

## Unnamed Actress

Really an actor's job is of great worth because it alters the play totally. What I've seen this afternoon it totally different to the original 'History Boys' many years ago, again, different to the film. And each time you think it says more about Alan Bennett than it does about anybody else. But the actors are altering it totally. And that's what I enjoyed about that job that I chose when I was your age, because once you are let loose on the stage, nobody can do anything about it! They can do notes forever, before and after, but they can do nothing about what's actually going on that moment, the instant of that.

(What was your favourite production while you were growing up?)

When I was growing up... I was a classical, theatre-adoring student. I went to a drama college in London. And I was terribly grateful that my school was in Oxford. I started at the OUDS (Oxford University Drama Society) because Oxford students were, in those days, terribly short of women who looked half presentable, shall we say. Because although there were women at Oxford, and I'd love that last line to be changed to men and women - I felt, you know, for now, there are more girls in the audience than there are boys. And we're making great strides.

(Why do you think there are more girls than boys?)

Because I think girls are trying harder. I have a granddaughter your age. I used to work for the Arts Council and in Joan Littlewood and in 'Oh, what a Lovely War!' she was my idol as a student because she tatted around, not looking glamorous, as we were all trying to do and trying to tell the truth. And that I think is the most important thing the theatre do. I went off the theatre largely in the 50s and 60s, because it was so busy entertaining. And in those days I thought that theatre was there to instruct gently for people to think. To start them thinking. Going along a line they hadn't pursued before and that is what took me into the theatre, and I think classical plays tend to do that if they're done well. But they're done, so often, more often than not, badly. So that it puts very young kids off going to see Shakespeare right at the very beginning and it takes them forever to get back, if they ever do. Yeah, any of the Shakespeare plays. If you study Shakespeare at all you will find that somewhere along the line he's felt that through a character, and told you about it. It's not for nothing that he is top of the list.

(How has the theatre changed in Brighton?)

Oh it's changed enormously! It was never my hometown, my husband and I lived in London, and we rented a flat on the seafront at Brighton to use when we had free time. Then, when I started having a family, we moved down to Brighton and it became my hometown. Many years ago. So yes, in those days it was my Brighton. These were the days when Lawrence Olivier lived just a few doors down along the sea front. There were so many actors living along the seafront in those days. It's going back quite a long way - John Clements, Kelly Hammond.

(What performance has had the biggest impact on you?)

That's hard. It's usually the last one that's meant a tremendous amount. I'm again back to classical theatre, although I'm trying to think of a modern play. I go to the theatre less now. When I retired I became a guide at Charleston Farmhouse and that's where I was taking hoards of students round but they weren't drama students they were art history and the Bloomsbury enthusiasts.