



Cambridge Arts Theatre

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Interviewee's surname: Hupe

Title: Ms

Interviewee's forename(s): Nicky

Gender: Female

Occupation: Head of Development

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Abstract: Current Head of Development, Nicky Hupe reflects on her career at the Theatre. Beginning in a box office and front of house role, Nicky spent 15 years in marketing and communications before moving to grow the Theatre's new fundraising team. Nicky joined the Theatre following its

	reopening in 1996, she remembers the challenges associated with joining the team after a major capital redevelopment. She speaks candidly about the unique skills needed when working as part of a small and dedicated staff team. She remembers some favourite performances and memorable Theatre events and discusses the importance of the annual pantomime.
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00.30	Nicky has been at the theatre for 23 years. She started after university and took half and half job in box office/front of house. After 6 months she moved into marketing assistant and stayed in marketing for 12-15yrs. She was promoted to marketing and design officer. Nicky did design training and became the in-house graphic designer. She took on the role of head of marketing for 10yrs. Then got married and had children and began to work part-time. She moved into fundraising and is currently head of development.
02.30	Nicky didn't begin thinking about a career in theatre. The opportunity came up and she took it. It was a surprise to her that someone thought she had the skills to do that job. When in marketing it felt like it was where she should be. Nicky loves the arts and being around creative people, but she doesn't want to be on stage. It was fantastic to see how a business worked around a creative industry. Nicky's background is more in visual arts
04.28	Nicky really remembers her first impressions. The theatre was very different. It was part of a collection; the arts theatre, the arts cinema and the festival theatre. The theatre had been closed for 5yrs in the 1990s for a refurbishment – the whole theatre was demolished and rebuilt as they had been given a multi-million-pound Lottery grant. The theatre had been running on skeleton staff. They had a huge recruitment drive for the reopening in 1996. There was quite a lot of new people. Nicky's time was divided between the arts theatre and the arts cinema. The two businesses were quite different. For Nicky it felt like an exciting place to be. There were interesting people doing jobs she never knew existed. She has great memories. Her first boss was Viv Mayne who was the box office manager across theatre and cinema. Viv was very experienced and ran a tight ship. She knew everything about box office. They were an organised team of like-minded people, mostly students. Ray Cross was the head of operations. Nicky and Ray didn't interact

	<p>day-to-day, but he was a big part of the theatre. Nicky was fascinated by all things technical. Ray worked on pantomimes and student productions until only a few years ago. He still comes in for various events. Nicky thinks it is lovely to see people who are still involved in some way. Rachel Parslew was the theatre director when she started.</p>
08.17	<p>In the early days the actual box office wasn't ready. The cinema was moved and sold eventually and is now the Arts Picturehouse, originally what is now B Bar. It was a very old building with an old-fashioned box office with glass turntables (money turns one way and ticket turns the other). Nicky found it quaint even then. She would do that for one day/half a day and then move to the Arts Theatre. The theatre didn't have a box office. It had a table with boxes of money and hand rolled PDQ machines and a pile of tickets. They ran a manual box office for the first couple weeks until a computer system was in place. It was behind schedule. The temporary box office was in what was going to be a little coffee shop. Nicky went from one extreme to the other. She remembers customers coming in desperate to know what had been done with the money and the time. Nicky wasn't here whilst it was shut. She remembers the theatre restaurant, but theatre wasn't a big part of her family life, so she didn't have the same awareness. Everything was new to her so Nicky didn't have the same expectations. It was a brilliant place to start a career in theatre as she was working with the people and customers, selling ice creams and programs. Nicky enjoyed being in the throng of it and feeling the excitement build every night.</p>
12.35	<p>The marketing manager was new into her role as the marketing managers who had seen the closure left after the theatre reopened. It was the previous marketing assistant who had been promoted. Nicky didn't know her well. She wanted Nicky to apply for the marketing assistant role. Nicky assumed there would be lots of people applying but they didn't have a plan for anyone else. The role was offered to Nicky. She didn't know what it meant and had no experience in marketing. Her hours changed and an office-based job was an appeal. Nicky jumped at it with little knowledge. She realised you do tasks to the best of your ability. Nicky didn't have to plan work at the time, she was given tasks. It was direct marketing mostly, stuffing envelopes and putting up posters and giving out flyers. Nicky mailed 6-8,000 letters every week and each one was done by hand. At brochure time the theatre produced 40-50,000 brochure and each one was stuffed by hand. She would sit in the middle table of office doing this, with all the administration of the theatre surrounding her. Nicky felt like a crucial part of the team. She picked it up without realising. It happened</p>

	<p>organically. Nicky felt more of a part of the theatre in this role. She could overhear the entire process of a show (booking, sell, promotion, sponsorship, customer interaction). Nicky recognises that you don't get that as a front-line member of staff. In the office you must spend time with the audience to fill in the gaps. The theatre now works hard to ensure all the staff feels informed. If there was a mistake in an already printed brochure, she had to put the correct information in every brochure by hand and then mail it.</p>
19.53	<p>Nicky forgets what happened when. The theatre had a new chief executive from another theatre which had had an in-house design department. The theatre increasingly needed graphic design. The theatre paid for Nicky to do a course in photoshop and design. The theatre bought a high-spec mac computer and asked Nicky to design the brochure. The theatre cancelled external designers. It was a huge project (pull together all the artwork, liaise with the programming team, get the copy, lay it out, proof it). Nicky thinks that it was not the greatest design, but she is still proud of it. She had nobody to turn to as nobody else had the skills. Nicky felt proud to have this big responsibility as the brochure is a key part of marketing tools. The 2001/2002 brochure was Nicky's first. She did this for years. Computers were relatively new. They didn't have an email system and Nicky had to set this up and find out how to use it. She was right on deadline for the brochure and Nicky's computer had a black question mark. The theatre had inhouse IT support from someone in the box office who had extra skills, but she didn't know what had happened. They called in favours and got someone to come in to check the computer. Nicky was told the mac had died. The theatre didn't have a back-up system at the time. Nicky worked through the night and all through the day. She got it to print. It now seems madness (she would ask for a delay). But she decided her best plan of action would be to redo it</p>
25.42	<p>Technology was here when Nicky got to the theatre. They had only just starting to build a website. Nicky didn't use computers at university, she had learnt everything on paper. The working industry had been ahead of this, using computers and CAD and other design systems. Nicky felt out of step as a generation. At the theatre computers were used as glorified word processors. They wrote memos, had fax machines. Early on at the theatre it was decided that email was needed. Nicky can't comment on how the theatre was relative to other businesses.</p>
27.52	<p>Nicky kept up design skills for a long time. Every one of her jobs since has used these skills. She does less now. In marketing she kept her design skills up, but it became a lesser focus of job.</p>

	<p>She recruited someone else to work alongside her when she was promoted to head of marketing.</p>
<p>28.48</p>	<p>The marketing manager at the time was a good friend. Nicky was asked round for dinner and was told that she was leaving. Nicky was worried about someone new coming in. Her friend thought that Nicky should take on role of head of marketing. It hadn't occurred to Nicky that running a department was a plan. She didn't feel like she had much of a choice at the time. She was really flattered but nervous and didn't understand how her friend had done her role. She saw a lot of responsibility and stress. It was a huge step from her previous role. In other jobs she had always had a team who had been through similar things before. Nicky felt there were big expectations. She was on the senior management team, employed staff and had a team of people. Nicky thinks there was a challenge of looking after people and the targets that she was responsible for. She had been a part of all this previously but not responsible for it. She was grateful for the opportunity. She didn't do a great job to begin with and made massive mistakes. Nicky thinks it was a risk of the theatre to promote her. She realised that she could step into these jobs if she wanted them, and that she should think about what she wanted to do. Nicky realised she was more capable than she realised. Nicky did this role for 10yrs. Her methods of running at start and end were opposite. Ian Ross the chief executive at the time was very supportive and encouraging. Nicky felt huge pressure, but thinks she employed brilliant people and created a great marketing team. Nicky learnt to love marketing. She made amazing contacts externally and got support from other theatres. Nicky built a proper professional network to rely on and forced herself to step up</p>
<p>34.20</p>	<p>Nicky's promotion changed her perspective of the theatre. She thinks that it is easy to be frustrated by decisions that are made that are out of your control, and it is easy to feel like you're not understood, and the amount of work is not realised in a team. The theatre had fantastic managers. The staff were working longer hours than they were employed to do, which Nicky thinks comes with the job and type of person. She had a reality check in this new role with responsibility and accountability. Nicky had to make difficult decisions (what to spend time on) and knew that her actions were going to have an impact on the people, staff or quality of work. Nicky realises that people don't see that until they are in a role of responsibility. She had to become more comfortable, get tougher and had to be robust. They were a small team, there was not a lot of resource or people to rely on. It was harder than Nicky expected. She was not prepared for carrying the responsibility by working as a team</p>

36.59	Nicky says there are benefits of having been here a long time and working her way up so that she can appreciate every step. She knows how a decision she makes is going to affect members of different teams, which is good because it helps inform decisions. Nicky recognises that it can make her overthink and falter. She wouldn't have this awareness in other jobs at other places. It is the only way Nicky knows how to do her job. The Arts Theatre is the only place she has ever worked. It helps her do her job better. Nicky knows it has its downsides as it makes her worry about everyone.
38.38	Nicky remembers her staff, the different people, the teams of people and the different combinations. It changed every time. The department was usually her with 2 or 3 people, having one change of staff really changed the dynamic. Nicky likes recruiting people, getting the right people, and being able to spot the kind of person who is going to work out in the department. The team is so reliant on each other. Nicky is nostalgic about the team. She remembers small moments when they felt like they really smashed it
39.47	Nicky thinks that marketing pantomime is the biggest job. It is a huge project for the marketing team. Pantomime is 5/6 weeks of theatre. They are given huge targets and there is big pressure. The theatre relies on the income of the panto every year. It is the biggest thing that they do. There is such an energy around the theatre at this time of year. The whole place is focused on the pantomime. The staff have enough time to put work in in a different way to most of the shows. The show is run week to week. They are given much bigger budgets for pantomime. The theatre attend the Cambridge lights switch on every year. The city council do an event to turn on the lights for the city and invite a celebrity or somebody local to switch on the lights. Nicky and her department spent years trying to get one of the pantos cast to switch on the lights but were always turned down in favour of someone from a boy band. She thought they'd try their own tack. Nicky worked with Claire in the marketing team who was renowned for getting stuff done. She contacted the local fire brigade as they had thought about how to get into the market square which is cornered off and heaving with people. They were not allowed on the balcony at Guildhall. The department phoned the fire brigade and asked for a fire truck that night, and the fire brigade said yes. The theatre and the fire department had worked together before as Claire had a friend there. The truck drove into the middle of the market square. The theatre had on standby the dame and 2 other cast in full costume and make-up. They gave them a loud hailer and the cast got into the cherry-picker. They were lifted to the height of the balcony at Guildhall and when they started

	<p>counting the Dame started shouting information about the Pantomime at the Cambridge arts theatre. They totally drew focus. Nicky remembers the photograph on the front of the Cambridge evening news, in which everybody was looking at the fire truck with the panto dame. It is one of her funniest memories. The theatre did get a serious complaint from the City council, but Nicky thinks it was worth it</p>
43.03	<p>Nicky says that pantomime was always big business. There used to be a pantomime at the Corn Exchange, and when she started at the theatre it was a competing pantomime. The Corn Exchange was soap star led, but the Cambridge arts was more traditional. Nicky remembers it being very competitive. She recalls that the corn exchange changed their format and began to do Christmas shows instead. The Cambridge Arts became the main pantomime. Nicky thinks they put on a fantastic pantomime, really good quality. She says it is such a big focus point of the theatre. A lot of money needed to be raised or earn to keep the theatre going. Nicky thinks it was a massive focus for everybody at the theatre and that it had always been like that. She thinks that some years were more successful than others, and some shows more successful than others. The theatre is absorbed in panto currently. Nicky says it is a culmination of everything they do. There is a huge celebratory gala every year, which Nicky thinks is a lovely celebration when it goes well. She says that it is a lot of work, but the best comes out in everybody. Nicky says that everything is more; bigger targets, more money to raise and to earn. She says that the marketing campaigns are the same (advertising, direct mail, radios, tv, press). Nicky says that they must get it right.</p>
46.24	<p>Nicky remembers lots of big names coming to the theatre. The names that stand out are: Helen Mirren who Nicky had known from the television programme <i>Prime Suspect</i>, she was not the Hollywood star she is now; Andrew Lincoln who Nicky remembers from his role in <i>This Life</i>, and she was impressed to meet him; David Suchet; Alison Steadman. Nicky was meeting these people every single week when she was in marketing; taking them to interviews, meeting them after shows. She says that she didn't get used to it. Nicky says that it was part of the weekly routine, so she was not always particularly starstruck. She says that lots of people are different and surprising. She says that she has an idea of what they will be, but almost always they are nothing like that at all, and that sometimes the big stars are the most down to earth people. Nicky says that sometimes it's the other way around, and stars can be quite difficult. She appreciates that they have lots of demands with their time and that interviews aren't always what they want to be doing. In her role Nicky thinks that you must be able to deal</p>

	<p>with some of the challenges of the actors and everybody involved in the shows. She says that her job is always interesting and varied. When working in the admin side of things she was not as involved with the actors, so didn't have as much time with them. Nicky says that she remembers it as being at the Theatre and the stars she's met rather than individuals.</p>
50.29	<p>After Nicky got married and was pregnant with her first child - she remembers talking to the Chief Executive Dave Murphy about plans and what to do in the future. After her maternity leave she initially came back as head of marketing. Nicky recalls that it was difficult to juggle, and it was quite a change. She had previously given a huge amount of time into the job. Nicky came back 3 days and eventually went up to 4 days. Nicky was working out what she wanted to do and Dave working out what he wanted the theatre to do. The theatre had to think about fundraising more seriously. The theatre had always had a fundraising function. The theatre had had a membership manager for some time and employed various people to do a fundraising role. The theatre thought over a number of years to work out what fundraising was needed. Nicky remembers that funds for theatres was becoming less and less. The Cambridge Arts was no longer an Arts Council England 'portfolio organisation', so they had to think about how to raise money themselves to support the theatre. Dave was thinking about what the fundraising department might look like and talked about Nicky's role changing to communications and fundraising. The theatre had plans to work on the building, improve foyer spaces. Nicky stepped into a part-time role. Al Morley had been interested in a cover role for maternity. Al became head of marketing full time, and Nicky moved into communications manager. Her role spanned fundraising and marketing. It developed into a formal role in the development team. The department appointed a head of fundraising, who suggested that they should create roles (fundraising for individuals and fundraising for corporates). Corporates was more in line with Nicky's experience in marketing. That was the background of the head of marketing at the time, so Nicky knew she would be well supported. It took Nicky a while to settle into a role. She was in corporate fundraising for 2/3 years. Nicky remembers staff changes in the department at the time. The Theatre had had a couple different development directors. It had taken Nicky a while to move across from marketing. She wasn't totally sure it was the right thing but found it interesting doing something new. Nicky transferred her skills from marketing and learnt new things. She liked being part of a new element of the theatre. Nicky thought it was such</p>

	<p>a crucial part to build on. She wasn't sure about heading the department and had a lot of concerns. When the opportunity came up Nicky went for it. She felt more prepared this time. Nicky had seen the challenges with the role and thought she knew what this theatre needed. Nicky says it is hard to reflect on this as it is her current role</p>
56.55	<p>The theatre run events for businesses. The theatre holds events for clients, including a reception and then meet the cast. Sir Ian McKellen came on his 80th birthday tour last May (2018), and it fell to Nicky's department to put on an event for high level supporters. There was an exclusive guest list. The theatre charged premium priced tickets for the best seats, and there was an opportunity to meet Sir Ian McKellen after the show. Nicky thought about how to make it different, as guests come to events throughout the year, and the event tends to be a similar format. They decided to hold the post-show event on the stage and had to speak to the technical team and Sir Ian McKellen's team. He didn't travel with a huge set. To get him off-stage, the audience out of the auditorium, hold the guests and then letting them onto the stage took some organising. Nicky thinks it came together beautifully. Mark Passey dressed the stage beautifully, put up lighting, she thinks it was stunning. The curtains came in and most of the audience left, the guests stayed and chatted in the auditorium for 10-15 minutes, and then the curtains lifted to reveal the lit stage. The guests walked up the steps directly onto the stage, then Sir Ian McKellen came on, walked around and spoke to everyone. He took time to talk to everyone and sign photographs. They had a photographer. It came together well. Nicky thinks it was special. It was a once in a lifetime chance.</p>
59.40	<p>Nicky thinks the Theatre has got good at events. They consistently try to deliver with not enough time and people. She says it is an opportunity to make income to the theatre. Nicky thinks that sometimes they cut it too close, but they get done what needs to get done with the people. She doesn't think they've ever had a disaster. Nicky says that they streamlined them well and know what they need to deliver. She says that Front of House are amazing, they provide bar service. Nicky says that the theatre has lovely bar spaces to hold events in.</p>
1.00.55	<p>Nicky's role in fundraising is relatively new. She admires the staff she's met in fundraising. Nicky thinks it is a hard department, with a big responsibility. She says that fundraising is quite black and white. Nicky says that the department is more detached from the core business. She recalls that in marketing she felt a crucial part of how the show went on, whereas in fundraising you sit slightly to the side. She sees it as</p>

	<p>core work, but they are not quite in the thick of putting on the shows. Nicky says that it can be challenging, but that she has seen and learnt from people who do their role well. Nicky says that it is fairly early days still</p>
1.02.52	<p>Nicky remembers the move into head of marketing being very hard. She remembers the events but not the emotions attached to them. Nicky remembers getting upset and feeling overwhelmed a lot. She found it really hard when she was new into marketing. Nicky remembers a lot of change within the organisation. The theatre had to make lots of redundancies to the staff as when they reopened the theatre it wasn't going quite as planned. She was really new in her job and didn't understand the decisions or what was happening. Nicky remembers a lot of unrest, and that a lot of people were made redundant in a short amount of time. The theatre sold the arts cinema and festival theatre to consolidate assets and run the theatre. Nicky's memories are jarred with excitement about her new role. She remembers people she really liked were made redundant. Nicky says it was a difficult time</p>
1.05.07	<p>Nicky says that there are lots of shows that stand out to her, and that they're not always the best shows but that they happened at a time when she'd worked really hard on a campaign or got to know the company really well. Her favourite show was <i>Cinderella</i> early on in her time here. The theatre had identical twins playing the roles of Cinderella and Dandini. Nicky remembers the rags to riches scene was incredible. She recalls that Dandini had been in a dark wig, one of them was in the rags, a puff of smoke was given off and Cinderella instantly changed into the beautiful ballgown. Nicky says that it was the one and only time they had real ponies. The theatre had white Shetland ponies who pulled on a beautiful carriage. This pantomime was around 2001 and is the most memorable scene of any production Nicky has ever seen. The theatre used to have a screen in the office, which was a show relay, so that the staff could see when the interval was or when to go downstairs. Nicky remembers that the staff used to have an alarm set for 3pm on matinee days, and that all the staff would gather round the screen just to watch the transformation scene. She says that it happened every day for 5/6 weeks and that it was special, like watching theatre as a child, and is imprinted on her memory.</p>