

1 I: Can you please tell me your name, and spell it, please?
2

3 DB: My name is Deborah Bestwick, and that's D-E-B-O-R-A-H B-E-S-T-W-I-C-
4 K.
5

6 I: Great. Hi, Deborah, can you tell us about how and why you came to be
7 involved with the Half Moon?
8

9 DB: I saw the job advert and applied; but it was a job that a lot of us were
10 talking about. At the time, I was working with the London Bubble as
11 associate director directing largely the young people's show to go on the
12 community tour with the London Bubble, and my background had also
13 been in a young people's theatre, associate director at The Tricycle,
14 Unicorn Theatre, so I had a background of community and young people's
15 theatre as well as mainstream theatre, and also workshop leading. So it
16 seemed like a great job, so I applied.
17

18 I: Great. And could you describe your strongest memory of the Half Moon?
19

20 DB: I can't say that any one particular incident or show or time is stronger than
21 any other, because it's a really, really vivid period. I think that obviously
22 the development of the bilingual theatre is probably the strongest strand,
23 identifiable strand, that I would be associated with while I was there; but
24 what I mostly remember about working with the Half Moon was an
25 incredible degree of intensity and passion, and I think that came from
26 being we were a collective at the time, we worked as a collective, we were
27 all young, had very little cares in the world except to focus on our work
28 and get on with it, and we did that whether it was campaigning for TYP
29 and TIE, researching the shows we did, having fun as a company, really
30 supporting our work with things like going to Sylheti classes; we were just
31 passionate, intense, hard working, and I remember that really, that that
32 would go through the whole time that I was here was very heady.
33

34 I: And can you describe a particular play or project that you felt was
35 important for the company, for audiences or for you as a practitioner?
36

37 DB: Well, it would have to be the first bilingual show that we did, which ended
38 up being called Dear Suraiya...Love Rehana. And when I joined the
39 company they had begun to engage with the fact that Tower Hamlets was
40 a very mixed community, a very, very high proportion of first-language
41 Sylheti speakers; and at that time, you know, remember how many years
42 ago it was, most of the children coming into primary schools didn't speak
43 English because their mothers were not first-language speakers – I mean
44 it's all changed now – and there were very many social reasons why more
45 cohesion would have helped et cetera, et cetera.
46

47 And the company had started to work within a participatory sense towards
48 I think they'd run a bilingual youth theatre or a project, and Elyse Dodgson
49 at the Royal Court had been hosting a conference on bilingualism within
50 theatre and education; so when I arrived the company had already

51 decided that they would start to explore developing a piece of theatre that
52 was fully bilingual in English and Sylheti Bengali, and that was one of the
53 first projects that I started preparation for in my first year. And it wasn't the
54 first show that I directed, I did two more I think before we actually got as
55 far as producing Dear Suraiya...Love Rehana but I think that that started
56 off a strand of a series of four or five bilingual projects that became an
57 identifying characteristic of the Half Moon Young People's Theatre and we
58 were known for it nationally and internationally.

59
60 M: Don't we need her to talk more about the play?

61
62 DB: Okay. So we were considering how we would approach a piece of
63 bilingual theatre in Tower Hamlets, in whatever year that was – 1987, did
64 we decide? – and there were a lot of things for us to consider, we needed
65 the balance to be equal, we needed the audience to be able to access the
66 play on an equal basis and for everybody to understand and enjoy the
67 same piece of work, and for the language issue to be a strength of the
68 piece and not a divisive factor.

69
70 [05:10]

71
72 We wanted it to be of interest to young children – obviously, it was for
73 junior age group – we wanted it to have strong resonance for those who
74 were from Bangladeshi families, and also for those who were East London
75 children, because they were all facing all sorts of things in different ways;
76 Docklands was in the thick of being built – the DLR wasn't actually
77 completed I think; and we hit on tea as being a sort of currency across
78 both countries and cultures, Sylhet being a tea-producing region, and East
79 London cafés being a central part of many people's culture, and strong
80 resonances; so we hit on tea.

81
82 And then in researching tea plantations in Sylhet I came across an event
83 where War On Want had run a campaign demanding clean drinking water
84 for tea pickers on the tea estates, and they had staged an event at
85 Finlay's tea company with their headquarters in Scotland. War On Want
86 managed to get a glass of water from a well on a tea estate in Bangladesh
87 and they brought it over with a union activist from Bangladesh, and then
88 War On Want activists in the Finlay tea pickers' AGM held out the glass of
89 water and challenged Finlay's company chairman to drink the water that
90 their workers were drinking in Bangladesh.

91
92 And we just found this, well, I just found this a very, very theatrical
93 dramatic image, and so we built the play around that, a fictional run up to
94 that event, with a young girl... So the play was a young girl in a school in
95 Bangladesh – Bangladeshi girl – with her best friend Sharon whose mum
96 Irene ran a cafe, and her cousin Rehana who lived on a tea estate in
97 Bangladesh; and so Sriya, with her friendship largely conducted in an
98 East End café with her friend Sharon, and also when she goes to visit her
99 cousin Rehana in Bangladesh. So we built the show around that.

100

101 But that was how we developed the story. But then we had to do things
102 like put together a bilingual company, find an actor or actors who had
103 credible levels of Sylheti Bengali; we wanted a high degree of authenticity
104 so we took on an adviser, whose name was Mitoub, who knew a lot about
105 the political situation in Sylhet, he was Sylheti himself.
106

107 The rest of our company, well, it was the Half Moon Company, people had
108 to learn Sylheti because everybody was going to speak every language at
109 some point during the play; and before we started devising what was to be
110 the script we had to work out ways in which we would deliver a story in
111 two languages, so that we didn't want a clunky old thing where everybody
112 just translated themselves all the time, we had to make the language
113 threaded through the piece as a theatrical language, part of the drama,
114 and to use the two different languages in different ways. So we played
115 with using one language as narration and another as dialogue, we had
116 some scenes where one character would speak in one language and the
117 other in the other, you know, just different structures like that, and then we
118 applied them to the play depending on the nature and feel of each scene
119 and section. So there was a lot of work going on really. It was very, very
120 exciting, though, very exciting; we spent a lot of time researching in cafés.
121

122 We also had a lot of physical and visual theatre in it as well. I remember
123 one scene, a lot of it was heavily around the construction of Docklands,
124 Docklands was full of builders, and I remember going into a branch of
125 Jewson's timber suppliers with my brother who was building his own
126 house at the time, and observing the way that men take up an immense
127 amount of space, by leaning on a counter and sticking their legs out, or
128 they put their elbow on and then lean out, or put both elbows on the
129 counter and stick their feet out forwards.
130

131 [10:11]

132
133 And so we had a whole physical scene in the café with construction
134 workers coming in and taking up space by counter leaning; did a lot of
135 research.
136

137 I: And how did the first bilingual play develop over the following year in the
138 terms of further work, in the artists?
139

140 DB: Well, it was clear from Dear Suraiya...Love Rehana in the schools that the
141 whole...well, the play itself was a massive success, and the principle of
142 working like that was a huge success; so we resolved to make it a once-a-
143 year thing. We typically did three productions a year and we said that one
144 of them would always be a bilingual piece.
145

146 Now as we went on, I think the next piece we did was for younger children
147 and was Khorghosh and Kautwa – Hare and Tortoise – and we began to
148 feel that we needed to deepen the bilingualism within the way we
149 produced work, and so alongside it we started...we applied to the Paul
150 Hamlyn Foundation for a grant to start a writing project. Because it was all

151 very well, but what we didn't have was a supply of Bengali-speaking
152 actors, A, actually within Muslim culture and Bangladeshi – Bengali –
153 culture acting isn't a thing, and in some parts of the community it's actually
154 a bad thing, or then particularly; we didn't have writers, we didn't have
155 British-based Bangladeshi writers. A fantastic tradition of poetry writing in
156 Bengali, in Bangladesh, and we used some of that in the songs, but not
157 playwriting in London.

158
159 And so we started to try and develop those things as well with a women's
160 writing project in fact, and out of that came the first bilingual play that was
161 actually written by a Bangladeshi writer, called *Bela–The Raft* by Shamim
162 Azad, I think. But actors continued to be a problem, and we were taking
163 very young women typically straight out of sixth form and sort of training
164 them to work in the company as the same time as performing; sometimes
165 that was more successful than others. So it became much more part of
166 the company's identity and trying to spread the practice.

167
168 I: What was special about that time and what made this work important?
169

170 DB: It took place, I think it was very much of its time and place and culture –
171 we would be doing it differently now – East London at that time was a
172 time, there'd been some really complicated politics and dirty tricks
173 between the ruling, largely ruling Lib Dems in Tower Hamlets and the
174 Labour Party, and they had pretty much ensured that the communities in
175 Tower Hamlets were split; so you would have whole estates that were
176 Bangladeshi families and whole estates that were white families. In the
177 thick of this there was a lot of very overt racist activity, Bangladeshi
178 families were regularly having dog shit and burning rags put through their
179 letterboxes. The schools: there was massive rivalry between different
180 schools, there were regularly fights between Stepney Green Boys and Sir
181 John Cass, for example.

182
183 And this was the last days of the Inner London Education Authority,
184 known as ILEA; and ILEA had had very progressive policies actually
185 about multiculturalism, cross-curricula teaching. And we were working
186 with teachers who were very wedded, that the whole nature of
187 multiculturalism was developing and possibly at its height, where you
188 would embrace everybody's culture on a very strong framework, the
189 antiracist movement was at its height; I mean we all underwent antiracist
190 training, it was a very political thing. And so working in a community where
191 in the schools there was a playground divide between kids who spoke
192 English and kids who didn't, and children's achievement was very badly
193 affected by that as well.

194
195 [15:12]

196
197 That was kind of the context that we said, well, look, our remit is to take
198 theatre into schools, let's make sure everybody can engage with it, let's
199 do bilingual theatre.
200

201 I: And what was important about the impact on family audiences of bilingual
202 work?

203
204 DB: I think it was that you could really tell the massive excitement as soon as
205 the children...you know, they'd be sitting on the floor in a circle or a
206 semicircle, and as soon as they realised that their language and things
207 that they recognised was in it that there would be an absolute physical
208 sense of excitement that would ripple around the room, and they'd sit up
209 and perk up. And the fact that all of the kids were enjoying it together; and
210 we would always put in songs that the kids would recognise. And we did a
211 lot of research work with the kids as well, so we would reference it, like in
212 Dear Suraiya...Love Rehana there's a scene where they're all going on a
213 school journey, and all of the kids would recognise that excitement, so
214 they would all recognise it together, and then they would be able to talk
215 about the show together. And I think that...teachers said that made a big
216 impact in the schools.

217
218 I: Can you tell us about other plays you've created and directed?

219
220 DB: With the Half Moon? Yeah. We had a fantastic writer in residence, my
221 friend Lin Coghlan who is an Irish writer, and we did a series of shows that
222 had quite an Irish theme to them; A Divided Kingdom – shorthand we
223 used to call it DK – about young Irish people in London; quite wild, wild
224 pieces of work, not sort of staid ordinary plays at all, they would always
225 have kind of quite wild scenes in them and strong musical elements.
226 Yeah, quite confronting sometimes as well; we always tried to make our
227 work funny.

228
229 We used to do a big tour in a van, the community tour, the first play that I
230 did was called Bad City, written by our first writer in residence, Nick
231 Stafford; and he wrote a play called Bad City about homelessness, which
232 we took to various art centres – I know we went to BAC – and then after
233 that, I can't remember what our next community tour was... Then we had
234 funding difficulties and we did a play called Peacemaker, in the main
235 house, I think as a Christmas show, which was a David Holman play
236 which is one of the classic TIE YPT plays, and that was lovely; we made
237 our wall out of sort of post-industrial knickknackery, it's all about a
238 community that live on either side of a wall and never meet, the reds and
239 the blues – lovely music. Divided Kingdom, which went into schools.

240
241 We were touring Tower Hamlets and Hackney, I remember taking A
242 Divided Kingdom into a school, into Hackney Downs, now razed to the
243 ground... You see, the schools were very different in those days as well,
244 and I remember having to stop the performance because the boys were
245 throwing liquorice allsorts at the actors, which is surprisingly painful if one
246 hits you in the neck. And a teacher was badly assaulted at that school as
247 well and, as I say, it was then razed to the ground.

248
249 And then we did one, I think the last main house play we did while we
250 were still based at the old Half Moon, was Fishing Up The Moon, which

251 was really thinking about people's...it was a kind of early environmental
252 play, if you like, thinking about people's relationship to the environment,
253 but in a very character-based spiritual way; Lin wrote that.

254

255 And then when we became the new Half Moon, after we had to establish
256 a new company, we did a play called Rattlin' The Cage, which was set on
257 a bus. We didn't have a real bus, it had been developed by Red Ladder
258 with Lin Coghlan and they did perform it on a real bus, and I wish we'd
259 been able...I wish we'd done it on a real bus actually. But that also went
260 to art centres.

261

262 And I remember Jenny Sealey – now Jenny Sealey MBE – had much
263 business with us... Oh, that was a lot about Catholicism in that play, and I
264 remember going to Catholic equipment shops in Brixton market to choose
265 statuettes, with Lin the writer, and Jenny Sealey having many comic
266 scenes with them. It was a very wide eclectic piece of work really, but all
267 of it was in some way responsive to things that we knew were issues in
268 young people's lives, or things that were happening in the community.

269

270 [20:41]

271

272 I: Your time at the Half Moon was both at the main building as well as when
273 the young people's section became independent; can you tell us about
274 that time and how the young people's focused work was integrated or
275 influenced by the parent company?

276

277 DB: Yes. When I first went there the YPT – the Half Moon YPT – was the
278 young people's department of the Half Moon Theatre; and I think that
279 would definitely have been influenced by the tradition of the original Half
280 Moon, you know, the first company I think to do The Ragged Trousered
281 Philanthropist when they were still in their old building in Alie Street, a
282 very radical community based theatre; and the YPT was the young
283 person's version of that. And it started, I think, largely as youth theatre.

284

285 And then when I went there they were starting to develop more
286 professional productions for young people, so I think they'd done one or
287 two before I got there; so they decided to make that a focus, and I was the
288 first director of the professional performing company.

289

290 To be honest, we acted almost like two separate companies under the
291 same roof, you know, we were really pleased to be part of the Half Moon,
292 but we had our own building out the back, which we called The Giraffe
293 House, because it was sort of square and not very big but it was taller
294 than it...the height was greater than the ground footprint. And we used to
295 be in there with our own administrator, our own designer, me, the actors,
296 stuffed in this box doing our own work. And we never had to...we were
297 given a budget by the Half Moon but it was largely a budget that was sort
298 of work that was for us, so they would get the Arts Council grant on the
299 understanding that there was an amount for the YPT; we also had our
300 own discrete pieces of funding specifically for young people's work, and

301 had to fight for that and demonstrate against cuts on our own account for
302 those particular pots of money. I think we had money from Tower Hamlets
303 and from the LDDC, which was the London Docklands Development
304 Corporation, and some charities that were specifically for the YPT. But the
305 administration and the money all went through the main house.
306

307 We didn't have to have our programme approved by them, I don't
308 remember anyone from the main house being on the selection panel
309 when I was interviewed and had to do my try-out workshops with the
310 company, you know, it was fairly self contained. We'd go and see their
311 shows.
312

313 I: What was the impact of the work on the audiences who saw works being
314 prepared, and can you tell us more about the building at 43 White Horse
315 Road?
316

317 DB: Okay. I think did we do audiences...?

318 M: Yes [voices overlap 24:05] question.
320

321 DB: Okay.
322

323 I: [Voices overlap 24:08] yes. Sorry.
324

325 DB: Okay.
326

327 I: And can you tell us [voices overlap 24:11]...
328

329 M: [Voices overlap 24:11] Pause a second.
330

331 I: So this one and this one.
332

333 M: Yeah, just ask one about the...
334

335 I: Just this one?
336

337 M: Mmm.
338

339 I: Okay. And can you tell us about the building at 43 White Horse Road?
340

341 DB: Well, when I arrived at the company, Steve Harris, who I think had been
342 associate director of the theatre, or was running the young people's work
343 and training programme for the YPT, had already established the
344 possibility of this building, the 43 White Horse Road – Stepney Town Hall
345 as it was colloquially called – being a base for the Half Moon YPT, and
346 this is when we were still happily part of the Half Moon company in Mile
347 End Road; and he had a vision to get this building and turn it into an
348 education and training centre for young people, in theatre but also very
349 much in film and television and technical studies.
350

351 [25:12]

352
353
354
355
356
357
358
359
360
361
362
363
364
365
366
367
368
369
370
371
372
373
374
375
376
377
378
379
380
381
382
383
384
385
386
387
388
389
390
391
392
393
394
395
396
397
398
399
400

So there's sort of there'd been political negotiations that the YPT would be able to take over this building and run it in that way. And that kind of chuntered on for a couple of years.

And then unfortunately it became clear that the Half Moon on Mile End Road was having serious financial difficulties, it had a big deficit, stuff was going on. And we began to see, we would go to board meetings and do a report but we didn't really have any management input into the whole thing, but we began to think that the Half Moon might be in danger.

Yeah, we had started to do work towards getting this building established, it was in a terrible, terrible state, and we were having to decide whether we would get grants to at least make it safe and secure; water was pouring through the roof, it had dangerous electrics, it was in a very, very derelict state, there were floors that were rotting and moulding through and were not safe to walk on. Squatted as well, for some of the time.

And when the Half Moon went into administration, or when it was clear that that was going to happen, we had a short consultancy done to see what the future of this building would be and whether we should continue to pursue the development of this building. And the advice of that report was very strongly that we should not, that the Half...I mean we were always intending to try to preserve the YPT and to set ourselves up as a small independent young people's theatre company so that that work could continue. And the advice was very much that to take on the development of the new building and to pursue this and to keep it going would definitely sink a new tiny independent company desperately trying to operate out of three office spaces on top of a housing project.

And I felt really strongly that that was the wrong advice and kind of flew in the teeth of that, because...and I think the phrase that I used at the...we were under pressure, you know, we were a small company running as a cooperative with not much towards our overheads, but I just felt...the phrase I had at the time was people in glass houses should throw as many stones as possible, like if the world's against you, you have to, you know, don't not throw stones, throw stones back, big ones. And I felt that the whole climate of the time was that most of the TIE companies, unlike the Half Moon, were actually funded direct from the education authorities, and they were being cut left, right and centre.

We were looking to establish funding from London Arts Board, but the sort of cold chill of funding cuts was starting to come, and I thought that if we were a tiny company in a little office in the middle of Tower Hamlets we would be very easily picked off, we wouldn't be able to do enough work...well, we'd do lots of work but... But I felt that having an asset and a base and an ability to bring more things into the building would give us a much stronger profile and we'd be much harder to cut, basically; so it was a kind of...it was also like building a fortress really.

401
402 And we did, we said, right, well, we will, and we will continue to negotiate
403 to get...I think we were talking about the terms of the lease, getting the
404 lease, we were looking for funding from the LDDC and other pots of
405 money to get the lease and to do the first tranche of work to make the
406 building safe and watertight and secure actually, even though it was never
407 going to make it to the state we could move in. So we did.

408
409 And then we employed architects who did the...one lot of architects,
410 Matrix, who did the first lot of work on the building, and then just as I was
411 leaving they commissioned the architects to do the second lot of work on
412 the building.

413
414 [30:12]

415
416 I: Are there any particular people or activities you would like to tell us about?

417
418 DB: I would...I suppose my own personal relationship with the company also
419 overlaps with some really fantastic friendships and creative relationships.
420 Lin Coghlan and I, with the company, developed at least four pieces of
421 work together, and that was an incredibly rich time. I think having a
422 resident company meant...and Sandra Vacciana and Andy Sinclair were
423 the longest standing members, the people who had the longest period of
424 that in my time, and, you know, the way we were able to create work
425 together. And also Ailsa Fairley who was a member of our company in the
426 first Dear Suraiya...Love Rehana; and then Jenny Sealey joined the
427 company later on.

428
429 And we forged strong creative bonds, strong friendship bonds; in all our
430 chaos, and all of us with our different strengths and un-strengths, and
431 really talented people as well – yeah, I would say – and then David
432 Belshaw who developed his work because he was very young when he
433 joined the company, really good workshop leader and developed a body
434 of work and then became a very good director.

435
436 I: Can you describe what impact your time at Half Moon has had for you?

437
438 DB: It goes back to that passion and intensity. Certainly the level at which you
439 would work, I carried a lot of that with me into my new job at Ovalhouse;
440 and looking back on that, I think that the thing of looking at your theatre in
441 relation to its community is something that I had the keenest experience of
442 at the Half Moon and has always stayed with me, and now that's
443 something I'm drawing on as I'm trying to take my new company into a
444 new building in Brixton.

445
446 Working in a collective: yes, well, I think that I don't think that you should
447 have collectives of more than three – based on my experience – it was
448 absolutely brilliant creatively, it was a nightmare to run a company as a
449 collective with seven or eight of us, especially when we were trying to do
450 things like develop a new building. But I went into my new job, when I

451 went into my new job I was the first director there and it had been run as a
452 collective, so I knew exactly what everybody was dealing with and how
453 they wanted to work, and from my own experiences how it wouldn't work.
454 So that influenced me, it was a great experience, I absolutely love the Half
455 Moon now, and to step off the DLR and see from the platform the lettering
456 that you've got now across the top of the building, it's that is fantastic.

457
458 I think I was there at a particular time, and I think, I'm sure there's been
459 difficult times, but I think sticking with getting 43 White Horse Road was
460 the right thing to do, and I think that moving towards the company not
461 being a collective any more was the right thing to do; but it was all of its
462 time and it all happened at the right time. So...

463
464 I: And looking back do you have any regrets or things that you would have
465 done differently?

466
467 [34:14]

468
469 DB: Well, I'm sure there were things I would have done differently. Not really,
470 actually, not really; I think I should have... I remember in an evaluation
471 once Sandra Vacciana saying – quite rightly – look, you know, we don't
472 know what we're doing half the time in rehearsal and that's because we
473 just kind of do it and go ahead with something that was great; and I think
474 that...actually think that the notion of rigour and artistic excellence has
475 developed more now, and it was just starting to develop then, and we
476 were, you know, [inaudible 34:55] well, it'll be all right, just do it like that.

477
478
479 [34:57]

480
481 But, hey, we were looking at a big picture and doing a different artistic
482 adventure, so... No, I don't think there's anything really major that I
483 would...that was a serious strategic mistake; other people looking in might
484 well say that, like what on earth did they do that for.

485
486 I: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

487
488 DB: Just the schools we were working with, very, very important that we had a
489 very good relationship with the schools, and a lot of the ability for us to
490 deliver something like a bilingual programme for the first time in Tower
491 Hamlets schools; part of the success of that was the support of the
492 network of teacher's centres, like every borough, every local authority had
493 a teacher's centre, teacher's resource centre, and you would do inset
494 days with the teachers, introduce the programme to them, do an inset
495 programme; teacher's advisory service telling us what was going on in
496 schools, really, really helpful at that time.

497
498 And also our relationships with the teachers in Mulberry and Central
499 Foundation were very good. And when...you see, the loss of the Half
500 Moon and the establishment of the new Half Moon YPT was a very, very

501 traumatic short space of time, actually, we knew the company was going
502 to go into administration and that our jobs would be lost, we'd get a letter
503 from the administrators in our final pay packet; and we had a short space
504 of time in which to establish a brand new company that we would all step
505 into. We found our offices above Dame Colet House, and we had to put
506 together a new board, we had to put together a new company constitution
507 and company registration, we had to get a new Charity Commission
508 number. And the members of the new board, which would be our first
509 board, some of them were teachers from Mulberry and Central
510 Foundation, for instance, and other community arts projects in the area.

511
512 So it was, to be honest I don't quite know how we did it; we talked to the
513 funders, we arranged that they would preserve the amount of grant that
514 had gone to the YPT, to the old Half Moon, that they would redivert that to
515 a new company. We talked to other funders and, you know, we had to go
516 and see a lawyer – oh, it was all very complicated – but basically on the
517 day that we got our letters from the administrators of the old Half Moon to
518 say that our contracts were terminated, we walked across the road from
519 our offices in the old Half Moon down onto Dame Colet House and signed
520 our new contracts, and had a party.

521
522 I: Thank you.

523
524 DB: Pleasure.

525
526 M: Thank you, that was great. Yeah? Is there anything else you want to...?

527
528 DB: Oh, I should have said Tony Gouveia as well, actually, as the...in the
529 people, yeah, Tony Gouveia, who was running the youth theatre. Yeah.
530 Anyway.

531
532 M: Could you just tell us [voices overlap 38:46] question, and then look at...

533
534 DB: Yes. Okay.

535
536 M: But what we didn't talk about so much was the importance of the
537 participatory work with young people, like the youth theatre...

538
539 DB: Yeah.

540
541 M: ...upon the organisation and your...

542
543 DB: Okay. Okay. So during the time I was director with the company we also
544 continued and developed the participatory work with young people; so we
545 continued the technical training course which ran once a year in the
546 space, and I think Chris Corner was running it and we appointed Deepak
547 Mistri to be its full-time coordinator and fundraiser. We had money from
548 the Monument Trust, a Sainsbury's trust, to do that.

549

550 And meanwhile the youth theatres were continuing and thriving. And when
551 I first arrived Josette Bushell-Mingo, who is a great actress and director,
552 was running them; she's gone to Sweden now I think. And then there was
553 a period we didn't have anyone, and we would all – we as company
554 members – would run a youth theatre each, after our day's work; and I ran
555 the girls' youth theatre with Sandra Vacciana.

556

557 [39:57]

558

559 And I think, you know, that was...it was introducing a whole load of people
560 to an experience that it didn't have access to elsewhere in the area at the
561 time; so we did do a good job of running ambitious youth theatres. But it
562 really fed, it really fed the performance work; because most of our shows
563 were devised or semi-devised, or written on the basis of something
564 devised, it was research, and we knew what young people were talking
565 about, we knew what their passions were, we knew what was facing them;
566 and we could try things out with them as well, so there was a very close
567 relationship between the participatory work and the professional work.

568

569 And then actually it was the youth service, I think, then, yeah, we
570 negotiated with the youth service who employed but placed within the Half
571 Moon Tony Gouveia as youth theatre director, and he ran some really
572 ambitious projects; and in fact he started a community project as well, so
573 it wasn't just with youth, he ran a whole project with women in the Ocean
574 Estate who were protesting about housing being taken over by housing
575 associations. And I think we ran a summer school which Tony directed
576 every year, for children with special needs, and we did absolutely lovely
577 performances with them.

578

579 And that was an important strand of the YPT's work as well, disability
580 integration; we always had a company member with a disability; we had
581 Ailsa Fairley, who had visual impairment; and then Jenny Sealey, a
582 famous Deaf director now, famous director of Graeae Theatre. And we
583 run projects for young people with disabilities; so we were a very...had a
584 very kind of wraparound inclusive vision, which I think wasn't...actually
585 wasn't so common for YPT and youth theatre companies then, there were
586 some specialist companies around but it wasn't common for that to be
587 integrated throughout a whole company; and we approached the
588 development of this building with that in mind as well. When Steve Harris
589 first started talking about this building, access was not, you know, that the
590 DDA was not law, it was kind of a bit hit and miss, and Steve Harris had
591 actually had his whole house made disabled accessible just on the off
592 chance that a visitor might need it to be so; and we talked about the
593 development of 43 White Horse Road, you know, if a space couldn't be
594 got at via the lift it couldn't be used as a space, you know, we were
595 quite... So it was... And that was very much to do with our participatory
596 work as well.

597

598 M: Perfect. I think you deserve to close that. Thank you so much.

599

600 DB: Sorry, I do cart on.
601
602 M: That's what you need to do.
603
604 DB: Yeah.
605
606 M: [Inaudible 43:16] you've just got to keep talking.
607
608 DB: Yeah.
609
610 M: Because it...that makes it better than too many questions.
611
612 **End of transcript**