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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:** Yarn  **Title:** Ms  **Interviewee’s forename(s):** Molly  **Gender:** F  **Occupation:** Independent Scholar | |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):**  **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):** 00:26:53  **Mono/Stereo:** Stereo | |
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| **Interviewer’s comments:** | Molly Yarn, former President of the Marlowe Society, describes the joyful and difficult process behind producing a play for the Arts Theatre stage and discusses her research on the female editors of Shakespeare works in the 19th and 20th centuries. |
| **Abstract:** |  |
| **Key words:** | University of Cambridge, Marlowe Society, Assistant Stage Manager, *Measure for Measure,* Dave Murphy, Chloe Brindle, Tom Littler, Jermyn Street Theatre, *Edward II,* Caroline Steinbeis, *Love’s Labour’s Lost,* ADC, *Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado about Nothing, Shakespeare’s ‘Lady Editors’: A New History of the Shakespearean Text,* Cambridge University Press, COVID |
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| **00:00** | Dale Copley introduces Molly Yarn who came to the University of Cambridge to do her PhD in English Literature. Molly joined the Marlowe Society as Assistant Stage Manager (ASM) in 2016 for *Measure for Measure*. She went on to become the society’s President. |
| **00:41** | **How does a Marlowe production develop from picking a title to getting it on our stage?** |
| **00:50** | Yarn says the process is long. The President starts talking to Dave Murphy about the possible titles and eventually one is decided upon by the Theatre and the Marlowe Society. Professional directors are approached and then the rest of the creative/production team. There is a student assistant director and the producing team are also students. They work closely with Dave Murphy and Chloe Brindle to shepherd the show along. |
| **02:33** | In the Autumn, students audition for the parts in January, so when they start rehearsing, usually in Spring, they know which role they are playing. The students find it very rewarding. “It’s such an exciting and long tradition which has been running since the 1930s. I was impressed with how committed the Arts is to continuing to do it despite the fact that it’s challenging”. |
| **04:04** | **There are challenges with students fitting in this commitment around the University terms etc, are there any other challenges?** |
|  | Scheduling can be a challenge. Cambridge students encounter conflicts with the University. The students are being asked to work a certain way and must conform to professional theatre standards. This is also the greatest benefit. |
| **05:42** | **How does the show progress from the Tech Week?** |
|  | Tech week is challenging and exhausting. It’s a real thrill for the student actors. It takes around a week to bring the sets in and put it all together. Yarn says this is the time when the Society is most impressed by the staff at the Theatre as they take the time to teach the students. When Yarn was President, she had been ill with flu during the Tech Week and was taking medicine but it is always a fun and exhausting time. |
| **07:50** | **Can you tell me how many shows you do, and what audiences are like?** |
|  | There is a full weekend of shows and some in the week too. There is discussion around pricing and marketing to students as the Arts can be expensive on pricing of tickets. The audience is made up of students, the Arts database of regular theatregoers, and a lovely mix of other people. They are supportive of what the students are doing. |
| **09:31** | **Can you tell us a little more about the shows you were involved with in your time with the Marlowe?** |
|  | Yarn’s first year was *Measure for Measure* and she was new to Cambridge. She approached the committee and asked if she could get involved. Alex Cartlidge was the Producer at the time and there was an ASM position available which Yarn took on. Historically, Yarn had been involved with props and the Director for that year was Tom Littler who is now the Artistic Director at Jermyn Street Theatre in London. Yarn and Littler became friends that year and continue to be. The cast was smaller but they were committed to working in professional theatre. She continued to be involved in her second year *Edward II* with Caroline Steinbeis as Director. Yarn was on the committee that year but not directly involved in the production. A lot of work was still undertaken and Yarn remembers coming to the Arts and the Founders’ Room tables were all covered with papier mâché heads as props for the show which they worked on for hours. Yarn also wrote some material for the show’s programme. Her third year she was President of the Marlowe and she was involved with every stage of the production process. Yarn and Littler were still friends and she approached him to direct again. Usually, the Director changes every year so this was an unusual situation. Littler wanted to do a production of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and then the ADC released their next Season’s listings and one of the shows was *Love’s Labour’s Lost* so a frantic discussion ensued about what title should be done. Yarn suggested to Dave Murphy that they go with *Romeo and Juliet*. That year was a large production with choreography and music; it was a big undertaking. Littler’s previous involvement made this smoother. It was a beautiful show. It was a credit to the professional designers. That was Yarn’s last year on the committee. |
| **17:08** | At the end of each President’s tenure there is a handover with the next President and introductions are made to Dave. The decision about the next year’s title is also made. The next title was *Much Ado about Nothing* which Yarn was sad not to be involved with. |
| **17.40** | **Is there anything you have taken away from your time with the Marlowe that you will take forward to the future?** |
|  | On a practical level Yarn now has many contacts who work in London Theatres. Chloe Brindle at the Arts is also a key person who makes the Marlowe productions happen for which Yarn is very grateful. Mixing students and professionals was a challenge but has helped Yarn’s understanding of the processes. Yarn talks about how much she learned from the process and about how the students really benefit. |
| **19:50** | **Can you tell us a little about your book?** |
|  | Yarn has written a book based on her dissertation about women editors of Shakespeare in the 19th and 20th Centuries. [*Shakespeare’s ‘Lady Editors’: A New History of the Shakespearean Text*, by Molly G. Yarn]. She discovered that almost 70 women had been editing Shakespeare during that time. The book was published in December 2021 with Cambridge University Press and is coming out in the USA early 2022. |
| **21.50** | **Has your research changed your impression of the text in any way?** |
|  | Yarn thinks more now about what each individual edition is for – not as an avatar for the Shakespearean texts. It’s more about the individual circumstances that shaped each edition. As a result, Yarn thinks about the plays in a different way. She takes the learnings from working in Theatre and thinks about the texts less as single monuments and more as living things subject to all sorts of situations and influences. Her studies of Shakespeare started because of her love of theatre so it is all woven together. |
| **23.55** | **You are now working as an independent scholar. Are you still involved in Theatre in any way?** |
|  | Yarn talks about the impact of COVID and how she is not really involved with Theatre currently. She and Littler did work on a project together during lockdown. Yarn organised a team of scholars who each wrote an analysis of sonnets which were being read aloud and streamed – one each day. She is currently living in USA and hoping that she will get back into theatre once she moves and settles. |
| **END.** |  |