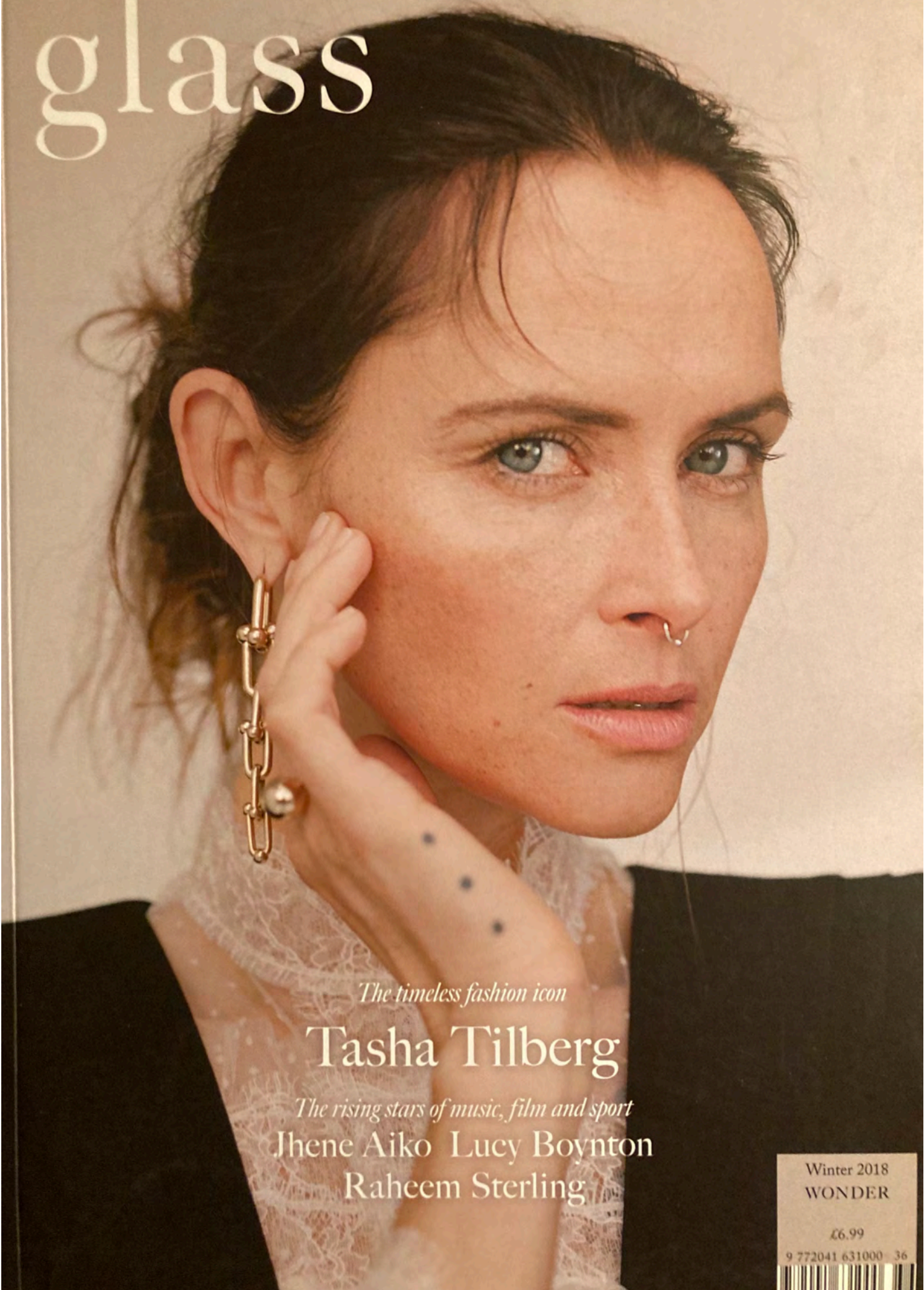


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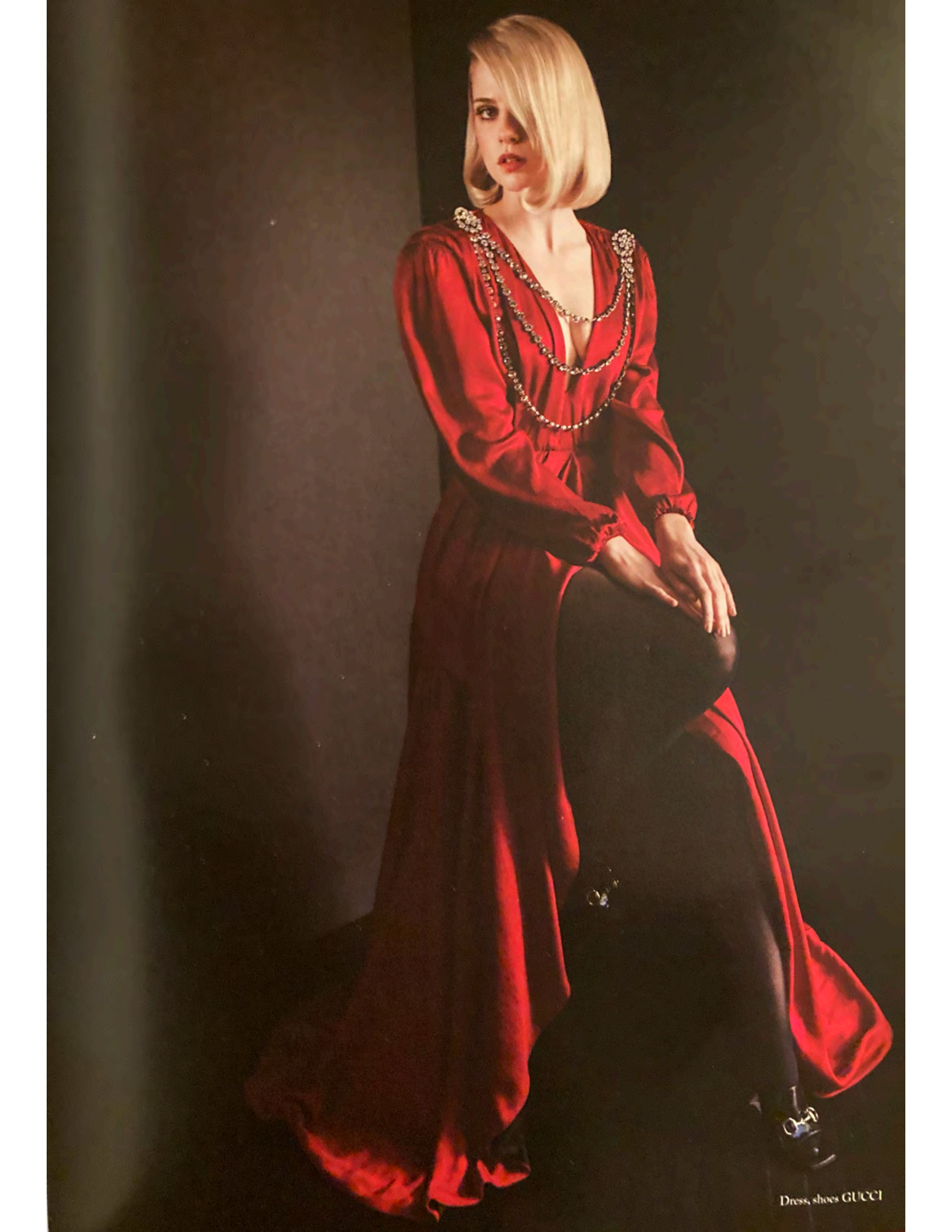
*Glass* meets up-and-coming  
British-American actor  
Lucy Boynton, co-star of  
the recently released film  
*Bohemian Rhapsody*

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Photographer DOUG INGLISH  
Styling OLGA YANUL

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**G**lass met actor Lucy Boynton in a sumptuous corner booth at Rose Bar at the Plaza Hotel, where she was staying during a whirlwind work-trip to New York City. The next week would be the North American debut of her new film, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, starring Rami Malek as Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of the rock band Queen, and the one-time partner and long-term close friend of Boynton's character Mary Austin. Small, lithe and blonde, the American-born, London-raised 24-year-old Boynton's girlish presence reveals itself as a façade for a mature, thoughtful professional, someone whose dedication to her characters has projected her career into the blockbuster territory she today inhabits. *Glass* spoke with her about this craft and process, about her past, present, and upcoming projects, and how her interests and upbringing have affected her professional engagement with the wondrous medium of film.



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*Bobemian Rhapsody* has just come out. One thing I heard you speak about regarding *Murder on the Orient Express* is that there is a sacredness to your character, the Countess, because of Agatha Christie's portrayal of her—which you had as your base text. In *Bobemian Rhapsody* you're playing a real-life person rather than a fictional one, so I'm assuming there's that same sense of sacred wonder to Mary, too. Could you speak a little about what that means?

Yes, it's interesting because with characters that are like the *Murder on the Orient Express* character, it's so exciting and thrilling because, as I said, there is this sacredness, but you can also kind of build them in your own way, as well - you can very much take ownership of that character. So as much as you owe it to Agatha Christie to stay true to what she wrote, there's a real thrill because you can also steer it in your own way and make your performance very different to previous performances. With this one especially, there was just more pressure; it was more daunting. I was very aware of how private Mary Austin is and how sensitive some of the subjects of the scenes were - which were more personal and intimate in nature.

So, there's a different kind of sacredness to that - it's none of our business, in a way. The reason I signed on to this film is because I think the story of Freddie Mercury is so important to tell. Especially right now, I feel like we need more of that inspiration, and I really believe in telling that story. But there was some level of discomfort in trying to figure out how to do it as respectfully as possible.

**Are you speaking to Freddie's story as a gay man or as a musical, artistic figure?**

Kind of in every sense, because of how unapologetically himself he was, and in a time when it was even more difficult, from my point of view, than it is now. But still, there seems to be this relentless pressure to conform and be a "certain way", and it feels that way especially in America right now, but also across the world in current politics. To be reminded of that, of this brilliant, brilliant human being - this iconic human being - that he can be so wildly himself and so wildly against the norm. We can take some kind of inspiration from that.

**For your character, specifically, what was your process like in**

I think in the last couple of years with the changing political climate... there just became no excuse not to be outspoken

**figuring out how to embody Mary?**

It was mostly from watching interviews. She viewed everything with hindsight, of course.

**Because these were interviews from the 1980s? Or were they more current?**

No, they were more current - the early 2000s and late nineties. There wasn't very much from the age I was playing her. So there is that interesting element of her speaking with the weight of hindsight I was also watching interviews of Freddie talking about her, which was so beautiful.

[Queen's guitarist] Brian May was my main source of information. He introduced Freddie and Mary. I got to see the genesis of their relationship and how it clearly and directly impacted them. Brian's wife Anita [Dobson] spent a lot of time with Mary, as well, so I was able to pick up on her idiosyncrasies and her manners, and that was very helpful. I didn't want to do a close impression of her in any way. It was to just get the essence of her, and her impact and presence in that world. I was trying to recreate and represent that.

**That's such a privilege, to see someone so close to her for your preparation. It feels like you are drawn to characters who have some kind of cultural heritage. Could you speak to those choices, or how those characters speak to you?**



Dress SALVATORE FERRAGAMO  
Hat DIOR  
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Earring CHANEL

It's weird because I don't have a plotted-out trajectory for my career, or paths that I want to take. It's just roles that I gravitate towards when I read the script; it's been more instinct-based. When I read the script and read the character, there is just this magnetic thing. Like, there is something here that I already understand, or want to understand. It's already embedded in me, even if the character is completely different from me - I want to get in there.

**Another thing I've perceived about your choices of roles is a relationship to music. *Sing Street* was extraordinarily musical, and there's this Queen biopic, of course, and you are working on a Ryan Murphy project now, which will inevitably be musical.**

I guess [that connection to music] is only through film, really, because I don't have a musical bone in my body, as much as I wish I did. I think it's because I'm drawn to it in film - music is the backbone of both *Sing Street* and this - music is very much embedded in the fabrics of the stories. I love that in both of those films, music forces you to feel a certain way. I find it very fascinating, how music can tweak your emotions in a way. Without your consent, even without your awareness, something starts to transform you with the impact of music in a film. With *Queen*, you have this brilliant soundtrack to back these emotions which push the story forward, both in the creation of songs and the telling of them.

**Are you a big film watcher? Were you a cinephile before you started acting?**

I do wish I watched a broader spectrum of films. It's for work, really, that I watch as much film as I can. But I was always fascinated by film in the way that watching it was just never enough. I could never just sit back and enjoy it. I watch a film that I love and want to be part of it in some way, I want to get more from it.

**For your role of former-ballerina, the Countess, in *Murder on the Orient Express*, you took some ballet classes. And in *Ballet Shoes* you played a dancer. In terms of film, music, and dance as these different mediums of art, is dance - movement - a part of the way you act? Or is that overlap more circumstantial?**

I really enjoy roles like that. Movement is one of the most exciting things to alter in a character, so the influence of ballet has been so much fun to throw around. For the Countess, [dance affected] how she holds herself, her walk, and even things like her



Dress SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

voice, or how she regards people. I [had to] add another layer with dance. Especially in *Ballet Shoes*, it was just such a joy watching those girls dance on set. There's something so very romantic, but also something secretive, about ballet; there's something unfolding, there's expression without words.

**That's such a good way to talk about ballet as something secretive.**

And the discipline it takes to get there. It is just so fascinating,

**Your parents were travel journalists. There's a worldliness and creativity to that job that I assume was a part of how you grew up. How did that affect your trajectory, in the sense that you've followed in a creative direction, and you're now also such a globe-trotter by the nature of your career?**

Because they're both journalists, I'd always been surrounded by the kind of unconventional element of the job; the kind of unconventional hours and the travel so much when we were younger – I was always used to that, everything set me up in preparation for this. I've always lived in the same place in London, and I've always had this very strong sense of a centre point, which meant I really enjoyed all the travelling. I'm such a homebody, but I let jobs take me wherever they take me, and I have been more adventurous because I've always had this sense of home to come back to. I think that was very much encouraged by their travelling. When you're very young and you learn that people go away, and they always come back, there is an expected sense of return to normalcy.

**So it was more a foundation for your lifestyle than the actual creative practice that influenced you?**

Yes, and it can be weird at the moment living in LA, where I have been for the past five months. It feels somewhat untethered and out of context, when you live somewhere else for an extended period of time, but you know it's only temporary. So I'm really grateful for being set up for that. I've been able to do it. My parents lived out of hotels so frequently. You've learnt to set up your home wherever you are, but there's still a longing to return.

**That sentiment is really nice, that there's always a home base for you, which is totally out of the public eye. It does seem though that on Instagram you're very open to your public. You're also clearly interested in history and stories and contexts. In attending**

**to those things, would you consider yourself an activist, with the messages you're sending out?**

It can be a very daunting thing, especially the more attention you get on there, but I think in the last couple of years with the changing political climate – to put it politely – there just became no excuse not to be outspoken. I don't think I have a very big following or a very loud voice, but I think whatever small conversation it starts in very impactful. I didn't want to sit back, I had to put something out there. But I'm still trying to find my feet with how vocal I want to be. As much as I value my privacy, it's more like I post something when I can't *not*, when something feels too important not to.

**I also always find myself going back to darker material. I find that a very interesting world to explore**

**It's a responsibility you're responding to.**

Yes, and I really appreciate seeing other people do it and I know I am affected by that, so if I have that reaction, why wouldn't I put messages out there, as well? Even if it affects just one person.

**Can you talk me through what feminism means to you?**

I think it's mad that it's a statement to identify as a feminist, it just shouldn't be such a trigger word. I think it's so strange that it's something we used to learn about in politics and history class, like the idea that feminism was something that was in the past. And now there has been this resurgence of having to reuse it and having to wake people up to something that should be so obvious. It's a necessity to talk about. When I read what's happening in the news – and when I found the book *Feminists Don't Wear Pink (and Other Lies)* – this is when you feel so depleted and shocked by having to justify your feminism. To find that book was just such a relief and realisation that these people get it. I inhaled these lessons from these brilliant women and men and people.. It's all been about trying to align myself and find my footing.

**I saw that quote the other day about how we shouldn't have to identify as feminist.**

Oh yes, that Maisie Williams quote about how we shouldn't identify as feminist and should just call people who aren't feminist "sexist."

**Yes, I love that.**

I'm always relieved when I see stuff like that. It's setting such an example.

**So what's coming up for you? Do you have any other projects happening, aside from working with Ryan Murphy?**

There are a few scripts that I've read of some indie films I'd love to do. And then [Ryan Murphy's] *The Politician* is so different to anything else I've done before, and I always want to go off in that direction of "very different". I also always find myself going back to darker material. I find that a very interesting world to explore. But I don't know for sure what's next. That's what I love about this job. You have such a variety and such an eclectic collection of material, and sometimes you read something that really sits with you and strikes you and it's all-encompassing. It's so thrilling not knowing what's next, and it's one of the best parts of it.

By Emily Rae Pellerin

*Bohemian Rhapsody* is on release now

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