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| **Interview data sheet:** Behind the Scenes Project |
| **Ref no:** THM/258  **WAV files ref:**  |
| **Collection title:** Behind the scenes: saving and sharing Cambridge Arts Theatre’s Archive**Interviewee’s surname:** Moar **Title:** Mr**Interviewee’s forename(s):** Danny**Gender:** Male**Occupation:** Chief Executive of Theatre Royal Bath |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):** **Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre**Name of interviewer:** Dale Copley**Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV**Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:20:38**Mono/Stereo:** Stereo |
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| **Interviewer’s comments:** | None |
| **Abstract:** | As an undergraduate student at the University of Cambridge Danny Moar stood outside the stage door of the Arts Theatre and thought what a lovely job it would be to work in a professional theatre in a beautiful city like Cambridge... Today he is Chief Executive of Theatre Royal Bath and a prolific drama producer.Moar explains his earliest memories of Cambridge and his involvement with student theatre as an undergraduate. He outlines his theatre career. As a drama producer who regularly tours work to Cambridge, he explains the process by which a new production reaches the Arts Theatre stage. As Chief Executive of Theatre Royal Bath he explores the similarities and differences between Theatre Royal Bath and Cambridge Arts Theatre.  |
| **Key words:** | The Preston Society, Trinity Hall College, Clare College, Theatre Royal Bath, Sam Mendes, National Theatre, Trevor Nunn, Richard Eyre, Peter Hall, Nicholas Hytner, ADC, Molière, *The Miser,* Sherlock Holmes, Corpus Playroom, Footlights, The Marlowe Society, The Greek Play, Southbank Centre, Salisbury Playhouse, Blackpool Grand Theatre, Dave Murphy, Malvern, Michael Frayn, *Noises Off*, Lindsay Posner, Felicity Kendal, Richmond, Brighton, CRF |
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| **00.00** | **You studied at Cambridge?** |
|  | Danny Moar studied English at Clare College Cambridge from 1984-1987. |
| **00:18** | **Were you involved in student theatre?** |
|  | Moar describes a period between school and coming up to Cambridge as an undergraduate, he did a play (‘A Pinter [Harold Pinter] double bill’) at the Trinity Hall lecture theatre, supported by The Preston Society, an opportunity he found via a friend of his sister. [Ed: The Preston Society funds and organises student theatrical productions within Trinity Hall].  |
| **01:20** | **When you got here, who were you working with?** |
|  | Sam Mendes was a contemporary, ‘by the end of the first year it was pretty clear he was amazing’, a designer Tom Piper whom Moar has subsequently worked with in Bath. Julian Murphy who now works in TV production. Pippa Harris. ‘Everyone was just doing their thing’. |
| **02:01** | **And was it exciting coming into that…** |
|  | Moar describes this period of his life as incredibly exciting, he believes it explains why all the people who have run the National Theatre ‘from Trevor Nunn, to Richard Eyre, to Peter Hall, to Nicholas Hytner all read English at Cambridge, because the opportunities were amazing’. The collegiate system in particular created opportunities. |
| **02:40** | **And you put on plays at the ADC?** |
|  | Moar did two plays at the ADC, a Molière play called *The Miser*, and a Sherlock Holmes play which Moar co-authored.   |
| **02:59** | **And were you aware of the Arts Theatre during that period?** |
|  | Moar said the Arts Theatre ‘didn’t really register at all’ in his student experience. The hierarchy of performing houses was; the ADC, the Corpus Playroom, Trinty Hall. The Arts was either not in the hierarchy or was so elevated as to not be considered. Moar knew of the Footlights and The Marlowe Society and maybe The Greek Play who did productions at the Arts Theatre. ‘We were, as young people are, just obsessed with ourselves’.  |
| **03:48** | **After graduating from university, you went on to build a career in the theatre, can you give us a quick overview?** |
|  | Moar described how his route to the Theatre ‘was not straightforward’. By his third year he was weary of student theatre and considered an alternative career in advertising, ‘I just wanted a Next suit and briefcase’. After a year he missed the arts and went back to work as a Sponsorship Manager at the Southbank Centre in London, got fed up with that and went back into advertising, got fed up with that… ‘a muddled twenty something year old’. At 26/27 he got a job as Marketing Director at Salisbury Playhouse and felt like he ‘was home’ and knew theatre was what he wanted to do with his life.  |
| **05:23** | **When did you come to Theatre Royal Bath?** |
|  | Moar started at Theatre Royal Bath in 1997. He went from Salisbury Playhouse to Marketing Director at Sadlers Wells. In his late twenties he decided he really wanted to run a theatre. After a couple of unsuccessful applications but eventually ended up at the Blackpool Grand Theatre which he ran for two or three years before moving to Theatre Royal Bath.  |
| **05:52** | **During this period were you aware of the Cambridge Arts Theatre? Did it cross your path?** |
|  | Moar described that as an undergraduate he had stood outside the stage door of the Arts Theatre and thought about how to work in a professional theatre in a lovely city like Cambridge must be the best job in the world. So already ‘the seed was sown’. But at Blackpool he had little time to think about other theatres as it was a difficult theatre to run. |
| **07:09** | **How do we get from there then, to where we are today, where we know Theatre Royal Bath as a close collaborator and you bring lots of productions to Cambridge, how do we start to work more closely together?** |
|  | Moar described how Bath did not produce much when he took it over. He wanted to start producing drama and so looked for other venues with a strong drama audience. Bath. Cambridge. Chichester. Moar brought shows to Cambridge Arts Theatre before [current Chief Executive] Dave Murphy was in post. He described it as a ‘muddly place’. He remembered an awful instance where a show he produced was double booked with another show at Cambridge Arts Theatre, and the contracts all had to be unpicked, an unusual occurrence in a theatre where those producing, and programming are usually hyper conscious to the risk of double booking. In Moar’s opinion since Dave Muphy has taken over the theatre Cambridge Arts Theatre has been good business, actors want to come to Cambridge, ‘it’s a nice theatre, a beautiful city, and it is close to London and that is crucial’. Moar likes to send shows here because they look good on the Arts Stage. If press cannot review his shows at Bath he always suggests they come to Cambridge.  |
| **10:34** | **Can you talk us through the process of producing a show, from your conception to it appearing on our stage?** |
|  | Moar explained the starting point is what sells well in Bath, ‘classic plays glossily cast’ and this probably also sells well in Cambridge and Malvern and the other places Moar sends plays to… He described the process with an upcoming production of Michael Frayn’s *Noises Off*. Moar had been trying for many years to get the rights to the production, not helped by some old animosity between Theatre Royal Bath and Frayn. Moar described how at Bath they generally work with a team of creatives known to them. In this case, the director Lindsay Posner, had previously done a celebrated production of the play and suggested the title, so the rights were secured with Posner already attached. When casting the play, Moar described how you look for actors who ‘you know can do it, but also who you can get to, so you aren’t going to be sitting there for six months waiting for them to say yes or no’. In this case Felicity Kendal was a natural fit, Posner approached Kendal and the tour was designed around Kendal’s availability and other commitments. Bath [Theatre Royal], Richmond [Theatre London] because it is near where Kendal lives, and two more weeks. Moar suggested Cambridge and she said yes for all the reasons mentioned above. The final week of the tour will be to Brighton. Every show from a visiting producer on the Arts Theatre stage will be a version of that scenario, ‘It will be a producer lining up, the rights to a play, the director, the star, and booking the tour.’ Moar says commercial theatre has to make money. |
| **14:11** | **And how does our Chief Executive Dave Murphy end up saying ‘yes’, how does it work with a producer and a chief executive?** |
|  | Moar explains when programming you would normally have five or six producers who are trusted, both for the quality of the production but also that the shows will happen. Theatre Royal Bath and Cambridge Arts Theatre have a standing deal which sometimes is complicated if there is a co-producer involved. The process is made simpler by the longstanding relationship between Moar and Dave Murphy, ‘it is a shorthand’. When programming a season of 12 weeks, you might have 5 or 6 shows which you really want and which you fix, and then you try to fill the gaps. |
| **16:54** | **Any differences between Cambridge Arts Theatre and Theatre Royal Bath?** |
|  | Theatre Royal Bath has a studio theatre and a children’s theatre alongside the main auditorium and so a bigger staff. They produce more.  |
| **17:49** | **We have all been through the COVID pandemic, how have the last three years been? Is there anything which is different post the pandemic?**  |
|  | Moar suggested strong theatres are still strong. The weaker theatres are struggling to come back. Business, audiences, are not quite at pre-pandemic levels but they are not bad. The bigger problem is the supply line of producers. Moar believed theatres like Bath and Cambridge should not moan, they had lots of public money. CRF [DCMS/ACE Culture Recovery Fund], all the furlough money – it was harder for commercial producers. As a result, there is less available to put on the stage. As a result, Moar and Theatre Royal Bath are producing more than ever before with thirteen shows currently committed to. It has been necessary to produce so much to plug the gap.  |
| **19:43** | **And do you think the recovery will happen, it will just take a long time?** |
|  | Moar believes it will. Medium to long term it is positive. In March 2020, at the point we locked down, theatre was incredibly buoyant, and that appetite is still there. Live entertainment is valued. It will just take time for audiences to recover.  |
|  | **ENDS** |