moments are when characters are generous to each other and witness when people are in trouble or need help. I think that is very useful in a time like today, to be spreading that kind of thing. I think it also does that with music in a more abstract way. In general, the show has this real warmth and encourages people to connect more.

Once runs September 22 to October 14, 2018, at the Citadel Theatre. For more information or to purchase tickets, call the Box Office at 780.425.1820 or visit www.citadeltheatre.com.