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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:** Walters **Title:** Angharad**Interviewee’s forename(s):** Ms**Gender:** F**Occupation:** Principal Stagecoach Cambridge |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):** 28/03/22**Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre**Name of interviewer:** Dale Copley**Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV**Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:33:58**Mono/Stereo:** Stereo |
| **Additional material:**  | None |
| **Copyright/Clearance:** Assigned to Cambridge Arts Theatre. |
| **Interviewer’s comments:** | Interviewee was masked throughout the recording in light of high level of COVID cases at the time of recording.  |
| **Abstract:** | Principal of Stagecoach, Angharad Walters, provides part-time training in the performing arts for children aged 4 to 18 in Cambridge and Cambourne. Many children from Stagecoach go on to perform on the Cambridge Arts Theatre stage in our annual Pantomime. Walters describes coming to the Arts Theatre at a young age, stresses the importance of the performing arts for children, and recalls the difficult impact the pandemic had on her work at Stagecoach.  |
| **Key words:** | *Snow White,* Marti Webb, *Aladdin*, Anneka Rice, *Challenge Anneka, Babes in the Wood,* Sylvester McCoy, Bill Kenwright, *Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat*, Pied Pipers, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too, Kiss Me Kate, Barnum, Me and My Girl,* Mountview, Stagecoach, Boris Johnson, *An Inspector Calls*, Christopher Biggins, *Dick Whittington, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk*, Michael Kirk |
| **File** |  |
| **00:00** | **We all know you as a friend of the Theatre. What was your first experience of the Arts Theatre?** |
|  | Walters first saw Pantomime at the Theatre when she was 3 or 4 years old. |
| **00:50** | **Can you remember what you felt when you saw the Panto?** |
|  | Walters remembers saying to her mother that she “wanted to do that!”. It was magical. As a family they came every year to Panto between Christmas and New Year with other family members.  |
| **01:37** | **Are there any other memorable shows from your earlier years that you remember seeing here?** |
|  | Walters recalls seeing *Snow White* with Marti Webb as the baddie and her neighbour and friend being cross that she liked the baddie! Walters says that not fearing the baddie was a powerful moment. Anneka Rice was *Aladdin* – she was a famous person on television and the *Challenge Anneka* music was played in the panto. Another was *Babes in the Wood* with Sylvester McCoy and a friend’s son played the little boy. “Nighty nighty, pyjama, pyjama” (words from the show) then became a family tradition when saying goodnight in her household. Walters also remembers seeing Bill Kenwright’s show *Joseph* [*and the Technicolour Dreamcoat*] – her first musical show outside of Panto. She bought the cassette tape and listened constantly to it. She went on to train in Musical Theatre at drama school because of her visits to the Arts Theatre and *Joseph* in particular – it was a real turning point for her. She recalls being in town when the Theatre frontage would be decorated for the Panto. |
|  | She recalls the gauze in front of the Panto being so pretty and sparkly before the show started. |
| **06:57** | **Your family cultivated your love for Theatre. Did your friends at school know about this?** |
|  | At school, it was very much known that Walters wanted to do drama. She belonged to a drama group at school and in her leavers’ book it was written that she was most likely to be a “Disney Voice or sing in the Eurovision song contest”. The Theatre was closed when she was 12 for 3 years and she started going to see things in London. She remembers when the Theatre was demolished and the big gap that was there. Walters recalls the show before the Theatre closed which was a Panto with real horses. Her family would also go to the Roof Garden Restaurant for lunch and after the show the cast would sometimes be there and they would sign programmes. |
| **09:57** | When the Theatre reopened after the rebuild, Walters did some shows on stage with Pied Pipers (a Cambridge-based amateur dramatic society) which was very different given it was an entirely new auditorium. |
| **10:21** | **Can you describe what it was like when you came back to the rebuilt Theatre?** |
|  | In Walter’s memory, the newly built Theatre wasn’t as beautiful and ornate as it had been but it was impressive to come in and see it. It was much more comfortable with new toilets. Her family and her came to see everything that was on when it opened so they saw plays and a variety as her parents were keen to support the Theatre. They were always interested in the theatre and, because of her love, they became much more involved. |
| **11:25** | She recalls coming to see *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* and being really embarrassed as she was with her parents – they had no idea it was so rude. Her teacher was also there so even more embarrassing! |
| **11:45** | **You are involved now in amateur dramatics in Cambridge and the Theatre has a connection to Pied Pipers which you were involved with. What was the process for you getting involved in that?**  |
|  | Walters really wanted to do a show at the Arts Theatre – it was the pinnacle of everything. Doing something at the professional theatre in Cambridge was what she wanted to do so she auditioned for the group and they did *Kiss Me Kate* and then *Barnum*. She also played the main part in *Me and My Girl* and that was amazing. They rehearsed in the school at Chesterton and came into the Theatre for the lengthy Tech process. There were shows Tuesday – Saturday and played to a sold-out theatre. |
| **13:15** | **Then you went away to study?** |
|  | Walters attended Mountview studying Musical Theatre as her degree course. Walters says if she hadn’t had the experiences she did at the Arts Theatre she probably wouldn’t have gone. Whilst she was training, she worked at Stagecoach at the weekends when she came back to Cambridge and loved working with children and seeing how much they gained from the performing arts and the journey they would take when they did a show. The whole experience gives the children a life-memory.  |
| **15:43** | **When you meet the children can you tell if they have a natural ability for it?** |
|  | There are lots of reasons why children go to Stagecoach. There are children who will go on to do this as a career. There are some who really love it and when they go on stage, they become the character and but they might not be as outgoing. There are others who are shy and anxious and performing is good for their confidence. It has an impact on the children – they love it and enjoy it. It opens them up to lots of things and builds their confidence in other ways too. |
| **18:06** | **You then went on to take over Stagecoach in Cambridge** |
|  | Walters knew, longer term, that she wanted run Stagecoach and kept asking the lady who ran it when she was going to retire – it was always “in 7 years”. She went on to train in Speech & Language Therapy to work with actors and singers. Walters asked the lady again while she was training and she consequently stopped training and took over.  |
| **19:30** | **In your role now, what’s your connection to the Arts Theatre? As an audience member and professionally.** |
|  | Walters describes becoming part of our Supporters’ Circle as a corporate partner and bringing children to the Panto. Sometimes this is the first experience of the Theatre and the impact of that on the children is amazing. They also interact with the show – shouting out and being part of it. They are transported into the world of whatever it is that they’re watching. You can see older children also enjoying it with and for the younger children.  |
| **21:58** | **Some of your children join us as performers in Panto?** |
|  | It’s a highlight for some of the children who are part of Stagecoach. Walters describes that if the children who want to be on stage in London, they must live within the M25 so to be part of shows at the Arts it gives them a chance to be part of something professional. |
| **23:06** | **Can I ask about how the pandemic has affected things?** |
|  | Walters describes the awful time for performing arts in general. Stagecoach haven’t been able to perform which is what the children most want to do. There were some families who supported Stagecoach to go online and do Zoom classes etc. Despite the restrictions, it was important for the children to come back in Summer 2020 doing holiday workshops. The children were so desperate to come back it was lovely to see them being so pleased. They were willing to make adaptations just to be able to come back. Sadly, when children have COVID then they aren’t able to do the show but there are some positives coming out – things aren’t quite as set and structured, the children are open to change. Walters brought a group to see *Aladdin* this year (2021/22) and it was lovely to be able to give the children this experience and given any opportunity. Walters was in the building when Boris Johnson made the announcement that lockdown was coming (Stagecoach had 3 children due to perform in *An Inspector Calls*). She recalls thinking that this was a strange time and that we probably won’t be doing the show but perhaps we would be able to do a couple of shows. She recalls asking the director if the show was going to happen and there was some positivity about this but there was a strange feeling. The children were running through everything in the rehearsal space when a tannoy announcement was made at the Theatre. They carried on rehearsing. The Company Manager then came in to talk to the Director. Walters remembers telling the children that this will be an important moment in their lives – one that they would always remember. The children were confused and didn’t really understand what was happening. The Company Manager then spoke to Walters explaining that the country was going into lockdown and that Theatres would inevitably have to close. The Company Manager then went on to tell the children. He explained it all to them telling them that it would probably only be “a couple of months”. There was no understanding of the magnitude of what was to come. |
| **31:01** | **I understand you also worked here as a dresser?** |
|  | When Christopher Biggins was here for Panto (for 4/5 years) Walters was a dresser (after she was in *Me and My Girl*) and she helped to dress/sew for the show. She would come in early to do the washing and stay late to be involved with the show doing quick changes etc. She worked on *Dick Whittington, Cinderella, Aladdin* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. There were many actors who came back. Her first job out of drama school was through Michael Kirk who played the baddie in the Arts Panto and she auditioned for his panto. The connections Walters made here were helpful.  |
| **END.**  |  |