

Maxine Peake

I only worked once at RADA with Dee Cannon as unfortunately she wasn't my acting teacher and at the time I didn't know whether that was a good thing as rumours were she was very tough. Dee directed me in *Steel Magnolia's* in my final year. Originally the story goes that I had been cast as the 'Daryl Hannah' part and Dee had thought I wasn't suitable so was given the 'Dolly Parton' role. I was a little miffed at this as I'd never played anyone at RADA who came anywhere near my own age.

So rehearsals began...and Dee was tough and pretty relentless.

Everything had to have an activity and action and I'd only toyed with this practice before. I found rehearsals so hard and I thought at the time Dee was pretty impossible to please but what I started to realise is that I'd been more or less let off before. I'd got away with mediocre performances and Dee wouldn't stand for that. She pushed you and pushed you till you felt you were about to give up but then there was some kind of 'breakthrough' and once you got there everything seemed to fly and become organic.

I do believe strongly in acting that restraint and boundaries can produce the greatest freedom. Dee is like a top athletic trainer. She pushes you through the pain barrier and makes you stronger and a more agile. I still adhere very much to the way Dee works today as it's a great foundation for any actor interested in truth.