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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:** Chapman**Title:** Mrs**Interviewee’s forename(s):** Patricia**Gender:** Female**Occupation:** Retired |
| **Date(s) of recording, tracks (from-to):** 03/03/2022**Location of interview:** Cambridge Arts Theatre**Name of interviewer:** Lucy St Clair Holbourn **Type of recorder:** Zoom H4N **Recording format:** WAV**Total no. of tracks:** 1 **Total duration (HH:MM:SS):** 00:31:00**Mono/Stereo:** Stereo |
| **Additional material:**  | None |
| **Copyright/Clearance:** Assigned to Cambridge Arts Theatre. |
| **Interviewer’s comments:** |  |
| **Abstract:** | Patricia Chapman is one of the longest serving volunteers at Cambridge Arts Theatre. She discusses what her role involves, her favourite shows, and the changes she has seen during her time working at the Theatre. |
| **Key words:** | Volunteer, Pantomime, *The 39 Steps, Animal Farm, Cinderella, Aladdin,* Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Corpus Christi, King’s College, Globe Theatre Company |
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| **00.00** | Patricia has visited the Theatre for many years. She used to see the Pantomimes with her children. They were once given seats in a box, which was very exciting for the children. In later years, she began to see shows by herself quite regularly. Her neighbour, who was the Theatre’s Duty Manager at the time, suggested that she volunteer and then she would get to see as many shows as she wanted. That was 14 years ago. |
| **1.40** | Her favourite show was *The 39 Steps*. She had seen the film recently and was sorely disappointed because the play was been so much better. There were very few actors, but they played many different characters; there was also a clever use of silhouettes. The play was very original. Patricia also enjoyed the recent production of *Animal Farm*. It used life-sized puppets. It made a lot of the children cry. She also likes coming to opera at the Theatre. She used to have a fear of opera because she had never seen it as a child; she went to her first one with much trepidation and was surprised to find how much she enjoyed it. The audiences for opera are very different from the usual audiences at the Theatre.  |
| **4.05** | Patricia does not enjoy some of the more experimental productions. |
| **5.10** | Patricia thinks the Theatre was very thorough about health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Audience members were asked to show proof of a negative test before entering. She says that people were a little taken aback by this but were generally very responsible. The biggest problem is the bag policy! Some audience members do not want to put away their expensive bags.  |
| **9.20** | Patricia’s favourite shows are the Pantomimes and the children’s shows. She has four children and five grandchildren whom she takes to see them. The most memorable show for Patricia was the first one she saw: *Cinderella*. This year’s pantomime was *Aladdin*. It had a flying carpet which came out over the audience. There were lots of issues with the cast as some caught COVID and had to self-isolate. Other cast members had to cover their roles – some played as many as three parts. Patricia is an usher which means she helps clean up after shows. She doesn’t enjoy clearing up on Panto nights because audience members bring all sorts of food – even sushi and pizza.  |
| **12.30** | Patricia volunteers in various roles – she reads to children at the local school and works in the hospital – but she enjoys volunteering at the Theatre most. She has made friends with lots of the other volunteers. There are also some sixth-form students who volunteer. There are often staffing issues – especially during panto season. At one performance, Patricia was the only usher instead of the usually seven. It’s loyalty that keeps the volunteers coming. When Patricia first began working at the Theatre there was a regular rota – Patricia worked every Tuesday. Now there is a changing rota which means there can be miscommunications.  |
| **20.00**  | Patricia saw the 2021 Panto 16 times. It was fun seeing it so many times because it changed each performance. There is a lot of improvisation, and the cast was different each time because of COVID cases. Patricia usually sees shows twice. She comes once as a volunteer and once as a guest. She still enjoys going to the Theatre outside of her volunteering hours. It feels more special. She loves volunteering because she feels valued; everyone treats volunteers in a lovely way. They are very welcoming and appreciative.  |
| **23.10**  | When Patricia first started working here, they showed Shakespeare in the college gardens. Patricia remembers that the volunteers would push fridges of ice creams down the streets to get to the colleges. The audiences love it. Once, during a performance of *Hamlet* in the Master’s Garden at Corpus Christi, it began to rain just as there was a storm scene in the play. But the audiences stayed. This year the Theatre is planning on putting on a play on the Kings’ College lawn, although it may not be Shakespeare. It used to be the Globe Theatre Company who put on the plays. |
| **25.40** | Patricia thinks that the biggest difference she has seen during her time working here is the way the Theatre is managed. It used to be a much more tightly knit community. The management team has grown but the number of people Front-of-House has not. They are quite short-staffed, especially at the bar. However, Patricia thinks that the team who manage the volunteers are close, and all help each other out. One big problem that the volunteers faced was the Wi-Fi in the auditorium wasn’t good enough to allow them to use contactless payment for ice creams; the machines worked at first but would suddenly crash and big queues would form – so they went back to cash payment. Now audience members assume that they take contactless payment, however, and get frustrated when they reach the end of the queue and cannot pay. |
| **END.**  |  |