

Type

Sound:, WAV

Duration

00:00:00

Project

Pass it On – Oral History Project for the Chichester Festival Theatre

Recording Date

13 July 2014

Recording locations

Interviewee's home

Interviewees

Adrian Whitaker (speaker, male)

Interviewers

Karen Robinson (speaker, female)

Abstract

Adrian Whitaker born in 1954. Brief description of starting work at Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) as a stage-hand in 1973, and stayed for 28 years. Description of the work involved, mainly changing scenery, [02:40] but also painting the building. [03:20] Comments his first Artistic Director was John Clements [JC], and first play was Anouilh's 'Director of the Opera', with JC acting and Peter Dews directing.[04:30] Remarks that JC then left, to be replaced by Keith Michell as Artistic Director. Mentions structure of the season, 23 weeks consisting of four plays. Remarks Production Manager Bill Green promoted him to making props, in Minerva Studios in Eastgate Square. [09:00] Mentions later work transferred to wooden building on theatre site. Brief description of making and acquiring props. Description of the work growing as fringe productions took place in Dolphin and Anchor Hotel in the 1970s, and at New Park Road, and in the tent erected opposite CFT. [18:00] Remarks that once the new Minerva Theatre [MT] was built the props workshop was in that building, but had to be quiet when performances or rehearsals were taking place. Mentions working on 'A Patriot for Me', 'Dandy Dick' with Alastair Sim, 'Underneath the Arches'. [23:00] Mentions problems with 'Therese Raquin' and an exploding pudding in 'O Kay'. [24:00]. Mentions working well with production manager Chris Bush Bailey, and leaving the theatre shortly after his death, when financial situation was difficult. Remarks that money for props limited as sets and costumes took priority.[27:00] Description of working on 'The Scarlet Pimpernel', and making severed heads on poles, by taking casts of actors' faces. [36:00] Brief description of working with guns in 'Annie get your Gun' and

'Treasure Island' [39:00]. Mentions 'A Man for all Seasons' designed by Julia Trevelyan Oman, wife of Sir Roy Strong. [42:00] Remarks that in certain plays one knows what props are needed, caskets in 'Merchant of Venice', a clock in 'Three Sisters', a barometer in 'Hay Fever'. Mentions co-production with Sheffield Theatre of 'School for Scandal', [45:00] and how when 'The Mitford Girls' and other productions moved on to other theatres, scenery had to be adapted. Description of working at set design for the new Youth Theatre productions under Kate Vaughan. Worked on 'The Boyfriend', 'The Good Doctor', 'Wild Oats', 'Youngest Shepherd'. Mentions designers has worked with, Carl Toms, Saul Radomsky, Simon Higlett, Finlay James, Pamela Howard, [48:00] Peter Rice. Comments on the increasing use of machinery in the management of scenery, compared with physical tasks in the early days. Comments that this is an attempt to copy film technology, and that old 'magic of the theatre sleight of hand' is preferable to 'throwing money at it'. [58:00]