



Cambridge Arts Theatre

Interview data sheet: Behind the Scenes Project

Ref no: THM/258

Collection title: Behind the scenes: saving and sharing Cambridge Arts Theatre's Archive

Interviewee's surname: Swarbrick

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forename(s): Andy

Gender: Male

Occupation:

Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to): 07/01/2020

Location of interview: Cambridge Arts Theatre

Name of interviewer: Caitlin O'Dell

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Interviewer's comments: None

Abstract: Board member, Andy Swarbrick leads the Theatre's audit committee. He describes the role of a board member, reflects on the Theatre's successful Foyer Project (2013) and looks forward to a future project undertaking essential improvement works to the Theatre's auditorium.

Key words:	Dave Murphy, Carter Jones, Ian Mathers, Foyer Project, Auditorium Project
File	CATOH2020Swarbrick
00.00	Swarbrick moved to Cambridge in 1975 after university. He came to the theatre often and in 2011 he was asked by Dave Murphy to come onto the board, to offer financial knowledge, and has been a member for 9 years.
01.22	He says that the theatre has become more professional. Swarbrick says that the theatre is historically a receiving house, and other than the pantomime didn't do any of their own productions. He notes that in the last couple years the theatre has tried to do its own productions, which have been successful. Swarbrick hopes in the future more will be done, because the stock of productions from elsewhere is limited. He says that the theatre is often unable to fill certain weeks, and having their own productions gives them greater flexibility.
02.33	Swarbrick recalls seeing Shakespeare at the Arts, as well as <i>The Winslow Boy</i> and <i>An Inspector Calls</i> . He notes his passion is Opera, which is put on a couple times a year. Swarbrick recalls attending the Greek play a couple times, which he thinks is entrepreneurial for the theatre to put on. He says the most memorable show he has seen was <i>Mary, Queen of Scots</i> . Swarbrick commends Dave Murphy for encouraging west end shows to come to the theatre, which has been happening for the last 10yrs.
03.40	He describes the variety of people who sit on the board. Swarbrick believes it is a strong board.
04.15	Swarbrick recalls the refurbishment 25yrs ago and describes it as lifesaving for the theatre. He says the project on the foyer was excellent, as before that it was too cramped and put people off from using the bars. He says they are much more accessible now. Swarbrick recalls the board discussing the restaurant on the 4 th floor, which fell out of use as there are lots of restaurants in Cambridge. He believes the foyer project was a great success.
05.41	He notes that the operatic touring company has an obscure repertoire, which sometimes annoys him as it puts people off. Swarbrick recalls that the operas sell well as there is an audience for them in Cambridge. He brings his grandchildren to the pantomime, and often goes to the gala nights also. Swarbrick says that it has created a reputation for itself and has grown year on year. He notes it appeals to all ages and has become a Cambridge Institution.
07.21	He described the 2020 pantomime <i>Cinderella</i> and the Theatre's purchase of a pantomime horse. His work on expanding the Theatre's corporate partners including, Oliver Dixon [Dixon Phillips LLP], Carter Jonas . The importance of a diverse programme for attracting a broad audience.
11.52	Swarbrick complements the Theatre staff on their passion and commitment.
13.00	He describes the commitment required of a board member and the nature of the role, meetings and away days, committee meetings, agendas. He complements the quality of the board

	and Chair, Ian Mathers . Swarbrick has been on the board 9 years.
	He describes the Foyer Project and the challenges of fundraising. The risks associated with the Theatre being dark.
15.57	He describes the need for the forthcoming Auditorium project.
16.45	He describes the development of the Foyer Project and fundraising initiatives including a dinner on stage. Although Cambridge is an affluent place there are lots of calls on funds, reflects fundraising for Arthur Rank where he is also a board member was easier!
19.48	Dine on stage was a success as part of this fundraising campaign. Friends of the Theatre were invited to bring guests who might contribute to the campaign, and places were easily filled. The stage was well dressed and people dressed up.
21.45	Described the fundraising approach to the forthcoming Auditorium project. Trusts and foundations will lead. Swarbrick was relieved when the Foyer project was scaled back. As Chair of the audit committee he is concerned that the Theatre does not overstretch themselves.
25.30	Swarbrick describes the Theatre's plans for the fifth floor and the possibility of a studio theatre. The Auditorium project is 'key for the next 25 years of the Theatre'. The build will be spread over 3 years –during this period the Theatre will be dark (nothing on the stage).
28.00	Describes financial management at the Theatre.
28.48	The problems of attracting an audience back after a closed period. The Theatre really picked up after Dave Murphy came to run it. 15 years ago.
30.00	'We are in a good place and we intend to stay there. Cambridge needs a good Theatre'.
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