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| 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:** Hannam-Creak  **Title:** Mr  **Interviewee’s forename(s):** Matt  **Gender:** Male  **Occupation:** Deputy Theatre Manager | |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):**  **Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre  **Name of interviewer: Cassia Wydra**  **Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV  **Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:37:12  **Mono/Stereo:** Stereo | |
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| **Copyright/Clearance:** Assigned to Cambridge Arts Theatre. | |
| **Interviewer’s comments:** |  |
| **Abstract:** | Deputy Theatre Manager, Matt Hannam-Creak, talks about his memories of Cambridge Arts Theatre, the joys of performing and costuming, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry more generally. |
| **Key words:** | COVID-19, Cambridge Arts Theatre, *Phantom of the Opera,* Her Majesty’s Theatre, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Mary Poppins*, Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Comedy of the Errors,* English Touring Opera, Royal Ballet |
| **File** |  |
| **00.00** | Matt Hannam-Creak introduces himself. |
| **03.25** | Matt describes how strange it was to see an empty theatre during the COVID-19 pandemic, but as soon as the first audience came in, everyone found their “groove” again. Matt talks about how happy the audiences were to just see live performances again, regardless of what show was on. Matt talks about how small the community in the theatre was and how “everyone knows everyone” so that has helped during the pandemic. |
| **06.00** | Matt goes on to recall his favourite memory that he has of Cambridge Arts Theatre: the first time he performed as a Panto Babe in front of an audience of 600 people. He remembers it vividly, saying that you don’t forget that “gulp moment” when you realise it’s not a rehearsal but the real thing. Matt talks about the nervous energy and exhilaration that you feel when walking on stage and he says that it never goes away, he still gets it now, anytime he now walks on stage (even if its empty) he never forgets that feeling. |
| **08.05** | Matt talks about the most challenging thing he’s done which he says is wardrobing, because you don’t ever get to see your final product on stage. He also says that the last year has been very difficult. Matt goes on to compare both making costumes and being on stage. He states that when working with costumes there is more control but on stage, the lack of control is just as thrilling. Matt finds both jobs equally as fun and rewarding but would never turn down the opportunity of being back on stage. |
| **10.45** | Matt talks about the favourite piece of theatre he has ever seen. Matt says that his decision to go into costume was based on *Phantom of the Opera.* He remembers the first time he saw that performance very vividly as it was the first time he had been to Her Majesty’s Theatre and the first time he had seen costumes at that level. He attributes his love for the theatre to this performance which he has seen 16 times. He says that seeing famous actors in live performances is also brilliant. |
| **12.50** | Matt says that both his parents were key in inspiring his love for theatre as his parents would take him regularly to see performances from a very young age. He describes the theatre for his parents as an escapism from working life. He remembers classics such as *Mary Poppins* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. From then on Matt knew he would be working in the theatre one way or another. |
| **14.45** | Matt talks about the difficulties of working during COVID-19 restrictions and how to keep the balance between those in the public who want the Arts Theatre back and those who are cautious so that the Theatre doesn’t permanently close. Matt calls this balance a difference between “The Arts surviving and the Arts thriving” |
| **16.50** | Matt talks about how he is not massively keen on Shakespeare performances but does enjoy the history of the Theatre which is inevitably linked to Shakespeare. Matt loves the plays *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Comedy of the Errors*. Matt also mentions language barriers when trying to understand Shakespeare but also indicates that the plots of the plays are timeless. |
| **18.40** | Matt talks about his first impressions of Cambridge Arts Theatre and how any performance has the inability to surprise you no matter how many times you have seen it. Matt really enjoys the unknown when it comes to seeing live performance as opposed to watching a movie and states that the unknown is the reason why live theatre is so important and why he wants to be part of the industry whatever the job. |
| **20.00** | Matt continues to talk about the magic of live theatre and says that what you take away from a show depends on at what point in your life you’re seeing the play. Matt describes live theatre as “tangible” and that memories of being on stage when you’re a child, such as being a Panto Babe, will stick in your memory forever. Matt claims live theatre is the only thing that can do that. |
| **21.20** | Matt talks about his recent role as Deputy Theatre Manager and how he knows most of the staff at the Theatre due to all his previous history with the Theatre. Matt states that although the role is new, working in the Arts Theatre isn’t. Matt claims that he didn’t have any first day nerves because he was so comfortable with the environment. Matt cannot envisage him leaving the Theatre any time soon. |
| **23.25** | Matt talks about working in the entertainment industry and the small community within theatres for example the finance department will talk to other finance departments in other theatres. Matt says, “everybody knows everybody somewhere”. He mentions that 4 years ago, he worked on a photoshoot for the English Touring Opera with his husband (a makeup artist). Matt talks about how the people you meet become contacts forever and you can text them at any time, no matter how long it’s been. Matt says that due to these contacts, he has worked in Wardrobe for the Royal Ballet. |
| **26.45** | Matt says that his work for the Royal Ballet was on a freelance basis. Matt says that if the Royal Ballet were overrun with work or they were going on tour, and they needed something immediately they would have a list of makers that would work on the costumes. Matt says that there is no direct link to the Ballet, but it is more indirect where the work would be shipped there and back. Matt mentions he has also done such work for the English Touring Opera. Despite the small part, Matt thinks it’s a honour to contribute to such a big institution. |
| **28.25** | Matt talks about how special it is to think about how many people have come through Cambridge Arts Theatre and what they have gone on to do. Matt goes on to mention how the Theatre has touched the lives of others, and that the last year and a half has proved how important theatre is. Matt stresses how the theatre has changed his life and how important it is to appreciate all the hard work that goes in to keeping a theatre (particularly Cambridge Arts Theatre) open. |
| **30.15** | Matt talks about his view on the longevity of live theatre in comparison to streaming services nowadays. Matt uses the analogy of downloading music on Spotify and seeing a live concert which are completely different. Matt mentions that there was live theatre available online during the pandemic but that it is no replacement for the real thing. Matt says that the emotion created by seeing live performances is not created anywhere else. Matt states that he is not worried that live theatre will die out as it will always be passed down generations. |
| **32.40** | Matt briefly talks about the livestreams that were frequent over the past year and says that all the productions happened within theatre bubbles. Matt briefly mentions the amount of unemployment in the industry and that because of the pandemic, jobs in this industry are now very sought after. |
| **33.50** | Matt ends off with talking about the recovery of the Theatre after the pandemic. Matt does state that the audiences were very cautious about coming back to the Theatre and had many questions about restrictions. Matt describes how the prudence people are taking has become second nature. But Matt goes on to say, “the need to watch the show has overbalanced the need to be overly cautious”. Matt believes that the pandemic has reinvigorated people’s enjoyment of theatre. Matt talks about the importance of hope and that during extreme hardships (such as World War II) the one thing people always return to is entertainment. Matt says Cambridge Arts Theatre has to evolve and find new ways to entertain. Matt states that with theatre you get to “escape as a crowd rather than as an individual sat at home” Matt talks about how much people have missed the Theatre and how grateful they are to have it back. |
| **ENDS.** |  |