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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:** Linsdell **Title:** Miss**Interviewee’s forename(s):**  Isla**Gender:** Female**Occupation:** Student |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):** **Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre**Name of interviewer:** Lucy St Clair Holborn**Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV**Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:24:02**Mono/Stereo:** Stereo |
| **Additional material:**  | None |
| **Copyright/Clearance:** Assigned to Cambridge Arts Theatre. |
| **Interviewer’s comments:** |  |
| **Abstract:** | Isla Linsdell first performed at Cambridge Arts Theatre as an orphan in ‘Annie’. She was then in two pantomimes in 2017-18 and 2018-19, ‘Jack in the Beanstalk’ and ‘Aladdin’. She has always enjoyed performing and liked the fact that Cambridge Arts Theatre has given her a taste of what professional theatre is like as she wants to be an actor. |
| **Key words:** | Stagecoach, Pantomime, Annie, Jack and the Beanstalk, Aladdin, Tony Christie, Matt Crosby |
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| **00.00** | Isla introduces herself. Her first involvement with Cambridge Arts Theatre was when she auditioned for the pantomime when she was 6, following the advice of her Stagecoach principal, and she has been watching productions, auditioning and performing at Cambridge Arts Theatre ever since.  |
| **01.00** | Her first performance was when she was an orphan in ‘Annie’ at the age of 10 in a 2017 production by Cambridge Amateur Operatic Society. She had a lot of fun and made lots of friends she still knows today. She says all the children got on well. She does not remember the audition process that well but does remember her voice cracking which knocked her confidence a little and she was very pleased to get in. |
| **02.38** | Isla was in the pantomime in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 season. She really enjoyed performing in the pantomimes and it is still one of her favourite things she has done. There were two casts of children and the shows were split between them. Isla “just loved being able to do something consistently for 30-odd shows”. Compared to ‘Annie’, Isla thinks the pantomimes were more professional and it was a bigger commitment as there were more shows. She had to miss some school for the pantomimes whereas she did not have to for ‘Annie’. She says she is still friends with most of the children she did the pantomimes with and that a lot of the children she knows in performing arts in the area have done pantomimes. She also says that the adult cast were always nice. During her first show, the preview show, in her first year of pantomime, the fire alarm went off shortly before the finale. The actor who played Jack, Holly [Easterbrook], had just run onto the stage but was interrupted by the fire alarm and they all had to evacuate the building alongside the audience. It was 30 November, and it was snowing, and all the children were wearing only ballet pumps as they walked outside. They had to stand in a shed while the building was checked and when they went back most of the audience had left apart from the other cast of children and the parents of children who were performing so the audience was extremely small but very loud because they all knew the actors.  |
| **5.13** | She says it was “amazing” to be part of these shows and they used to take photographs in front of the promotional posters for the show. Isla says they enjoyed seeing the buses which were advertising the show while they drove to the Theatre to perform in that same show. When she went to secondary school, she was speaking to some of her friends who came from Castle Camps [a primary school in Cambridge] and they told her they saw the pantomime when they were in Year 6 and she told them “I was in that, I was in that!”. Isla feels very proud to have performed in ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ and ‘Aladdin’. She says ‘Aladdin’ was her favourite because the children were very close as her cast only had eight children instead of ten. Normally, there are two casts with ten children each and everyone has a partner in the other cast who they share a costume with. They lost two of their cast which meant that those left all got on well. Isla says that although they had to restage things slightly, she did not feel that they were at a disadvantage only having eight, compared to the other cast which still had ten children. She did thirty-two shows in one year and thirty-three in the other which she did not find difficult because her parents organised a lot of it and apart from having to catch up on a little schoolwork, she did not find it that disruptive. |
| **7.31** | Rehearsals lasted for two weeks, every night after school from 16.30-18.30 in a church in Cambridge where they would learn and practise the numbers. After that, they would do a run through for their parents and then the following week they did a carol service in the church next to the Theatre. The next two days were spent doing tech rehearsals from 14.00-21.00 which felt very long because there was a lot of stopping and starting to ensure that everyone knew what they were doing. She says she struggled with the footwork but over the two weeks it all fell into place naturally. She particularly remembers the opening number of Act 2 in ‘Aladdin’, “Dancing in the Street”, and can still remember a lot of the footwork from it. She recalls how after her cast had finished their shows and were waiting to watch the other cast perform in the final show, they did a small flash mob in the middle of Cambridge “which was quite embarrassing but also brilliant at the same time.” She says they received some odd looks but that their parents loved it and it was “a lot of fun”.  |
| **9.30?** | Isla discusses the best shows she did. She remembers that one year her cast did the press night performance and that was particularly good because the entire cast were particularly enthusiastic as that night is when there are many reviewers watching. It is important that the performance goes well because if it goes badly, that will affect the reviews. Isla says that opening and closing night performances were always particularly good, especially closing night although it was “bittersweet” as everyone says goodbye to each other. Of the adult casts she worked with, she particularly remembers Tony Christie (the singer of “(Is This the Way to) Amarillo?”), who was in ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ with her, as being particularly nice. She remembers he and his wife were lovely and bought Christmas presents and goodbye gifts for them and she remembers getting a signed CD. |
| **10.38** | She remembers the children were allocated two rooms backstage. They always had to be accompanied by a chaperone as they were under 16. There was one chaperone who was almost always there but there were usually four to five chaperones in total, some of whom were teachers from Stagecoach where she did performing arts classes. She remembers they used to play games backstage, particularly “Dobble” and the card game “Cheat”. |
| **11.39** | Isla says she has been performing “since I’ve been born really”. She did ballet classes until she was roughly 6 then stopped those and started Stagecoach Cambridge and has been doing that for eight years now. Stagecoach recommended she audition for the pantomime at Cambridge Arts Theatre when she was 6 although she does not know how that came about, but her mum told her that she remembers Stagecoach thinking that Isla was the right type of child to be in the pantomime. Her first ever performance was probably one of her ballet performances and there is a video of her where she “was just bossing everyone around on stage” because she was the only person who knew what people should be doing. She does not remember a time in her life where she has not wanted to be a professional actor. |
| **13.14** | She says that the productions at Cambridge Arts Theatre were much more professional than she was used to and that there were small things that were different to more amateur productions. She remembers always having to be quiet in the wings and backstage and staying in place before the curtain went up and always having a chaperone with you. She also remembers being told off for looking at the clock once, she thinks perhaps because she looked at it “disrespectfully” as though she was waiting for it to finish, but she was not entirely sure why she was told off and that sort of thing was different to what she was used to.  |
| **14.42** | Isla says that they were always a very tight cast, not only amongst the children but with the adults too. Isla particularly enjoyed the end scene and says that after the curtain fell everyone would congratulate each other and they fell into a routine after the show because they did so many. However, sometimes the adults did three shows in a day and it was after the third performance that there would be the most congratulations. There were around sixty-four shows per season and each cast of children did half. The children usually only did one show a day on weekdays but on weekends did two shows per day either Saturday or Sunday. She enjoyed leaving school and telling everyone she was doing a show when they asked why she was leaving. Isla enjoyed the evening shows the most because they had the best audiences, and the best shows were those with the best audiences. She remembers one performance of ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ where there were only around fifty people in the audience because it was a “relaxed performance” and says that was difficult because there was not such a big audience to bounce off. |
| **17.10** | She remembers the opening number was always very fun and all the children had to run around the village pretending it was the most exciting thing they had ever seen. She found the slosh scene with the Dame and another character fun to watch with the other children on the TV backstage. She remembers one moment when Matt Crosby fell into the wall and broke the set with his head, and it was so funny that they then added a flap into the set so that he did that every time. Isla remembers that Matt and some of the other actors would go off script quite often, making the most of a mistake they made before going back in script. She says those were always the most fun for the children to watch because they had seen the show so many times. She says the first ten shows the children would watch quite eagerly and for the rest would mainly do other things. She recalls one scene during the first year when there was a scene with three fairies, and they used to always have three people pretend they were the fairies and mouth along to it. |
| **19.13** | She remembers being chaperoned in both ‘Annie’ and the pantomimes but remembers ‘Annie’ less well. She does recall there being the same tight bond between the cast in ‘Annie’ as there was for both pantomimes. For the pantomimes, the children would come in forty-five minutes before the show to get ready. They always had to have their hair in French plaits, and she remembers once offering to do someone’s hair because they did not come in with it done. She did it with five minutes left before the show but had to have it redone because it looked too bad, and she has doubted her French plaiting ability since then! |
| **20.22** | The children were not allowed to wear nail polish or makeup because they were playing children. The pantomimes she performed in at Cambridge Arts Theatre are two of the most professional shows she has ever done, she “loved” having quite a long run and being able to perform the same show to a different audience. She used to go onto the website before the shows to see how full the audience was going to be. Her time in the pantomimes has made her want to pursue acting as a career even more. Isla wants to go to Performing Arts College when she is 18 and wants to pursue acting as a career. She describes her time performing at Cambridge Arts Theatre as “a taster of the professional world” of acting which enabled her to learn what it is like to be an actor. She says that the adult cast were always professional but were relaxed on stage and would talk to them when they were miming a conversation on stage.  |
| **22.12** | Isla auditioned for the equivalent of ‘Annie’ and the pantomime in 2019 but did not get in to either of them. A few of her friends who had been in the pantomime before did not get in either and they found that quite hard because they knew what they were missing out on. Isla would love to perform at Cambridge Arts Theatre again. She always watches pantomimes here and saw ‘The Sound of Music’ last year but she and her mum were surprised to realise that she has not seen many shows at the Arts Theatre, despite having been to the Theatre many times because of performing. She says she loves both performing and watching plays but happens to have been to Cambridge Arts Theatre more to take part in productions than to watch them. |
| **24.02** | End |