

Robert Watts Transcript

Robert Watts, I'm 65 and I'm from Brighton

(What would you say your earliest experience of theatre in Brighton was?)

Probably 1970-ish I would guess. I can remember seeing Phil Silvers who you probably don't know; He used to be Bilco, playing in 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum' here in about 1970. And I can remember standing outside the stage door when Marlene Dietrich came here.

(What was your favourite production when growing up?)

I guess I used to like Gilbert and Sullivan quite a lot. They were a couple of Victorian, one wrote the music and the other wrote the songs and they were and still are incredibly popular. Occasionally this theatre does it, but I seem to miss it every time. When it's good it's good. I mean I don't particularly like musicals very much, but I do like that. So I suppose I could say that. Some good quality plays, Cause I think Alan Bennett is just absolutely amazing. You need to look up Alan Bennett 'The Lady in the Van' is one of his plays. It has been on here as a matter of fact and they're just about to make a film of it. But it was about a Lady who lived in a van in her drive for about 15 years and she was just a tramp and if you can't get to see the play I don't know if you're local at the moment but go up to the Brighton Library and pick up the BBC audio of Alan Bennett actually reading that particular story. It's really really good. Trust me. I just think the quality of his writing is amazing. The fact that he's slightly older than me but probably has the same views on education, he's an ex grammar school boy, he just strikes a chord as far as I'm concerned. I think he's clever and I think he's funny. Some people can't stand him - It's like Marmite, you either like him or you hate him but I actually love him. And I wish I'd seen that performance.

(How did your interest in theatre start?)

I don't know. I guess it was something that I, I mean my parents never took me to theatre we went to things like pantomimes at Christmas every year but I was possibly never encouraged to go to the theatre so when I grew up, I decided it was an opportunity to have a crack at something different. I mean it's lovely to just sit here and think that someone's doing this for you. You know, warts and all. So if they make a mistake, you know, so what? That's the thing I like about it. I think it's fabulous.

(Did you have anyone in particular that influenced you to go?)

I don't think so, I think I influenced myself. There's got to be some influence, whether it was school or whether it was somebody saying something but honestly it's such a long time ago I can't remember. I just remember that I decided that going to the theatre was... It was probably 'the thing to do' at one point. Plus the fact of course, my other half works here two afternoons a week so it encouraged me again.

(About the theatre)

There some lovely lovely people, I've made some fabulous friends as a result of this, which is really good. They'd still probably encourage me to come along. Not that I need much encouragement.

(Do you think the theatre had changed much in Brighton?)

No. I don't think it has. They still bring some oddball things on occasionally. Which probably in other parts of the country wouldn't succeed. Brighton's a bit of a cosmopolitan area, mixed, very, very mixed community so it can actually cope with putting up some new stuff. As long as it's not too far off the wall, it's okay. I think as long as they keep the old established things going. I mean, I love coming and seeing the ballet here. Not seen Opera here yet, so I need to check that out.

(Have you seen anything risqué in your years)

Risqué? I suppose you could say, what's it called? Rocky Horror Show I suppose you could consider to be relatively risqué

(What was your opinion on that?)

Brilliant, Fabulous. I mean in attracts all the right people who are there to enjoy themselves. I don't know if I've seen anything else too risqué. If you wanna know the worst performance I've ever seen, in this theatre, was 'Catch 22'. It was crap. I walked out half way through and I wasn't the only person to do so. I mean I've read the book and seen the film with Art Garfunkel in it so I knew what I was up against. But it was hopeless! I've seen some good Shakespeare here and I'm not heavily into Shakespeare but the 'Propeller' Group doing the Henrys and things like that was very very good.

(How long have you been involved with the Brighton theatre?)

Most recently the last four years. It coincided with my meeting Sandra, she worked here so you know, I remember the first time she said 'would you like to come to the theatre?' It was something called 'The Dinnerladies', it was a follow on from a TV show of 'Dinnerladies'. It was absolutely abysmal, but I persevered. I don't like farce particularly. Although, I came to see 'The Hypochondriac' the other week with the guy who played Baldrick in Blackadder. And that was exceptionally good and that was a sort of vague farce. But I don't like people running across with their trousers hanging down and stuff like that. They have a few here, which usually were written in about the 60's and really should've stayed in the 60s.

It used to be a thing every Christmas there used to be what they called 'The Whitehall Farce' and there was a very famous actor, he's still alive as a matter of fact, called Brian Ricks who used to regularly be on the TV on a televised stage

play at his theatre and it used to end up with everyone's trousers hanging round their ankles and running around like idiots and it just put me off forever and it was about the late 50's early 60's.

But I think that's something that's changed over the last few years. When I used to come to the theatre shall we say 20, 25 years ago; I don't recall this sort of animation of scenery, which you now get. Which first of all I hated. And there's so many times I think 'Gosh that's really clever, how did they do that' or 'I'd have never thought of doing it that way' or something like that.

(Do you prefer the emotional type work or not?)

I can get very emotional at times. It takes a bit of a while to just sort of bring it out but if it's well acted, and links to my personal thoughts about something, yeah I can get very very emotional about the whole thing

(Can you describe a set or costume that you really got attached to?)

They did a performance of 'Under Milkwood' here a few months ago where the whole of the village was effectively portrayed in a circle with steps up. Which is incredibly simple but it worked. If I'd have been asked to sit down and work out the scenery for 'Under Milkwood' I would've done something huge and stupid and unnecessary but it's horses for courses really.