FIRST STEPS

From period drama to gothic horror, *Bodhi Rae Breathnach* is collecting roles like some teens might collect lip balms. She acted opposite Jessie Buckely and Paul Mescal in *Hamnet* and gave Jason Statham a run for his money in Shelter, now she's taken on Jane Austen in *Sense & Sensibility*. Born in Ireland, she lives in London and is hailed as a talent to watch.

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Bodhi Rae Breathnach is not long home for the day when she pops onto my screen in her school uniform. She's all smiles, and has just finished her mock GCSE art exam, with a self-portrait which she managed to finish ahead of time and is "really happy" with. Her next art project will be drawing all the characters she's played so far; which for this 14-year-old actor, are many and varied.

"*I never really made the conscious decision that acting was what I wanted to do*," she explains. "*I've been making films with my dolls on my iPad since I was about 5 or 6, and making props and scripts with my dad. I don't know when it started, but it's been my dream for so long.*" Dad is Danann Breathnach, an Irish filmmaker; and her mum, Tara Breathnach, works in jewellery. Bodhi was born into a creative home, and a family which knows how to nurture her talents.

Born in Ireland and now based in London, she has been hailed as an emerging talent to watch by film critics, and even her co-star on *Shelter*, Jason Statham, who told RTE that " *she knows what she's doing. She's very talented, I think we're going to see a lot of her*." She has been acting since she was little, and made one of her closest friends working on *So Awkward Kids Camp*, a film in the popular kids' franchise. "*Filming with a group of people I'd just met for my first ever job was special, and it was such a different experience as I had only been in adverts before that*". She came to mainstream prominence last year in Chloe Zhao's *Hamnet*, in which she plays Shakespeare's eldest daughter, Susannah Hall, opposite her on-screen parents played by Jessie Buckely and Paul Mescal, and a brother and sister played by Olivia Lynes and Jacobi Jupe. "*It was easier than it could have been to create a familial bond with people I'd just met, it felt really real. We experienced a range of different emotions together as a family, although a lot of the happy moments didn't make the final cut. Jessie and Paul were amazing, I felt very safe with Jessie*," she remembers. Bodhi's performance cuts like a knife through one of the most emotionally charged scenes in the movie, and is central to the film's emotional core.

Her more recent films have been a chance to try different genres. She filmed *Shelter*, which came out earlier this year, opposite Statham; a pacey action film which goes big on pyrotechnics and high-speed chase scenes. It was a whole new experience for her, and she remembers filming a long and gruelling scene in the water, complete with wave and wind machines, during which she had to swim and hold her breath until Statham could pull her onto a boat without the aid of pulleys. The scene marks a defining moment in their on-screen relationship, and Bodhi received glowing reviews for her performance: "*it was different to anything I've done before and physically difficult, whereas the film I just finished*—A Headful of Ghosts—*was more emotionally challenging, and I had to wear prosthetics which took a long time in the morning and were a bit uncomfortable*".

From ghost stories, to gothic horror, and *Werwulf*, also slated for release early next year, from Robert Eggers starring Willem Dafoe, Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Lily-Rose Depp. To prepare for the role, Bodhi sat down with her dad to think about questions like what her character would have eaten in Medieval Britain, how she would have dressed and what the customs were around werewolves at the time, to help her to understand what it would have been like to live in early Middle Ages. "*For new roles, I've started writing about the context of the movie,*" she says. "*costumes and set design really helps as well. The costume department on Sense & Sensibility dyed all the clothes naturally—I wore socks that had been dyed with elderflower—which helped me get into character and made it feel more real.*" She plays Margaret Dashwood, with Daisy Edgar-Jones as her elder sister Elinor, in the period adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel. It was one of her favourite filming experiences so far: "*there were animals on set, always a dog or a horse that we could go and stroke when we weren't filming. There were lots of funny incidents with them, like horse farting at the wrong moment!*" Shot during the school summer holidays, the experience was more relaxed than other films, for which she has had on-set tutors to help her keep up with her classmates back at school. Although it's sometimes hard work to catch up, she's surrounded by a tight group of friends at home, who she keeps in touch with on-set. I get the impression that she wouldn't change her hybrid life for the world.

As for the future, Bodhi wants to improve her hobbies of singing and drawing, and is working for getting good results in school. She's also a big reader, and admires the author Holly Jackson for the *Good Girls Guide to Murder* trilogy, as well as some of the women she has been lucky enough to act alongside in her career so far: "*a lot of the people I look up to are people I've worked with, like Daisy, Lily and Jessie, as I've seen them work their magic first-hand. We had a great connection which inspired me even more*." Later, Tara tells me how pleased she is that her daughter has been able to learn from such established actors, and work with supportive cast and crew: "*As Bodhi's mum, I can't always be with her on-set, so it's great to know there are these amazing women looking after her.*"
Acting is her main priority; she has a US agent in the works and tells me she would love to play Alice in Wonderland, or Sarah in the *Labyrinth*, if the 1986 kids' classic were to be remade. "*I love the idea of stepping into a fantasy world that's a bit creepy and weird*," she says "*it's also a secret dream of mine to include singing and dancing in my career. In this life, I just want to try as many different things as I can.*" And if her career to date is anything to go by, it looks like she's already on the right track. ●



Organza jacket, HAI, worn over a sweatshirt, MAIN STORY.

Previous double-page spread: T-shirts, MAIN STORY. Trousers, HAI. Scarf tied around the waist, HAI. Shoes, LOEWE. Necklace, HAI.



Striped polo shirt, MAIN STORY, worn over a polo shirt, TRUE ARTIST. Skirt and shoes, BORA AKSU.

Left-hand page: Dress, CECILIE BAHNSEN. Trainers, ADIDAS.

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T-shirt, MAIN STORY. Top and embroidered skirt, CECILIE BAHNSEN. Court shoes, BORA AKSU.



Co-ord by Loewe.

Left-hand page: Organza jacket, HAI, worn over a sweatshirt, MAIN STORY.

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