

"A Conversation with: Mary Costa"
Writer/Producer: Craig Hodgkins
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Walt Disney Art Classics
March 21, 1999
Contemporary Hotel
Walt Disney World Resort; Orlando, Florida

Master Script

(Stage is set with two high-backed "throne" chairs and a small coffee table between them. Water glasses are in place on the table for Craig and Mary. A hand-held microphone is stationed next to his chair for use later in the program. Lights dim on stage and video monitor comes up full)

Video Clip: Sleeping Beauty Letterbox trailer

Sound: "Once Upon a Dream" theme (as clip ends)

(Theme plays as the screen transitions to a logo graphic)

Graphic: *A Conversation with: Mary Costa* (Main Title Card)

(Craig enters during music, index cards in hand, waving to the live audience. He hits his mark and stands center stage, then speaks directly to the audience)

Craig

Hello, everybody, my name is still Craig Hodgkins, and I'd like to thank you for coming back for yet another day of fun and frolic. This afternoon, we're all set for a fun visit with one of my favorite people on the planet, the lovely and talented Mary Costa.

Now if you're really nice, she'll talk about her fantastic career, share a few stories and answer some of your very own questions. And, as if that weren't enough to have you dancing on cloud nine – in a blue or pink dress, depending on your preference – we've added a few special surprises as only The Walt Disney Company can.

So, without further ado, please join me in welcoming Mary Costa!

Sound: "Once Upon a Dream" theme

(Theme plays as Mary enters, bows and continues until she and Craig are seated. [Conversation will be structured, but not completely scripted, in order to keep it spontaneous. Scripted portions primarily exist to provide in and out cues to video and audio portions of the show, as well as the order of events])

Craig

Well, here we are again, Mary. How are you?

Mary

(Responds. Craig and Mary chat about her family, her early performing years, how she was discovered at a party and how she auditioned for -- and won -- the role of Sleeping Beauty)

Craig

Sleeping Beauty really was the last of the great hand-inked, hand painted animated films. And it remains a favorite of many Disney fans because of the unique look created by artist Eyvind Earle, the art director on the picture.

Graphic: Eyvind Earle painting

Craig (continuing)

Because of the extra time given to the production of this film, Eyvind was able to create most of the background paintings himself, a very rare accomplishment.

Graphic: Eyvind Earle holding backgrounds

Craig (continuing)

But it also drew out the amount of time you worked on the film. How many years did it take from the time you began work on the film until you recorded your final line?

Mary

(Responds)

Craig

You were also able to work with many of the legendary Disney animators, including...

Graphic: Mary with Marc Davis

...another one of our special guests this weekend, Mr. Marc Davis. What memories can you share about working with him?

Mary

(Responds)

Craig

Graphic: Mary with Backgrounds

Of course, you were keeping pretty busy between the time you started voicing the role of Princess Aurora and the time the film premiered weren't you?

Mary

(Responds. Discusses early television and movie work, including Marry Me Again)

Craig

You know, I'll bet several of our Guests today have never seen that film. And since I promised them some surprises today, let's make one of them a short clip from *Marry Me Again*. Let's watch...

Video Clip: *Marry Me Again* excerpt

(The "A Conversation with" title card graphic returns following each video clip)

Graphic: *A Conversation with: Mary Costa* (Main Title Card)

(Following applause)

Craig

Now, that was fun. How long has it been since you've seen that?

Mary

(Responds. They chat about the early days of live television (mention kinescopes), Shower of Stars, Climax and Jack Benny; sharing hosting duties with Bill Lundigan, doing commercials, etc.)

Craig

Now, Mary, before we get too far down your career path, I'd like to sneak in a couple more of my surprises.

(To audience) Ladies and gentlemen, not only is this a surprise for you, but the next few clips are also a surprise for Mary.

(To Mary) Are you ready?

(To audience) Let's return to the days of live television. First up: A kinescope of a *Shower of Stars* program from 1956!

Video Clip: *Shower of Stars* Chrysler Commercial (boy & book) /Rory Calhoun Duet

("A Conversation with" graphic returns)

Graphic: *A Conversation with: Mary Costa* (Main Title Card)

Craig

Surprise! What do you remember about those scenes and those shows?

Mary

(Responds. They chat briefly about *Shower of Stars* and live TV in general)

Craig

I love hearing stories about those days. But you know what I love even more? This next clip! But this time I'm going to let someone a bit more qualified than me introduce you...Let's take a look.

Video Clip: *Frank Sinatra Timex Show/Intro and Mary Song*

("A Conversation with" graphic returns)

Graphic: *A Conversation with: Mary Costa (Main Title Card)*

(Following BIG applause)

Craig

Wow! That really is my favorite. It sounds like you did a little practicing between your duet with Rory Calhoun and your appearance on the Sinatra show. (Reaction) Isn't there a fun story about that Frank Sinatra show, one that involves one of his other Guests that night?

Mary

(Tells Eleanor Roosevelt story)

Graphic: *Mary with Backgrounds*

Craig

Well, Mary, through the magic of videotape, we've made it all the way to 1959. And although *Sleeping Beauty* hadn't even been released yet, your serious opera career was well underway.

It really amazes me how far your career had progressed from the time you recorded the voice of Princess Aurora to the time the film was finally released. Where were you performing when the film finally premiered in January of '59?

Mary

(At the Paris opera house. They chat about her opera career, her favorite roles, and various stories)

Craig

So after touring the world with various opera companies throughout the 1960s, the 1970s found you back in the USA as well as returning to the big screen. Tell us a bit about the film project that brought you back to a theater near us.

Mary

(Tells about The Great Waltz)

Craig

I would be remiss if I didn't provide a little visual accompaniment for your story. Let's take a quick peek at a scene from The Great Waltz...

Video Clip: The Great Waltz excerpt

(“A Conversation with” graphic returns)

Graphic: A Conversation with: Mary Costa (Main Title Card)

(Following applause)

Craig

I was just singing that in the shower this morning. When did you “officially” retire from the stage? And what have you been doing lately?

Mary

(Retired to help with mother. Talks about Knoxville, Child Help USA, and other recent topics and events)

Craig

Well, I think this is a good time to take a few questions from our very patient audience. So, with your indulgence, I'll grab this microphone and head out into the crowd.

(Craig takes hand-held microphone from the floor next to his chair and walks into the audience, speaking as he does so. As Craig handles audience questions, Mary remains on stage to answer)

(During the question and answer period, a table with draped product is moved to the stage near Mary)

(Craig makes way through audience, fielding questions, for a maximum of 10 minutes)

Craig

(As he re-joins Mary on stage)

Mary, we have one more responsibility for you before we let you go today. I'm sure in your role as a Disney princess you have become used to these official tasks, but we could think of no one more perfect to unveil this exciting new product, which has never been seen in public before.

But before we see the new piece, let's take a look at the film moment that inspired it...

Video Clip: Three fairies and the dress

Craig

(As clip plays, Mary and Craig rise and move to the table with Sleeping Beauty dress product under drapery. Craig stands opposite Mary behind the table to assist. Mary and Craig to adlib, if needed. Theme continues as she lifts the product covering. When it is completely uncovered, product shot appears on video screen. Theme continues under)

Graphic: Product Slide of Sleeping Beauty Dress

(Following applause as theme fades out)

Craig

There it is, ladies and gentlemen, Sleeping Beauty's dress [get official title] viewed here at The Walt Disney World Resort for the first time ever in public. And thank you, Mary, for making it all possible.

[Craig to share product details and plussing]

Craig

Well, Mary, as always, it has been an indescribable pleasure to visit with you. I hope you and all of our Guests here today enjoyed our video surprises. And thank you so much for sharing some of your memories with us today.

(Mary exits through the curtain, waving good-bye to the crowd)

(To audience) Folks, that's about all we have time for, but I do want to remind you about the public signing sessions taking place this afternoon at the Animation Gallery at The Disney/MGM studios. The first will be from 2:00pm to 3:30pm, and the second will start at 5:00pm and end at 6:30pm. Mary will be joining you, as will Marc Davis, Kathryn Beaumont and sculptor Patrick Simmons.

But first, before you storm the exits, I'd like to call back to the stage our new Vice President and General Manager of Walt Disney Art Classics, Paul Phillips.

(Paul rises and joins Craig on-stage. Craig hands Paul the hand-held microphone. Craig steps downstage of Paul as he speaks)

Paul

Thank you Craig. (To audience) I sincerely hope you had a great time today, and throughout the entire weekend. Did you enjoy yourselves? (Audience responds)

Your response is very encouraging, for – as you all know – this is our first-ever Walt Disney Art Classics collectors convention. And since this is the final scheduled program of the weekend, I wanted to take time to thank you for your on-going support of our business. It has been a personal pleasure to meet and to talk with so many of you over the past three days, and I look forward to meeting more of you in the future.

Paul (continued)

I'd like to encourage you to attend the public signing sessions later this afternoon that Craig just mentioned, as well as the motorcade and handprint ceremony featuring Marc, Mary and Kathryn at the Disney/MGM studios. That special event will take place from 4:30pm – 5:00pm.

Thank you all for coming. (To Craig) Any final words, Craig?

Craig

(To Paul) Just thirty-five or so.

(To audience) On behalf of Paul Phillips and Walt Disney Art Classics, I thank you for your kind attention, both today and throughout the weekend! We'll see you at the signing session and the parade!

Sound: "Once Upon a Dream" theme (as audience stands and exits)