

39 - Julie Taymor (The Glorias): A Stuck at Home Special

Announcer: From CurtCo Media there's no place like Hollywood.

Jenny Curtis: Welcome to another very special episode of Hollywood Unscripted: Stuck at Home. I'm Jenny Curtis and today I am incredibly excited to be virtually sitting down with visionary director Julie Taymor. Julie creates thrilling explorations across a wide variety of mediums.

She's the force behind the groundbreaking Broadway adaptation of The Lion King which debuted in 1997 and has achieved the largest worldwide box office gross ever across any entertainment form.

It's amazing. Her films include Across The Universe, Frida, the Shakespeare films Titus and The Tempest and now the Gloria Steinem biopic The Glorias. Welcome Julie. Thank you so much for joining me today. Happy to be here. Thank you. Our specials of our show are called Hollywood Unscripted: Stuck at Home, because we're all obviously stuck at home and as an artist who thrives on connection, What has the pandemic been like for you?

Julie Taymor: I left New York City in March and haven't been back and I've been in the country and being in the country allows me to be isolated with Elliott. My other half, who's the composer who I lived with for thirty five years and we take enormously long walks with our dog and have fresh air and he just finished The Glorias soundtrack last night and I'm working on two other scripts, both for film, and one for film and theater so that I can do. You know? I don't have to be in rehearsal or on set. So a lot of it is doing press for The Glorias and working on future projects.

Jenny Curtis: The Glorias is based on the Gloria Steinem autobiography My Life on the Road. Can you take us through the genesis of the project. I know it took some time to get off the ground.

Julie Taymor: I was given the book by one of my best friends when I was in Tulum in Mexico on the beach. So she just said oh you have to read this I was like, OK. And I got the book. I knew Gloria Steinem but not well, and I was just totally taken with her writing, the stories. I had no idea what her early life was like. There are things in her life that are similar to mine, go on 20 years younger, so I could identify with what she went through, what she is going through. My mother is very political. She was chairwoman and ran for state representative and started programs in Massachusetts to get women involved in politics and she wrote a book called Running Against the Wind. So I've dedicated this movie to her. She's ninety nine point nine. She's seen the film five times and loves it, says it's my best film.

So there were things about it that I was familiar with, but I didn't think it was cinematic. Her book. I thought it was all over the map in a good way, a road book. And I thought well, you know

what - I can't get it out of my mind and it's probably because her early life with her father and her mother. That felt cinematic, that felt like these relationships, the emotional through line of that. And then the whole idea that travel is the best education. I love that notion of her journeys of a life on the road. So I thought about it. I asked Gloria if I could have the rights and she thought I was out of my mind because it's so not a movie. It's you know - it doesn't have any dramatic through line it's journeys all over the place. It's taxi rides, it's canvassing for this senator or starting a magazine. But no linear story. And I said, Well let me just go to it. Let me try. So I had the rights and then I tried to think of how to do this.

And I came up with the notion first of all that there would be four Gloria's at least. A six year old or 12 year old Elise to kind of place 20 to 40. Julianne Moore plays 40 to 80 and that instead of having it move along you know from young to old 80 years of this woman's life I would have them all gathered together on this bus that I call a bus out of time. And the Greyhound bus in America is such an archetypal image of journey of travel across the country. So this was the structure upon which I hung all these disparate stories these disparate events of her life somehow getting on that bus it's black and white and moving through the landscapes even abstract landscapes keeps the through line going that it's forever travelling to the next march on Washington. How many did you go to the next conference in a city on women's rights to the next speech she might be giving to a university to the next talking circle and a women's group in San Francisco. So this bus was the glue. It was the in musical terms the leitmotif.

Jenny Curtis: I like to call it the bus out of time I have it written down as the bus of life. Yours is better when you landed upon that idea. How did you find it. Is it like a light bulb where suddenly everything clicks or did it develop slowly.

Julie Taymor: Well I do this in theater and film as a designer. You're trained to do this and as a director I also do it with actors and I'll give the Lion King as an example because have you ever seen it on Broadway. Did you ever see the light. OK. So a lot of people out there have and when I was working on that and knowing that I didn't want to put up a carbon copy of the movie I thought about what is the main idea graph. It's like in Chinese brush paintings or Japanese brush paintings they have three strokes to represent an entire bamboo forest just it's an abstraction that culling down to an essential concept or image. And in the Lion King It's the circle. It's obvious the circle of life is the first song the sun rises which is round with forces head mask has this circular bamboo framing around it the wheels of the gazelle will move in circles the way that pride rocks circles up out the set designer. He took that idea of the circle and that's how the mountain comes out of the hole in the ground. So that's easy. Midsummer Night's Dream in my film and theater piece. It was the bed the sheets they kept becoming various things in the play because that's where we dream the Glorias. It became the bus the bus on a road a highway with the yellow slash lines.

Jenny Curtis: That's the recurring image.

Julie Taymor: And so it's symbolic but it's also real at the same time the motion the movement that sometimes there's one Gloria by herself sometimes two or four and sometimes there's a whole bus filled with women who hate.

Jenny Curtis: Gloria Steinem I want to say that this film is so desperately needed right now but in truth it's desperately needed always and that's kind of the point of the movie and the point that Gloria is always making that the challenges she tackles persist and come back to them over and over and over again. But what does it mean to have this film coming out at this time of turmoil.

Julie Taymor: When we started the movie which was before the election four years ago it was going to be a celebration of the first female president. Of course even shot Election Night at Samantha Powers apartment with Madeleine Albright Gloria Steinem and 40 female ambassadors. But it was such depressing footage that I didn't use it was just awful. The room sagged. Now right before this election I mean we had our premiere at Sundance. That was thrilling a thousand people got to see it CHEERING standing ovations all of that were desperately sad that it's not in movie theaters but we had a choice to postpone the wide opening or stream and we chose streaming because it's necessary before the election at least a month before we said that people before they vote. And also to inspire people to register and vote. We had planned to be on a Greyhound bus travelling through the swing states. Now Gloria and myself and a lot of the actors and other women presenting the film to groups and having talking circles and really talking about what choice means like a big part of the film and feels more relevant since the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. We know that Roe v. Wade is on the chopping block. If the Supreme Court is more conservative and young men and women really have to know how hard that law was fought for choice as you see in the movie in that scene between Dolores Huerta and Gloria at the Women's Conference doors where there was totally a right to life for an anti abortion she's Catholic she had 10 kids but she comes to a point where she realizes that if the government isn't responsible to helping these women who have birth after birth who's going to take care of them who's taking care of the woman and the child and if the government is forcing women who do not want to give birth at that time there has to be a law where a woman carries a baby for nine months OK. The father of the baby takes care of the baby for the next nine months. That has to be some equality there. A woman shouldn't be punished if she doesn't want to stop her life at that moment because other people are governing her body and her choice. That's just one aspect it's the Equal Rights Amendment. We haven't passed that yet. We have to realize that more than the presidency the Supreme Court has ultimate rule over the future of people's lives. But I would say I'm really concerned about young people who really have a future and they haven't voted yet a No vote is a vote that's just it. And they have to realize because you don't think Biden is all that Hoxie tortilla or whatever vote against Trump everything Obama put in it is now gone. We've gone backwards as far as racial equality. Female equality and a proper future for this country the United States. Well now it's not it's the divided states and that's the way he's playing it. So yeah I think unfortunately the movie is more important now than it would have been if we were just out there celebrating Hillary Clinton. It's historical but it's fun. Did you find it entertaining. I mean I hope it is.

Jenny Curtis: Oh I loved it. Yeah. By the end I was full sobbing.

Julie Taymor: So I've been surprised at all the men I know who are more emotionally moved than women I know because this is about women working together. This is important to me. Women supporting women on television on ethics. All these stations there's way too many feuds as we call them there's too much cat fights there's too much drama made out of women competing with each other for attention jobs men. This is not about that. Phyllis Schlafly is in our movie but is the real woman. We have documentary footage. I didn't want to make it about that because the best part of Gloria Steinem and all those great women is that they love being together back to the love story they love what they were trying to do they succeeded. They had fun. They have humor. And that's a big part of it.

Jenny Curtis: At the time of this recording we are less than a week after Ruth Bader Ginsburg passing and there is a universal mourning but I think this is so powerful because it reminds not only all women but young people especially that there are still amazing women to look up to and follow their lead. But like you said they have to be paying attention. How do you think this film will get to the younger audience and do you think it will inspire them to change or act.

Julie Taymor: Well it gets to it by people like you. Programs like this you know we don't have gobs of money we're not a big Hollywood film. So it's not going to be through that kind of marketing it's going to be through social media and our full out trailer came out yesterday. So we had a teaser for a couple weeks and now there's a trailer and hopefully you see actors that you love. You know whether it's Julianne Moore and Alicia Vikander, Janelle Monae, Bette Midler, Lorraine to song you know they're fantastic actors. I'm so proud of them in this film. But it's an entertaining film and you can see that from the trailer. I hope so. I don't find a whole lot out there to see I like to watch television streaming but I don't see a whole lot of stuff that's gripping me right now except documentaries frankly. And so as a drama I want to be moved and I want to be inspired. You talk about Ruth Bader Ginsburg without people like the women in my movie. And it's not just Gloria it's what's called Gloria's without them making their voices loud for all the voiceless people. Ruth wouldn't have heard the call I shouldn't say Ruth I should really say Justice Ginsburg for respect. But she heard it and then the laws were changed so the power is in the voice that's out there marching writing calling and we have to be so careful that it's not perverted by Trump and his team to say oh it's angry and socialistic and violent.

Speaker 12: The violence is not coming from the peaceful Black Lives Matter movement. Not at all.

Speaker 11: So don't get suckered in to becoming violent because it will be used. It's what happened with the Black Panthers. They couldn't last as soon as they had the guns. William Barr the period of that time the Justice Department closed it down. And that will happen now. I mean when Trump said I didn't want to scare people about Kobe 19 I didn't want to cause a panic. I has no problem trying to cause a panic by saying they're going to come up and come into your neighborhoods and take your. He has no problem causing a panic. So I don't hear people saying that but that is his method of using terror to try and sway people to vote for him and using hatred is the playbook of all the dictators. And people are falling for it.

Speaker 13: So we really do need young people in particular to get out there and vote and to really make their voices heard.

Speaker 14: A moment of your time.

Speaker 15: A new podcast from CurtCo Media. I'm currently 21 years old and today like magic Reed extended from her fingertips down to the blood to take care of yourself because the world needs you and just me every do gooder that asked about me was ready to spit on my dream fingers her face you can feel like your purpose and your worth is really being kind of to stop me from playing the piano she buys walkie talkies wonders to whom she should give the second I don't love humans. We never did. We never will. We just find what you do.

Speaker 16: Rock climbing is that you can only focus on what's right.

Speaker 14: And so are American life begins. We may need to stay apart but let's create together available on all podcast platforms. Submit your piece at Kirkham slash a moment of your time.

Jenny Curtis: And jump into the production side of the film. This was co-written by Sarah rule an amazing playwright. But she hasn't had much experience in film. So how did that collaboration come to be.

Julie Taymor: Well I wanted someone who was good at emotional scenes and dialogue scenes. I had already started and I already had the concept of the bus out of time and knew that the sort of real flights of fancy I would read in there later because those are cinematic and that isn't really her bailiwick. But she read the book deeply like I did.

We looked at all the documentary footage together and we pulled out the scenes that we thought were really worth elaborating on and writing. So it was a back and forth. And then at a certain point I needed to make it more cinematic. So I took over the last part and really put in my visual ideas and my crazy ideas into the script.

Jenny Curtis: What was the collaboration like with the real Gloria in this process.

Julie Taymor: Well as she'll say if you ask. She just is like I trust you. Go ahead. She loved the idea of before Gloria. She said to me I don't understand. How did you come up with that idea. How did you know. And I said no. How did I know what. And she said that I often see my younger self or other self on a street corner or across the room and I think well what would they think if they knew what I know now. What would they have done. Well I feel empathy for them because later in other books she wrote something like that how she sees her other selves. I never read that book. So this was a wavelength that must have been on together. And she was always there when I would call her up. You know like the barbershop scene. That's not in any book. She told us that story because she always wanted to be a dancer. So she talked about

how when she was twelve and her mother was really mentally unbalanced she had tap dance shoes I mean chiefs tap dancing anything she had the shoes and a mother couldn't stand the sound so she'd do it outside and a little girl came and invited her to a barbershop and gave her tap shoes and it's where you first see Gloria crossing the racial boundaries where she immediately very easily became friends with this young little girl. And Gloria was there to tell me stories that weren't in the books. And she also helped get Bette Midler. You know she thought it was a great idea to have bet she wrote the letter to janelle. She was an executive producer from a distance but she helped in those major points. And she also helped get the money for the film because we couldn't get it from Hollywood so she went to a not for profit organization who had the money and loved her and knew that if there was any money ever made from the sales of this film the recoupment would go to women's causes. Now that will not probably happen because we're streaming sadly but it's more important for them and for us that people are moved by the movie that they're really inspired so that's OK. And the other thing is she met with Julianne and Alisha in my apartment and answered their questions and they listen to her speech patterns and she was accessible.

Jenny Curtis: So Helen Mirren once talked about how you use all kind of elements to encourage a performance. And so I'm really wondering what did you use with Elise and Julianne to create Gloria with them and how did they connect over it.

Julie Taymor: They're both formidable actresses who did their research listened to the tapes saw the documentaries we talked about the moments I think that most surreal moments where I had to coerce them basically I mean I had to explain to them that no this isn't real because these are actors who really are grounded and they like reality. And that sequence where we go into a tornado and the women or the three witches and all of that. I kept saying No I understand this isn't reality. This is an inner thought that I'm putting out there dimensionally. And that's one of these things that's very hard for anybody to know until they see it at the end because they don't see the tornado. They don't know when they're on a wire being a witch being thrown around in the studio that it's actually going to look okay or a Julianne Moore for instance had to run on a conveyor belt on a running machine. She had no image of the highways and the multiple Gloria's. So that's hard when you're a director and some of the work is actually not understood until the final product. They have to trust me so I can show them pictures and I can show them ideas but they need to feel grounded. It's giving them confidence that I know what I'm doing.

Jenny Curtis: Did they work together.

Julie Taymor: No. They met with Gloria all at the same time but except for the scenes where they were on the bus together they never had scenes together and they had their own dialect coaches. So they really were concentrating on their part of being Gloria and I felt no reason to have them try to be similar. The unifying person is Gloria. That's the thing that connects them. So Alicia is different just like her younger self is different. Our six year old self is different. You have to see that you're not full blown Gloria Steinem with the streaks in the glasses and this magazine when you're six or when you're 22. That's why I love the scene where Alicia sits next

to her on the bus later on and says Didn't you ever want to have children. And the older Gloria says no. And the young one says Oh yes I did. You know you may not remember but there was a point where maybe she didn't want and she just thought she'd have them because even the 12 year old says I'm going to have a house and three kids and a golden retriever and a ping pong table in my basement because that's what at that age in her life women were supposed to expect and nothing more. It's good enough. So I didn't feel the need that they should match each other and there was enough matching because the two women can look like the younger Gloria and the older Gloria. And then of course the hair.

Jenny Curtis: OK so if you were on the Julie's bus out of time.

Julie Taymor: Oh God.

Jenny Curtis: What's the conversation you would be having with yourself.

Julie Taymor: Well I've never thought of that such a good question. Which age.

Jenny Curtis: So there's the 20s Julie and the 40s Julie and then the now.

Julie Taymor: JULIE Well I know what the eight year old Julie would say. I want to be a ice ballerina. Seventeen year old was interested in anthropology and travel. That's not dissimilar from doing what I'm doing now you know which is people. I'm an anthropologist mythology folklore shamanism those are things that I studied back then and I'm still reflecting. That's why Rafiq he became a woman. I look back at my 22 year old self in Indonesia and am astounded at certain bravery certain kinds of things I did certain foolhardy things as well like walking on the rim of a volcano that was erupting in Bali. I know I wouldn't do that now because I fell and had an accident. So I had blinders on for a lot of my career. I didn't see misogyny. I didn't see sexism if I let those things enter my view. I wouldn't have been able to get anything done. Now I am much more aware of that. So I have to remind myself now of what I did when I was younger. I don't feel wiser now. I feel a little bit more savvy and maybe cautious. So I have to remember the time I spent four years travelling in Indonesia and a theatre company I did all kinds of things I could never do. Now I have to remind myself how I did it. It's like when things are dark and difficult Spider-Man era was really the lowest point I go That's nothing. I was an Indonesian a volcano that was erupting. I was there where there was a tsunami where my theatre company was staying. I was there when I was the only white woman for four years and felt like an outsider but still did these things so for me I look back at my younger self and she tells me this ain't anything don't worry about it.

It also helps me to have perspective on the United States because I've travelled and lived so much outside of this country and I feel that America is just too full of itself and that what's happening is it's getting a big slap in the face because the rest of the world is going what happened. You had the greatest democracy in the world and you're letting it go you know.

Jenny Curtis: So we're on the bus and we're looking back at your career. I want to briefly talk about Lion King because I know you've been talking about it for decades but it is such a major part of your legacy. You created a form of theatre that brought people to theatre who didn't care about theatre which is just amazing and mind blowing and you've launched so many more productions of it. And what is the Lion King to you. I guess it's the question.

Julie Taymor: Well yes it's 25 years old now. Ninety million people have seen it on every continent but Antarctica. So the penguins they're not interested. But everybody else I've done versions in Mandarin in Shanghai and Portuguese in Brazil in Spanish in Spain and Mexico in all these languages we've done companies in the local language and changed the humor accordingly.

It's also just another statistic. The most successful entertainment in the history of all entertainment not just theatre but including film television. So as a woman that's pretty awesome. You know people don't really know that but that's the truth more than Star Wars. We as women hate touting our whore tooting or whatever you say but we gotta get over that a bit because it does help other women to know that not only did I create something that was entertaining but that it was extremely successful.

But I will say what it did is two major things for me which is it's given me freedom to do the projects that I want to do because I really have to be passionate about every project I have to it takes too much of my everything. Everything you know I don't have children I have Elliot who's my other half for 35 years happily unmarried and he's my main collaborator he's the composer. He won the Academy Award for Frida. He did most of the arrangements for across the universe and the score he's done all my theatre work except for Spider-Man and The Lion King we done opera and everything so I have tremendous freedom because Lion King is financially successful. But what is more important to me is the spiritual nature of that piece that it transcends cultural limitations and boundaries. I can go to Japan and because it's a coming of age story an archetypal story that every culture has which is the coming of age of a young man. Mostly though I did make not part. Much more important in the Broadway show as opposed to the movies. I think that this is the connecting thing between us as humans and that's what art is about. It's to say people often India are going to see the Glorias and feel as passionate about this American woman who is inspired by India and what she learned in India as we would be. And so it's this trans cultural aspect of the musical that I'm so proud of. And I know this is weird because it is Disney but it deals with death and when little kids come it's what do you call it. It's almost a exorcism of pain when the little boy turns to his father similar to move closer and says Will you always be there for me. The father knows what he's asking and he says to the young Simba look at the stars the great kings of the past looked down upon us from those stars they live in you. They live in me they're watching over everything we see that's one of my favorite songs that metal and wrote with the South African chorus without being a specific religion. It's a very religious spiritual in the best way song which is I may not be here physically but I am here with you spiritually and for a fact. I have had people tell me stories like one that really moved me was about a family from somewhere in the United States who had bought tickets the first year way in advance because I couldn't get tickets to the Broadway production and the little girl had

died in the family that year. And so when they were supposed to come to New York they didn't want to come. Everybody said you've got to bring the little boy you've got to go anyway. So this is what was told to me they're sitting there with their young son still in mourning and watching this scene that I just described and a little boy turned to his parents and he said is with us isn't she. Exactly. I see your face now. If I was able in any way as an artist to help that child through mourning through what death is then I've done my job as an artist because we were the first shamans. That's what a shaman is. It's a cross between director and entertainer and a psychiatrist and a leader of the community. And that is the origins of theater.

Theater is to take you through the droughts the blizzards the fires of California the hurricanes of the South the misery of our political system and the entertainment is there to get you to get out your fears to release you of the tension and to share that in an environment with other people. The same thing happened with Greta when I was in Australia a woman told me she had cancer and then when she saw how Frida dealt with pain it changed her whole attitude towards what she could do and how she could live through the pain. So these are the important things for me as an artist. It's how we can really help our communities and our fellow human beings through entertainment but also through thought and stories that get us out of ourselves.

Ad: Hi I'm Robert Ross, host of Cars That Matter. You might be wondering what makes a car madder and I have a feeling you already know the answer. Some cars have changed history some you can hear a mile away some have lines that make your heart skip a beat if a car is ever made you look twice then I think you know the ones that matter. Joining me as I speak with designers collectors and market experts about the passions of drivers and the passions we drive cars that matter wherever you get your podcasts.

Jenny Curtis: And your first feature film was Titus which was a choice for your first film what an undertaking because the scale was huge and the cast was amazing. What was that experience to have that be your first foray into this medium.

Julie Taymor: Well I had directed the play off Broadway before the Lion King and I had already felt that it was the most daunting Shakespearean play the most violent thing I've ever seen in my life.

Horrifying and scary and very. Of our times right after the success of The Lion King. I remember Spielberg offering me the cat in the hat. And I thought to myself well if the cat is black maybe but more to the point I felt I don't want people to think of me as a family children's theater. You know I just didn't want to be put into any kind of box whatsoever. I knew that Titus was an extraordinary maligned Shakespeare play people about bringing all over the top. I said this is the violence of today whether it's honor killings remember the Menendez brothers or Columbine. You know the surge of violence in America that wasn't just inner city but was young middle class people. Oh my God. How did that happen. Now we just take it for granted because school shootings this is just a hideous part of everyday life in America. But in 98 I think we opened Christmas Day nineteen ninety nine right before the millennium turn. I thought I'm going to ask Anthony Hopkins and we're going to make this my first feature sort of the opposite of the line

although people say the ranking is based on Hamlet but whatever. And I loved it I wanted to work with very great actors and rich language. And we shot on location in Italy.

Jenny Curtis: I read that during the shoot and maybe to this day you and Anthony Hopkins didn't necessarily agree on Titus as mindset.

Julie Taymor: No it wasn't an easy ride for either one of us together. But as I like to call it was like two stones when they rub against each other fire happens. So I think that this is very well known and Tony has said this that he didn't want to act after Titus you know it was sort of the pinnacle and the end of his career. Of course that didn't stick at all. But that play is so awful. I mean you have to go to a very dark place.

The young boys who played the rapist that were very racist parts to Aaron Blackmore Aaron the Moors part is very much based on certain things from Iago the kind of malevolent manipulation and concoctions. But the only two black roles in the Shakespeare canon or Othello and Aaron Moore and Aaron played by Harry Lennox is one of the greatest parts with the greatest language. Now for Hopkins to go to the place where Titus is ready to bake his enemies children into pies and feed them to his mother is a very dark place for him to go to a place where he has to experience his hand getting chopped off is hard. And he went there and he went to the madness and it was happening to him as it was going on. So we didn't have a disagreement. It was in front of my eyes. You know it was scary. And yet I would see the rushes every night and go Oh my God this is unbelievable. So I knew that it was going to be great to see. It is one of his greatest performances ever. People haven't seen TITUS It's just extraordinary.

Jenny Curtis: When you did Frida and it was spearheaded by Salma Hayek. How did she connect with you. How did you come onto the project and what was that experience like.

Julie Taymor: Well I got a call from Mark Gil at Miramax in New York City saying Salma Hayek is on her way to the airport. But if you will meet her she would love to talk to you about directing potentially the film of Frida Kahlo life. And I said sure. So Salma Hayek age 34 stunning still stunning. But she comes into my apartment and you know I'm just thinking oh God if I were a lesbian this would be should I probably get even say that now the same way. But she just was overwhelming physically and then she sat down on my couch and for two hours told me about Frida Kahlo with knowledge and depth and intelligence and exuberance and I just sat there because I liked Diego Rivera's paintings I wasn't sure about Frida Kahlo but I'd spent a lot of time in Mexico with Elliot. We created a piece called Quan study in. And so I knew Mexican artists I knew Mexican culture. I loved it. And she made me feel that if she can entertain me for two hours I surely can do a film and be her midwife help her get her baby up there and then I fell in love with it. Once I delve deeply into the material and into her paintings and the autobiography that is in those paintings and I love the actors that I was able to cast I love them. Alfred Molina Valeria Galeano it was just a tremendous cast. GEOFFREY RUSH All of it. Diego Luna. Nobody knew who he was then but did she say hello ugly when she has her first love affair at age 15 with him.

Jenny Curtis: It was great. It was really great. Selma has since said it was a very hard process because of Harvey Weinstein. I'm not asking any details about that but I'm really curious. Looking back at your work if that affects your memory of the piece or your feeling toward the piece or does the piece stand alone away from the experience except for when Harvey would show up or in post-production where he tried to manipulate everything it was a tremendous experience.

Julie Taymor: He wasn't in Mexico all the time but when he came it was difficult for her and I would have to coax him I'd have to do that. Female flattery playing around things that you learn so that he doesn't feel like he's not coming up with every idea. I was way too old for him to be interested in me. That didn't happen with me with Salma. Yes he was extremely disgusting and rude. I don't know all the details of that. I know that he wanted very much to have lots of sex scenes in the movie. He wasn't interested in her limping as if he didn't even know that absolutely the most important event in her life was the bus accident. He was like Why is she limping when he saw that first week of dailies and it just shocking frankly. But I managed because I had such a good team and Salma was a great producer. She protected the process and we had fun. It was great Rodrigo Prieto who shot Gloria's shot Frida and I loved working with my Mexican team. It was just great. It was during post that he was unbearable because he just kept wanting to get rid of politics or get rid of the Father and he thinks that he makes a film better. But honestly that's just ridiculous. Shorter isn't better shorter shorter and he didn't understand really what it was about that movie that people really loved.

Jenny Curtis: He did later one of my all time favorite movies is Across the Universe. To tell you how much I love that film, and I actually had the gift of having Jim Sturgess on the show a couple of months ago and he was talking about the rehearsal process with you because it was his first film. It was OK because it was a theater rehearsal process where you got to workshop the piece.

Julie Taymor: Oh it was so great. I went to London to look for Jude the part and ended up finding Jude and Max because Jo Anderson auditioned and said I'm not Jude. Can I audition for Max. I said Well this is weird. Can you do an American accent. He said Yeah I can. And he just took the energy. He just was Max. He wasn't you. So those two had never been to America came over and tore up New York City. And then we had Evan Rachel Wood who had just turned 18 I think was known for the movie 13 and was a complete David Bowie fanatic and I told her I'm going to try and see if I can get David Bowie for Mr. Kite. We did. We went for Eddie Izzard but she would wear his t shirt and then the other lead characters two of them were singers Dana Fuchs and Martin Luther. They were singers who I auditioned and could really act. And then T.V. Carpio who is a fabulous actor singer. So we had a small band six musicians. We were in a classic Broadway rehearsal room a couple of rooms. We played around with Danny as loved the choreographer whose birthday it is today. Happy birthday Danny and call him up after this. And we had about 15 phenomenal dancers who worked on all the different concepts. Then there's a thousand dancers in the film but you know you had to work them out ahead of time and then that core group would then teach everybody else.

It was so much fun. Elliot worked on the arrangements and then T Bone Burnett joined in and we had to record in advance the tracks. Although 90 percent of the movie is sunrise and way before Labor's Day. In fact they acted like they were the first but frankly they did less live than we did. But you had to have it be live. We wanted it but even if it's live you have an earbud in there just in case there's too many airplanes. Some of the locations you just can't get good enough sound but it was so much fun. And you know eventually yes I would love to do it as theater we'll see.

Jenny Curtis: I saw that Evan Rachel Wood showed up to her first day on set and it was if I fell and she wasn't aware that she would be singing live.

Julie Taymor: That's exactly right. She thought that because we had pre-recorded that she would be lipstick and I said don't worry Evan it's always there in case there's a problem like Joe didn't like singing live because you really didn't think he was a singer at all. Fact is he's a fabulous singer. He sang live and all the rehearsals. But we were really able to mix it if I fell in love with you. It's not only brilliant but it was her first take and why I say it was brilliant. We were going to make a cut from that first location in a kind of broken down building to the party much earlier and we'd set up a circular track around her. So it's no editing. It's one shot where the camera moves around her and her singing was so brilliant and her acting that I said Don't you know we just kept moving so much more of the song is sung in one shot and it's the fear and fragility which is perfect for that moment when she's looking at Jude and she's not sure that she can handle falling in love with.

Jenny Curtis: It's so real that I didn't read any other takes just like the Gloria's it's kind of this piece that's always relevant because the cyclical nature we're back in these riots and these young people being awakened to activism and she has this line I should be radical you should be radical we should all don't be radical it just rings so true.

Julie Taymor: Now when he tries to say as many people are saying now you know are you kidding you won't get anywhere it won't change anything. And she gets really angry member in the Laundromat where she says listen I would lie down in front of a tank if it would bring Max home. You don't think it's worth trying. That's the moment that they fall apart. She's not going off to war but the responsibility of everybody to have the government listen. The Vietnam War because young men were drafted. They became more involved because it was affecting them personally. You know if we had a draft now people would be much more out there in the streets as Gloria said at the Women's March she said sometimes pressing send is not enough your voice and your activism is critical. And I'm so proud of the people who have gone out on the streets in this very scary time put on their masks and marched for the Black Lives Matter movement. This is incredibly impressive moving critical and they should be marching for women's rights and racial rights and all of those rights now if they're not marching then they're making phone calls and saying listen guys we've got to vote because this is going to be the rest of this generation's future and the next generation I want to wrap up on my favorite question to ask what does it mean to you to have a life in very telling. Well it is my life. Your life is to use whatever talents I have or imagination I have to make other people's lives fulfilled to entertain

and to move them. That's kind of what as I said when I talked about The Lion King. What gives me the most joy is people's reactions. I know women. Lot of women will identify and love this. But when I've had some of the men around me right at the beginning like the sound designer in post when Michael told me how he just was weeping through the whole movie I was so touched.

And that's happened more than once because think about it. Men don't see movies about women in the workplace just women. Most movies about women or girls is about I want this boyfriend my husband's beating me I wish I could marry him. It's a romance. You know this boss is stepping over the line. Whatever it is their lives are geared towards their male partners. I made a choice like Gloria did in her book that this is about women moving together in this movement and that the men are secondary characters not that they're not important to Gloria's real life of course they are. But you can only focus on one aspect. And so when the men say that I feel so gratified because the idea that this would be a chick flick or this would be something just for women although women are half the population is so ridiculous.

This is about people. If you're a feminist you can be male doesn't mean you're a woman. And feminists are not anti male. They're about equality pure and simple. Is that you respect both genders equally. And I love this reaction and I love their surprise because it's new to them to see women working like that and loving like that loving each other supporting each other.

Jenny Curtis: Julie I cannot thank you enough for taking time out of your day to come talk to me.

This has meant the world to me because I am such a fan.

Julie Taymor: Jenny thank you it's been terrific. Have a good one. Bye bye.

Jenny Curtis: Hollywood unscripted was created by CurtCo Media. This special episode of the stuck at home series was hosted and produced by me **Jenny Curtis**. With guest. **Julie Taymor** co-produced and edited by Jay Whiting. The executive producer of Hollywood Unscripted is Stuart Halperin. The Hollywood Unscripted theme song is by Celleste and Eric Dick. Make sure to subscribe so you don't miss any special episodes of Hollywood Unscripted: Stuck at Home and we want to hear from you. Leave us a rating and a review. Tell us what you like what you don't like. Maybe we can be better.

Jenny Curtis: Stay safe and healthy and thanks for listening.

Announcer: CurtCo Media. Media for Your Mind.