**Type**

Sound: WAV

**Duration**

00:52:15

**Project**

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

**Recording Date**

9 May 2014

**Recording locations**

Interviewee’s home

**Interviewee**

Roger Redfarn (speaker, male)

**Interviewer**

Karen Robinson (speaker, female)

**Abstract**

Roger Redfarn [RR] lives near Chichester. Anecdote about attending first night performances directed by Sir Lawrence Olivier [LO] and commented that Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) has always remained a very special theatre space, the shape of the auditorium and the actor-audience relationship. Remarked on great productions with little scenery but great actors ‘ Uncle Vanya’ with Michael Redgrave and LO, ‘The Madness of King George the Third’ with David Haig. (3:00) Description of RR training at drama school, then stage management, working in Wales and Coventry. Comments in the 1980s and 1990s he was Artistic Director of the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. Anecdote of working with Patrick Garland at CFT on ‘Underneath the Arches’ a celebration of the work of the Crazy Gang in the music hall, with Chesney Allan, Roy Hudd and Christopher Timothy (6:00) Describes Crazy Gang cast playing tricks on audience in intervals. (12:00) Remarks that ‘Underneath the Arches’ and ‘The Mitford Girls’ successfully transferred to London. Anecdote of rehearsals for ‘The Cherry Orchard’ and ‘Underneath the Arches’ running at the same time with alternate scenery changes. (18:00) Describes directing productions in other theatres in early career, including musicals. Remarks knowing Andrew Welch at Plymouth and was asked to direct musicals at CFT. Mentions producing 'Song of Singapore' a jazz musical in the Minerva (27:00) Comments that in ‘Terra Nova’, about Scott in the Antarctic, clever lighting and white sheeting created the Antarctic on stage. Describes a life sized camel on stage in ‘Nymph Errant’. Mentions community productions ‘The Barchester Chronicles’ and ‘The Devil's Dancing Hour’ with casts of hundreds of amateur actors. Describes the work of a Director. Comments the Director’s first duty is to the playwright, reading and interpreting the play, choosing actors, designers and stage management. (33:00) Anecdote of creativity of opening scene of ‘Barchester Chronicles’ with the funeral of the bishop. Describes outstanding memories of CFT of ‘Uncle Vanya’ with Sybil Thorndyke and Fay Compton, ‘Terra Nova’ and ‘The Madness of George the Third’ and the whole ambience of the auditorium and picnicking in the park. (42:00) Remarks that staff who were very helpful during his time at CFT, Gypsy Maddigan with accommodation for the cast, Adrian in props. Janet Edwards, House Manager, and Patrick meeting the audience in the foyer and a remarkable lady Mrs Kemp. Comments on family atmosphere in staffing. (45:00) Funny anecdote involving Fenella Fielding and Bertice Reading. Comments that audiences are more relaxed now with whole families attending, rather than the dressy occasions of past years. (51:00)