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| **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:** Stanley  **Title:** Mr  **Interviewee’s forename(s):** Bill  **Gender:** M  **Occupation:** Student | |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):** 26/03/22  **Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre  **Name of interviewer:** Emily Bowen  **Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV  **Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:34:14  **Mono/Stereo:** Stereo | |
| **Additional material:** | None |
| **Copyright/Clearance:** Assigned to Cambridge Arts Theatre. | |
| **Interviewer’s comments:** | None |
| **Abstract:** | Bill Stanley has been involved with Cambridge Arts Theatre from a very young age. He has performed with touring companies and as a Panto Babe, undertaken work experience with the Theatre, and now volunteers with Front of House. He praises the Theatre for the opportunities it has offered him and recounts his time as a member of the cast of a variety of shows, ranging from *Jack and the Beanstalk* to *Richard III*. |
| **Key words:** | Volunteer, panto babe, pantomime, audition, cast, Tony Christie, Stephen Beckett, Suzie Mathers, Matt Crosby, COVID-19, Tom Mothersdale, CaOS, Headlong, work experience, choreography |
| **File** | STE-001 |
| **00.22** | Bill Stanley currently volunteers at Cambridge Arts Theatre. The Arts has been his local theatre since he was young, as he grew up in Cambridge. Bill has both performed at the Theatre and watched productions as an audience member. |
| **00:49** | Bill was a member of Panto Babes. Age 9, he came to Pantomime auditions and received a call back. He did not get a place the first time he auditioned but received a complimentary ticket from the Theatre for auditioning. He watched *Robin Hood* that year and wanted to be involved. Bill reauditioned the next year. From the 2014 production of *Aladdin* until 2018, he was a Panto Babe. Bill got to know the Arts well through his involvement. He notes that Pantomime shows are done on rotation. At the end of each run the cast would write their names and the show under the tables in the dressing rooms. Bill assumes they have been painted over but hopes they are still there. |
| **02.09** | Bill’s first show, aged 9 or 10, was the most magical, and he recalls being on stage with the special effects around him. He notes that the Panto magic was a great experience. Bill enjoyed the shows when he was younger but notes that he grew to understand more of the jokes and how a professional show was run. He notes that each show had its bonuses in different ways. |
| **03:18** | Bill has a signed-Tony Christie CD. He notes that at a young age he wasn’t familiar with the fame of his co-stars, such as Stephen Beckett, so to him they were normal people. |
| **04:22** | Bill notes that Panto Babes was a good experience for learning how to be in a professional company. There were two teams of Panto Babes, Bill notes that some of his closest friends acted as his double and they shared costumes. He recalls the competition between the teams, such as ‘Team Cinders’ and ‘Team Buttons’ for *Cinderella* or ‘Team Ping’ and ‘Team Pong’ for *Aladdin.* Each year on the penultimate show, there was a talent show, in which both teams and the adult cast would be involved. Bill recalls singing ‘Where Is Love?’ from *Oliver*, but did not win. He recalls receiving a hug from Suzie Mathers, who wasn’t a lead in the show, but notes she went on to play Glinda in the West End production of *Wicked* and from her social media believes she’s living in Australia. In the last 2-3 weeks of Panto, Bill remembers choreographing and performing dances in his team in the breaks, and that the teams would face-off between the last two shows. |
| **06:20** | Bill would recommend Panto Babes. He notes that it was the highlight of his winter season, recalling the first year he wasn’t involved, not knowing how to spend his time. Bill remembers he was never allowed to go ice skating during Panto season to avoid breaking a bone. |
| **07:00** | Bill participated in the week-long work experience scheme in summer 2020. He enjoys being in a theatre, whether onstage, backstage or in the audience. Bill recalls doing a variety of things, such as a stage tour and working through the archives. He remembers working through reviews and articles about old shows, as well as programmes, which acted as a reminder of his time at the Theatre when he would spot his name. Bill learnt a lot about the behind the scenes work of productions, that isn’t always realised by cast or audience members. He gives advertising posters as an example. |
| **09:09** | Bill recalls being in a group of 8 or 9. He notes there was enough people to have conversations and talk through ideas with, but that he didn’t feel like one of many and that there was time to ask questions. |
| **09:46** | During work experience, Bill spent time in marketing, discussing strategies and how to best target audience members. He also spent time in sales. Bill found discussing programming the most interesting, as he had not thought of the logistics of being a receiving house. |
| **10:52** | Bill started volunteering in September 2021, when he started college and had greater flexibility. He wants to go into the theatre and has been advised to watch as many shows as possible. Bill notes that the ability to watch weekly shows for free drew him to volunteering. He first heard about volunteering during his work experience. Bill felt that he was already known to the Theatre, and wasn’t scared to volunteer. He notes a bonus for volunteering is the complimentary tickets, which he received for *BalletBoyz* recently. Bill enjoys the range of shows available at the Arts, he last volunteered for *Private Peaceful*. He volunteers once a week and feels this lets him capture what is going on. |
| **13:15** | Bill notes that Panto is a lot of fun. He recalls seeing it eight times throughout the its 6 week run [in 2021]. Due to the pandemic, Bill also notes seeing different cast members play different roles, such as dancers playing the leads. He recalls seeing a performance with only one or two ensemble dancers, because the others were playing lead roles. Bill notes there is always Panto excitement with the Christmas songs, which he feels he heard enough until next winter. He recalls people of all ages coming in from the dark to the warm Theatre. |
| **14:50** | Bill notes that the Theatre has changed in response to the pandemic, with the volunteers wearing masks out of respect for audience members. He doesn’t believe any of the good parts of the Arts has been lost. He recalls the closure period at the start of the pandemic and notes the grant that assisted in reopening. Bill thinks it is a positive thing that Theatres are recognised for their importance. He doesn’t believe much has changed as an audience member. |
| **16:46** | As an audience member, Bill knows he will enjoy what he sees at the Arts, regardless of the show. He looks forward to seeing the shows here. Bill praises the layout of the auditorium for view of the stage, as well as the ice creams available. He notes the toys sold during Panto and recalls waving around the light up propellers during the show. Bill notes that the Arts puts on different productions, and that the audience experience changes depending on the show. He recalls always wanting to be picked for Panto audience involvement, but also the stunned feeling of watching *BalletBoyz.* Bill praises the variety of theatre the Arts show. |
| **19:03** | Bill recalls, as a Panto Babe for *Jack and the Beanstalk*, the beanstalk having technical difficulties. He explains how it was supposed to work, and how it half-inflated during one performance. Bill praises Matt Crosby, who has played the Dame at the Arts for many years, for improvising. He recalls that whilst Jack sang ‘Defying Gravity’, Matt found a backpack and presented it to the lead as a jetpack. Bill remembers the cast, crew, and audience bursting out laughing in response. |
| **21:20** | He recalls at a young age watching Panto and telling his Mum it was what he wanted to do. Bill believes many of his memories started at the Arts. |
| **21:51** | Bill notes the slosh scene of Panto is an audience favourite. He explains that from an audience perspective it looks to be accidental, but it is in fact highly choreographed. He recalls one instance where Matt Crosby slid too far and his head went through the set. Bill notes he believed it was new choreography, but it was a complete accident. He praises Matt for continuing. |
| **23:19** | Bill praises the Panto Babe chaperones. He recalls being dressed in fox costumes and having a designated ‘fox box’ taped on the floor, to keep the ten children out of the way of heavy scenery backstage. Bill remembers being chosen to creep behind the audience members in the auditorium boxes, and recalls giving a few scares, making one audience member drop their drink. |
| **25:04** | Bill notes he is lucky to form connections with members of the Theatre staff. His first show was *Oliver*, with CaOS [Cambridge Operatic Society], aged 7. He notes the roles offered to children by touring companies for their run at the Arts. Bill has done this for three shows. His most recent was *Richard III* by Headlong, and this is a strong memory. He recalls meeting wonderful people, auditioning and learning more about Shakespeare. Bill notes that Headlong was a style of theatre he hadn’t seen on the Arts stage before. He praises the set and staging of the production, recalling blowing white powder at Tom Mothersdale. He notes meeting people such as Michael Matus who toured with Headlong and acted as a mentor. Bill is thankful for the networking opportunities he’s had from the Arts. *Richard III* was in 2019. Bill also participated in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. He discusses being paid for something he enjoys, at age 10. Bill also participated in *Goodnight Mr Tom*. He notes that wartime shows are enjoyable to watch at the Arts, as it reminds him how beautiful the stage can be with the help of the fly team. |
| **31:39** | Bill recalls Panto being fun, whereas the other shows were work. He notes that he tried hard in Panto because he enjoyed it, and the touring shows had a professional atmosphere. He recalls age 9, hoping to be taken seriously in his involvement. Bill reiterated the variety of shows programmed at the Arts, and that there is something for everyone. He does not see how anyone can dislike Panto. |
| **33:14** | Bill notes that without the theatre, he wouldn’t be doing what he does today. He is reassured by his involvement in the Behind The Scenes Project of his value at the Theatre. He enjoys being in a community of likeminded people. Bill notes that Cambridge Arts Theatre is a special place. |
| **34:14** | **END.** |