|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A drawing of a face  Description automatically generated | |
| **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:** Fuller  **Title:** Mr  **Interviewee’s forename(s):** Sam  **Gender:** Male  **Occupation:** Business Manager for Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) | |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):**  **Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre  **Name of interviewer:** Katherine Moar  **Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV  **Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:32:19  **Mono/Stereo:** Stereo | |
| **Additional material:** | None |
| **Copyright/Clearance:** Assigned to Cambridge Arts Theatre. | |
| **Interviewer’s comments:** |  |
| **Abstract:** | Sam Fuller is Business Manager of the Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS), who perform at Cambridge Arts Theatre annually. He discusses his memories of working at the Theatre as a teenager, his involvement with CaOS, and the process of putting on a show. |
| **Key words:** | *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *The Demon Headmaster, A Chorus Line,* *Measure for Measure, The Duchess of Malfi,* *Jack and the Beanstalk,* Opera, Musical, Terrence Hardiman, Dave Benson Phillips, Sam Spencer Lane, Body Work Theatre School, Stephen Hawking, *Oliver,* London Palladium, Arthur Miller, *The Price, Annie, The Sound of Music, My Fair Lady, Sweeney Todd* |
| **File** |  |
| **00.00** | Sam has worked at the Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) for the past six years. As Business Manager, he produces the shows and deals with the financial and legal side of the charity. The Society recently became a legally recognised charity. The ‘A’ in CaOS used to stand for the Amateur (i.e., Cambridge Amateur Operatic Society); the Society removed the word Amateur from their name, and it now stands for the ‘a’ in Cambridge. |
| **4.30** | The Society is currently preparing for the production of *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* at the Theatre. They co-ordinate with the Theatre to pick a musical that will go well with the rest of the Theatre’s programme. *Priscilla* is a particularly expensive show because of the extravagant costumes and a huge bus which covers almost the whole stage. The show was previously postponed due to COVID and the Society took a few weeks off. Once the production was rescheduled, they hired a new director and re-auditioned several cast members. Sam is playing the part of Miss Understanding. |
| **12.10** | Sam has brought with him some programmes from productions he has been involved with. His first memory of the Arts Theatre is of performing in a theatrical adaptation of the children’s TV show *The Demon Headmaster* in 1999 when he was about 12 years old. At that time, he was at the Body Work Theatre School. The school was approached to provide children to perform with the show when it was in Cambridge. The show starred Terrence Hardiman, who had played the Headmaster in the original CBBC show, and Dave Benson Phillips. Sam Spencer Lane choreographed the musical. Sam Fuller particularly recalls the homey smell of the green room and the big green leather sofa. Hardiman would sit and chat with the children on that sofa. Until then, Sam had thought he was terrifying (almost as terrifying as he was on stage) but Hardiman turned out to be very friendly. |
| **15.30** | Sam later worked backstage on *A Chorus Line* at the Theatre. He operated the sound desk for the Theatre’s production of *Measure for Measure* when he was 15 or 16. He was invited back to be the Deputy Stage Manager for *The Duchess of Malfi* in 2003. He also got a job in the Theatre’s Front of House team around that time. He remembers that the team advertised the panto, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, by handing out jellybeans from an open-top bus, all in full costume. After shows, the staff at the Theatre would often have parties in the Circle Bar and play heavy metal music until 2 am. Sam also remembers an incident when he and a colleague were working alone in the Theatre and were having fun pushing each other around on some trolleys in the foyer. They needed to get the lift to the 5th floor and when the lift came down, his friend pushed him into the lift on the trolley. He landed on the lap of Stephen Hawking! Another memorable event for Sam was performing in the Theatre’s annual panto put on by the tech and backstage crew. It was very raucous. |
| **21.10** | Sam’s interest in theatre stems from seeing *Oliver* at the London Palladium in 1996. He was interested in both technical theatre and acting. He loves musicals but is not such a fan of plays. He recalls falling asleep during Arthur Miller’s *The Price* while working at the Theatre. |
| **23.00** | Sam became involved with CaOS when he moved back from London where he had lived for 10 years and worked in a different field. When he returned to Cambridge, he wanted to meet people and work in the theatre. Someone suggested he audition for the CaOS production of *Annie*. He had never heard of the Society, though it had been around for 113 years. He got a part in the ensemble and so enjoyed it that he wanted to become more involved in the Society. He joined the committee five years ago. Sam really enjoys working with the Arts Theatre management team because they have a real insight into what will do well. It is a fine balance to strike to find a musical that will sell and be something that CaOS has not done too recently and will be interesting for the Society to put on. The Theatre suggests *Oliver, The Sound of Music* and *My Fair Lady* each year as these are popular among audiences. |
| **28.40** | The Society has performed at the Theatre since at least 1947; there is a programme dating from that year. CaOS has been running since before the Theatre opened but they do not know where the shows were put on at that time. |
| **29.30** | COVID was in some ways positive for CaOS as it allowed them to take stock and update their financial model. It is always a challenge for the Society to break even as they would have to sell out every night. They also took the chance to do workshops with industry professionals and to put on events for the local public. |
| **31.10** | Sam’s favourite CaOS show was *Sweeney Todd* because he got to go down the trap door when his character’s throat was slit. |
| **END.** |  |