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BECTU History Project
Interview no: 227
Interviewee: Yvonne Littlewood
Interviewer: Norman Swallow
No of tapes : 4
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NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 1 Side 1

 Yvonne Littlewood, television producer. Interviewer, Norman Swallow. Recorded on the 21st of November 1991. Side One.

Can, can we ask, first of all when and where you were born?

I was born in Maidstone, Kent, in 1927. And, but from Kent I moved over for a short to King's Lynn in Norfolk because my father was in banking, and then eventually I went to the West Country, to Ross-on-Wye, when I was about six I suppose, I think, or there around. And so I spent all my schooling in Ross, and that was, of course, then sort of late '30s and into the War. So, the early part of the War anyway, I, I was in Ross, I was in school there. Convents, schooling, I can't claim any academic qualifications, but I did specialise in school quite a bit in music, and my mother seemed to think that I had some, I mean, and my mother was one of those people who I think thought I should have to do everything, you know, one of those, a bit of this, a bit of that, and whether you did any of it really well, but it, we had to have a go at it all. So dancing was also something which I had a, a, quite an extensive training in. But I used to have to go to Hereford for my dancing lessons, although somebody came once a week to give a class somewhere in the church hall, which I can't remember too much about that. I can remember going to Hereford, and I went twice a week, and I used to have to take the bus and it left at 4.10, and to a child at that age it was an endless bus journey. And I went to May Hatton's Academy in Hereford, and I took my dancing lessons there, and I did my exams at The Royal Academy, I went, soldiered through them. I think I must have started some dancing in King's Lynn because my cousin has reminded me of something recently that must have been in King's Lynn, so I, that was really when I was four or five, but I can't remember much about that, but I can remember Hereford. And I took my exams, and some, I sometimes had to come to London for those, that was, you know, a huge excursion to come to London to do an exam. And so I did a lot of that, and at music, at school I did music, which I seemed to have potential for. And mainly because, I liked it so much was that we had an inspiring nun who taught music, Sister Patricia, and it was because of her I think that I perhaps got on well with that because I, although I, obviously I wasn't particularly mathematically, you know, inclined and so all that side of it I kind of slightly blamed on the nun not having any inspiration, but I think probably I didn't have the potential for that kind of thing. I'm quite interested in languages. And so I

soldiered through school, and I didn't go to school in the afternoons till I was about ten, I, because I was so busy being sent to Hereford for my dancing lessons.

We're now just...

And I can..

Sorry, we're now just after the War aren't we?

No, we're, we're...

Aren't we?

This would be...

Yes.

Well '27, '37...

Oh sorry, please, I beg your pardon.

And just about the War beginning.

So during the War, yes, sorry.

During the War, during the, the pre, run up to the War. And I can remember the nuns saying to my mother if the child is going to take her, her, you know, Oxford and whatever it was examinations well then she'll have to come full time.

Mm.

So I, that happened and with a lot of effort I got through Junior School Certificate and Senior School Certificate and I was quite good at real crash study, because I had quite a good brain for sort of memorising things as long as it needed and then by the next day I'd forgotten the lot, you know. So I scrambled through the School Certificate with a, a, just about enough whatever it was to pass. And towards the end of that I thought, you know, I'm no good at maths, and I don't like them, and, and I mean geometry and algebra was just, you know, gobbledegook.

Yes.

I mean I think it is to a lot of children, well it was, to me it was, you know, I don't know. And I, and so for some reason we could specialise, if we didn't like that we could take Shorthand and Typing and Bookkeeping, so that was where I went to. And, the way I went anyway. And after that it was, what would I have been? Sixteen, seventeen'ish.

Mm.

It was 'What are you going to do'? And there was not much, you see and now we were well into Wartime.

Mm.

[05:00]

So there was not much access to the Arts or to concerts, I never went to a concert, or a, a, the only theatre experience I had was to go to Cheltenham once a year with some friends to the pantomime, which we went in an old Morris car I can remember, and I didn't like that because it was all of about twenty-eight miles and I was always carsick so I didn't really enjoy the pantomime because it was dreading the journey. We didn't have a car, I had a bicycle, I used to get around. And I didn't appreciate that part of the country, which is beautiful, because I never sort of saw much of it. It was up and down the hill to school and that was it. And the War started...

Mm.

And so it, we had a wireless.

Mm.

We did have a wireless, from quite way back. And I, we must have had a wireless in, everybody called it a wireless didn't they, in King's Lynn, and we used to listen to the wireless a lot, and I used to like the wireless. And I can remember Henry Hall, and I can remember all the things he played. And my father and mother were both interested in amateur theatricals and were members of the local Ross Operatic and Dramatic Society, and I can remember them putting on *The Desert Song* and all those things, and the local cinema became a theatre for the occasion. And so that was really the only sort of background of, you know, entertainment I had.

I'm sorry, what, what was your father's job, career?

He was in the bank, he was a bank accountant in the Nat, Nat Provincial.

Mm.

And we lived over the bank in, in Ross. And my mother was a very active lady, she was into all sorts of things, she liked the amateur theatricals, she had in fact as a young person, I mean she was a rebel, and she'd run away from school and she'd gone and done an audition and, for something in Brighton, and got this… Anyway, I don't know, but she was, she was, she obviously liked that. She had a, given a part on the stage and then her father discovered where she was and she was, a strict background, her father was Army, and she was whipped back to school. But he, he obviously had her, you know, it was fisticuffs always with her father. But I think to this day, and she's now ninety-seven, she retains some of his, some of it has rubbed off on her.

Mm.

Some of that strict, you know, parental thing, but, God love her. Anyway, she, that was the only, so I had to decide what I wanted to do didn't I? And I can't remember having much advice from them. But, and I don't know where I got the idea from but we must get on to it quickly, I wrote to the BBC and asked them if I could have a job in the BBC, because like all sixteen, seventeen year olds, you don't know what you want to do. And I thought that somehow the BBC was associated with music and the Arts and I suppose...

Mm.

I must have got this from listening to the radio. And so I wrote and they said I could go up for an interview and I, because I'd done Shorthand and Typing at school and they said 'Okay'. So up I came, that was '44, the summer of '44. I had the interview, and I joined on October the 2nd 1944 and I reported to 55 Portland Place. Now I can't remember the name of the lady but we did three weeks there to give us the sort of how to lay out letters and memos and who DXB was, and XYZ.

Mm.

And AJB and I...

You were seventeen then weren't you?

Seventeen, because July.

Okay.

I was a July birthday. And I went there for three weeks, so I thought, you see, the end of this, Music Department and whatever, I didn't know where this was all, you know, I couldn't wait. So on the Friday afternoon when I'd done my three weeks, and I think I must have been staying in the hostel then, which was in Grosvenor Square because, you know, we were War on.

Mm.

And it was doodlebug time. And she said to me 'Well', you know, 'on Monday morning you report to Doris Lewis, the Finance Secretary's Office, in The Langham Hotel, 525'. And I said, 'Finance Secretary'?. She said 'Yes'. I said 'But I, I, I joined the BBC to work in music'. 'Oh', she said, 'you'll love it there', she said 'they're ever so nice', she said 'you'll love it there'. I said 'Finance? I'm no good at money', I said, 'I could have worked in my father's bank if I were', you know, 'I've got no potential for figures, I gave up arithmetic at school because I was so useless'. And I mean when I think about it now. So anyway, she said 'Well you go along there', she said, 'and if you don't like it you don't have to stay, but you, I think you'll like it', you know. So conned wasn't I? And I, so off I went and surely enough I went and reported to Doris Lewis. And the Finance Secretary was a man called Jack Godfrey, a nice man, and, and 525 The Langham it was, and that has memories now. And I can remember the room numbers, lots of room numbers I can't remember, but I can remember that one. So, I was the junior, you know, the typist there, the shorthand typist. And, and it was interesting though, and I don't regret it sort of in retrospect because I got to understand

about they had to make money to run the BBC programmes, and he used to do the weekly financial document that was taken across to Broadcasting House to the Controller of Finance, or Chief Accountant, who was a man called J.G.L. Francis I think.

[10:24]

And there was also a, they used a Chief Accountant and I think Lock..., Mr. Lockhead was the Controller of Finance. And I typed this dreaded thing, which was a double foolscap page thing, and we had these old Remington typewriters and the whole thing was you did one plus five at least, and if you could get six that was a good idea, you see. And off I used to go, and it was all written out, you know, in columns across. And that was my life. And we did it, we had to take it across on Monday evenings and I, I mean it's so fun, this is awful rubbish isn't it, but I can remember doing these things, and because there were five or six carbons, you know, there was nothing like it was today. And you went up and of course, the thing was to set it nicely on the page, and the page seemed to be huge, it was a long carriage thing. And as you went up, and you, you know, you, you rolled away, you made a mistake, you had to get all these bits of paper in to make the alteration and inevitably you got to the bottom and the paper slipped and, oh, and my life. And I think, you know, the trauma of it. And, and I used to struggle with this, quite a funny story, nightmare, but it had to go across the road at five o'clock on, on Mondays for the meeting the next day for the… And it was an interesting though thing, it was like, we need a new transmitter, or there, we, we had War correspondents and we need another one. And I can remember names like Richard Dimbleby, and Wynford Vaughan Thomas and Frank Gillard and all these...

Yes. Also how much it, it cost?

Yes. It was the, it was the, it was the sort of request for more money for various people who needed money in different departments. And there would be something about the, you know, obviously capital money that's there, and there would be money for new transmitters or whatever. It was the, you know, a weekly thing for the overall finances of the Corporation. Not specialist so much, not like salaries or...

No.

Any, it was, you know, capital monies.

Mm.

So I used to do this on Monday. And BH then had a, had a specially built up stone sort of frontage, because of the War to, to shield the main entrance.

Right, yes. Mm.

And you went in through a thing.

A blast thing, yes.

A blast thing.

Mm.

And I used to come across from the Langham with it, and because it was such big paper you couldn't, there were no envelopes big enough, I used to carry it across like this you see and usually I used to put a piece of paper across the top.

Mm.

But I'm going this day with it, you know, this precious thing with a clip at the top and maybe one at the side, and I used to carry this across in my hot, sticky hands, across the road. And I got outside the Langham, and as I got outside a pigeon went splat, right in the middle of the top page. I mean absolutely smothered the top page with it. I, I stood there, the tears poured out of my eyes and I went back upstairs crying my heart out, I mean, and, and Doris said 'What's happened'? I said 'Look at this'. And she...

Laughed?

I mean we laughed. And then we got rubbers and we blotted it and we, there was no time to do it all again, you know, and we patched it all up, and off I went back with it. All the money that week was agreed, we got everything we wanted we'd put in for, so it was obviously a good luck symbol you see, but that was, that was life. So anyway, enough of that.

So if that document still exists it would be interesting to see what condition it's in now.

I don't know, I don't think so. I can remember it though, I'm sure, you know. Anyway, after about two years of this, or a little less, you know, I thought this, this isn't really why I joined the BBC. And I used to see on the notice board notices asking for people for television, because it was six, you know, '46 you see.

'46.

It was starting up again. And during the period and the run up to this period when it restarted there were, little adverts would go up on the wall. And I was staying in Grosvenor Square, as I say, at the time, and there was a hostel there which was, which was kind of, I mean it was bunk beds and things.

Mm.

But we stayed there, and I might say my salary in those days was two pounds ten and ten pence a week, and we got thirty shillings extra for living away from home.

Yes. It's, go on..

And I managed to save some money then. And we used to go across to BH canteen for our lunch, you know, and things like that. But anyway I thought a lot, I must sort of think about this, so I used to, I used to apply for these jobs. There were all sorts of

things in television and there were, you'd see jobs in production, I fancied that so I used to apply, and I never got anything, not anything.

[15:12]

And, by the way, one other interesting, small sideline, in that building, on the third floor, because we were in the fifth, and the building on the third floor was Ronnie Waldman, who was producing for radio and he and his secretary, Hilary Mitton, who was quite a character, he used to produce The American Band of the AEF, which was Glenn Miller and, and The Canadian Band of the AEF, which was Robert Farnon, and all those sort of things. And they used to have audiences for those shows, and I used to go bash on the door regularly asking for tickets, you know, to, to the point where I used to sort of think 'Dare I ask again'? But I used to do that and I used to get tickets for those sort of shows that they made.

Where, where were they?

Well some of, I can't think that they would fit into The Paris Cinema.

Mm.

But I can't work, think where else they would have been, I think they must have been at The Paris Cinema. A lot of things were at The Paris Cinema, whether they were big enough, they, I don't think they were in The Concert Hall at Broadcasting House, they might have been.

They wouldn't have been the, the, you know, The Forces Club?

I don't know where they were, I can't remember where they were, but I can remember going and getting the tickets. And why I remember it I suppose was because of my latter association with Ronnie when he came to television.

Mm.

But that's where I used to first, I never spoke to him because he was too grand but I used to go and, and knock on Mitt's door. And, you know, she'd sort of say 'But you had two last week'. And I'd say 'Well have you got any spares', you know? But I used to apply anyway, I didn't get any jobs. And then in desperation I went home for the holi.… No, I, I went home for the holidays to Ross in the August and somebody rang me up or sent me a letter and said 'There's a job as a secretary to The Establishment Assistant in Television, Sydney W. Budd'.

Mm.

'And we wonder if you'd be interested, you'll have to come up to London for the interview', and I'd only gone home for, you know, a couple of… And that was a major thing getting home to Ross in those days. I mean you had to get to Gloucester, change, the traffic you're stood in, when you went home at a Bank Holiday, Paddington Station was like cheek by jowl, I mean it was packed with people, queue

deep, and if you didn't leave by two o'clock you couldn't get home the same day. It was, you know, it was really difficult.

Right.

And around about that time too I remember we were in Grosvenor Square, and we used to hear the doodlebugs go over, and one hit Selfridges, I can remember that one coming down. And, and it didn't half make a mess, the glass sort of halfway up to Grosvenor Square was all over the place. That's the nearest, and fortunately, you know, fortunately. My relations, I had some relations in, in, up in Parliament Hill way, they were bombed out during the War.

Mm.

But I went, I came up and I had this interview and of course, I got the job didn't I, because I didn't really want it but I got that one. So I thought 'Well, you know, I, I want to move on', and so I went. And it was all 'You've got to be back, and you've got to go by September', or something or other so I came back and I duly went to AP and of course, when I got there Sidney Budd hadn't arrived so I was there with no boss. So they said 'Well I'll tell you what, Harold Clayton needs a secretary so could you go and give him a hand'? Now the joke was I, I never got any of these jobs as, in production because I had no experience, I hadn't been in radio production so if you hadn't been in radio production you were no good for a production job. So they get, I get there so they immediately send me to Harold Clayton. I mean, I cannot imagine how useless I must have been. And he was doing a production of *Jane Eyre* with The Embassy, Swiss Cottage Embassy Theatre Company. Apart from the fact I remember Mary Morris was in it I can't remember anything else. And I worked for Harold, who was a lovely man, but I must have been more trouble than I was help to him because, you know, I didn't know what I was doing. But that was what I did, I helped some way, I don't know what my capacity was, whether there was anybody, but I can't remember whether there was anybody else but that's what I did. And then, then Sidney arrived and up we went into the, we were in the, in the posh tower, you know, the, the operational tower we had an office and there was Sidney Budd, there was Jack Rich.

Yes.

And Sidney was the Establishment Assistant and Jack Rich was the, sort of responsible for the establishment of the studio staff, the, the scenic people and that whereas Sidney was all the programme personnel. And the, the, now what was his title? Jack Knott was the Establishment Officer, I think he was called.

[20:12]

Yes.

Little man, Jack Knott, do you remember him?

I remember him, yes.

Mm. And there we were. And Sidney was a lovely gentle man and charming, and we, you know, did what we had to do, which was establishment business and all the necessary correspondence. And I was doing that for a little while and I think my salary was now, mm. and by this time I'd got the odd bonuses that you got at the end of the year, and I got, I think I got four pounds six, sixteen, two years on.

Per week?

Yes, per week. I think it must have been that. And, well it's significant for what's coming later. And then, I don't know how long I tolerated this, but in the long term it was a good, good gag, I followed here because I, being in that position knew exactly who was coming and going.

[Laughter]

Devious I was. I waited to see where there was a vacancy and as soon as there was a job I fancied I put in an application much to Sidney's chagrin [Laughter] and I think little displeasure. And he used to say, you know, 'But you don't want a job in production'. 'Oh, yes, well I sort of, that's why I joined the BBC'. And at the end of that year, '46, and the beginning of '47, there were of course, lots of producers at that time, there was Michael Barry, there was Royston Morley and Robert Barr and, you know, I can't remember too many about people other than these names. Fred O'Donovan, Harold Clayton of course. And they used to do everything, they didn't just do drama they did, they had to do whatever was there. Cecil Madden must have been around in those days of course, doing sort of a, I think he was more or less the, the main pin of scheduling programmes that people do.

Yes.

Peter Bax was, I think.

Was Mary Adams there then?

I think she must have been.

She was my first boss, that's why I asked.

Yes. Yes, I think she must have been there...

Yes.

In, in terms of the current affairs.

Mm.

They weren't called that then but...

Right.

But that's, that's what she must have done.

Talks.

I remember yourself and I remember Greeve Del Strother

Yes.

Who used to buy the films that, that were shown, he was that side of the Film Department. And then we heard that on the first of January there was a young chap due called Michael Mills back from the Navy. And he was coming back to do Light Entertainment, and not only that, they decided to give him a job called Producer Light Entertainment, and that was the first time that people had a, they had a classification, they were put into a department you see. Well there wasn't a department, but they were called 'Light Entertainment' instead of just 'Producer'. So I can, we all waited for him and his office was, duly had the, you know, the heating switched on and he didn't arrive did he on the first of January? And then we got copious telegrams and things saying 'Regret, won't be there till the third or fourth', or something, because he was coming back from the Navy where he'd served as a, in the Free French Navy ultimately as a sort of entertainments officer. And he had been at the BBC before, he was being rein.., reinstated, re, re-established. He was a, a technical operator before the War, along with Johnnie Stewart who, who later was also of course, he went in…

Mm.

He was in radio again but...

Yes.

When he came back but he of course, joined television and was the originator of *Top Of The Pops*. And in fact Michael was best man at his, his wedding too. And John Carter was another one, was of that ilk, who became the Gramophone Librarian. But anyway, Michael duly swept in, because Michael only swept in anywhere when he arrived he never came in quietly through the door. And we all sort of said, you know, 'You're late'. I mean, and, and he said 'Well I'm sorry', you know there was all sorts of reasons for why he wasn't there but he, he was dispatched to an office, as you rightly said, at the back of the theatre. And he had a lady working for him called Mrs. Woodfield, I think her name was, his secretary, and that was that. He, he got on with his thing and I was there getting on with my thing and, Philip Bate was there.

[25:00]

Yes, yes, Philip Bate.

And Philip did music and ballet and things. And Philip's secretary left. Now that was just my mark you see so I was in there faster than. I typed the resignation sheet one minute and, and along with the resignation sheet went my application, you know.

Mm.

That was, that was really cheeky. And so I had a, an interview, I didn't get that, so I was, not really, you know, not really, no, no experience of course, was his answer. Philip, I remember, do you remember his droopy moustache?

Yes, yes.

Big man.

And sucking his pipe.

So that went on. And so anyway I soldiered on doing my thing. I can remember we had, I mean digressing slightly for me, but there was, there was Peter Bax, I think he was there then, but we only had two designers.

Yes.

We had Barry Learoyd and James Bold, they were the only two designers that were there. And we had a temporary who came in, on what was called in those days, 'casual labour', and his name was Stephen Bundy, and I can remember going with a piece of paper about that big, you know, small octavo size,

Yes, yes.

Which was his pay chit with what he was to get and if he took it to the cashier he got some money. And I used to walk it across from my office to where he was, which was I think it must have been, they must have had offices at… I don't know whether, I mean all the work they did ultimately was done on the stage of the theatre because that's where they painted the cloths. And then I can remember Percy Cornish was the Scene Master.

Mm.

And I can remember Jack Hind was the Artist Painter, because there was only one of anybody wasn't there?

That's right.

And I, was, I think the Property Master was Bill King.

That's right.

Because Frank Holland was around but he wasn't Property Master then, I think it was Bill King.

Mm.

But, anyway, Michael, who was, obviously drove Mrs. Woodfield, or Woodville or whatever her name was, totally to distraction, which wasn't surprising because he drove everybody to distraction. And she upped and left after about five months and always 'Must go home because I've got the children to give their tea', and there was

Mills trying to do his programmes. And, of course, there, there was only a producer and a secretary, there wasn't anything else and he used to ring me up, and he used to say 'I've got a show tonight', or tomorrow, 'and I've got a script to do and I, I want somebody'. And I used to say 'But Michael we haven't got anybody, I mean there isn't anybody to send you'. 'Well I've got to have it done', you know, and so this dialogue went on 'where's Sidney Budd, what…'? you know, and I, there was me doing by this time my shielding routine, you know, because poor Sidney hadn't got an answer to it anyway. And he used to ring me up so much, I used to say 'Michael if you would stop ringing me up I'll come and do it myself when I've finished here, but for goodness sake don't pick up the phone again because there isn't anybody'. I mean I don't know how I thought the poor man was going to get his show done but, you know, you sort of didn't think of those values. And, and so at five thirty when I'd done my duties for Sidney I used to plough across and say 'Well what's the matter'? 'Well, I've got this', I don't think he had a script I think it was just a running order you see, and you used to type this running order for him. And, and then eventually Mrs. Woodfield, Woodville, decided, you know, enough was enough and she put in her resignation and in went the application. I thought 'Well it's an easier life to go and do it for him properly than keep on trying to get, get somebody to work for him', so that was how I started. And I don't remember quite whether, when I joined him my dates, and I've got a piece of paper somewhere. Oh I, I love this point. I went to Sidney, I said 'Sidney', or 'Mr. Budd', not Sidney, in those days it wasn't first names, 'Mr. Budd I would like to…' He, he saw the application and he sent for me and he said 'You don't really want to do this do you'? in a sort of plumy voice.

Yes.

Sidney, I said 'Yes I do'. 'Well' he said, you know, 'you don't really want to work in production'. I said 'That's why I joined the BBC'. He said 'But you know if you, if you do you'll have to be downgraded'. So I said 'Well, I'll have to be downgraded then'. He said 'Well', you know, it, your salary will go down', and I said 'Well what will it be'? He said 'It will be twelve pounds ten, four pounds twelve and ten pence', and it was now four pounds sixteen and something you see. So shoot, I duly got the sheet downgrading me.

Mm.

So I, as, you know, production secretaries were lower grade than establishment secretaries, isn't that...

Where were you living now, you've left Grosvenor Square?

No I was, I think I was still hanging on.

Right.

If I wasn't still, no, I think I had left, but I was in another hostel, I went round a succession of hostels.

Mm.

I, I lived in one in Mortimer Street, nothing to do with the BBC, then I lived in Prince…

[30:06]

Mm.

In Prince, Prince, oh what's that road? Princes Road, down near the V&A.

A long way from Alexandra Palace of course?

Yes, and I'll tell you how we got there. And then, then eventually I conned the BBC for some reason into letting me back into the, into this Hallam Street Hostel. It might well have been that by the time I had to go to AP I couldn't do the journey, I can't quite remember where, where hostels began and ended, but I was quite a, I, I could tell you a good deal about hostel life. But at the hostel I lived, in Grosvenor Square and I met in the same year, a small diversion, was Roger Chase.

Mm.

Latterly, Controller of Personnel and, and, Director of Personnel, only retired this year. And Fred Viner.

Mm.

Who was quite a well-known OB producer. A nice man called, I've forgotten his name now, Ray, he was a, McDonough, who was in VT for many years, married Joan Neville who was a make-up lady who was the sister of John Neville, the actor. However, that was hostel life. But I went and worked for Michael and the first show I did with him was the 14th of June 1947. It was called *Variety Express* and it was, like the title suggests, a variety bill which had Donald Stewart and Rene Stewart, Donald Houston and Rene Stewart in it.

Mm.

It had The Great Singalee [ph 1A 31:48] who must have been a magician. He, it had, I can't remember, there was some singers. And it had Michael Bentine, and I think it must have been Michael Bentine's first ever television appearance doing his chair routine, he used to do a, a routine with just a chair. And we did that in Studio A. And in those days we used to do a thing twice, we used to do it, well quite often there was a show on a Wednesday afternoon and repeated it on Saturday night.

That was true, but the other way round, wasn't it Saturday night...

No, no, no.

Oh I think drama, drama was the other way round probably, wasn't it.

It may have been.

Drama on the Saturday, and repeated Wednesday I think.

Yes, well but...

Yes.

I think we did it, I think we did it on a Wednesday afternoon. It might have been that by Saturday night we'd got it a bit more proficient because somebody else would have been in the studio in the afternoon, you know, and we'd have got, had to get it ready for, in the morning's rehearsal. Eric Robinson was the Conductor.

Mm.

And my one classic thing on that show I can remember is that we were sitting there doing it, I don't know how long it was, whether it was half an hour, forty-five minutes, or an hour even, I mean times were lengthy weren't they? And half way through [Laughter] Michael screamed at me, because he screamed a lot, 'How are you doing'? Meaning how long are we running it on the clock. And the shock reaction of it, I pushed the button that pushed the thing back to zero and I looked at, instead of the...

Yes.

I, I shouldn't have pushed anything should I, I should have just looked at the watch. And I pushed this thing back and they were both their hands up here and I said 'Oh pretty good I think'.

Mm.

And he said 'Oh, alright then', and on we went. I don't know how long we ran, but, you know, in those days things over ran didn't they.

They did indeed.

And, well we didn't take too much notice, but that..

You were, you were obviously in the Studio Gallery?

Oh yes.

Yes.

Yes, yes, I was sitting at the...

So the secretaries were then like, well PAs I suppose?

That's right, oh yes, you did everything.

Mm, yes.

You, you did the whole lot. You did the finance, you, you typed the script, you went and duplicated it. And, and our offices were in the back as I, at that old theatre bit which was through the East Tower and down through the empty auditorium, which was awful dusty and musty and over the stage, on which they painted the cloths because they'd nowhere to hang them, and most of the scenery, particularly, well for dramas too if you had a picture, you had a scene through the window it had to be a cloth, and for Light Entertainment most of it was cloths because the theatre ran on cloths, I mean that theatre's basically the scenery was cloths. And we walked, and you used to say to Jack 'Can I walk on this bit'? Because we had to go across a stage to a little door in the corner to get down, which were the dressing rooms, to our offices. And there were three floors, there was a floor on the level with the stage, the basement and one above. And we were in the basement and it was as damp as hell and the water used to run down the, the walls, quite a small room. And latterly on from there, he wasn't, then, Henry Caldwell was in the office next to us, who was distinguished for doing everything French, like *'Café Continental'* and all those things. And, and I think Walton Anderson must have been there then, although I don't know when he left, because I found a billing for January '47 in this book and Michael wasn't on it but Walton Anderson was, and, and, and Robert Barr doing *Picture Page*, and things like that, and that was just about when Michael joined.

[35:09]

And John Glyn-Jones was there, I can remember him coming along because Henry used to do everything that had a continental flavour including day,, we always did shows for special occasions and we used to have a thing about The Bastille Day in those days. And I can remember Michael's door flying open and John Glyn-Jones, that incredible face of his and that grin saying 'What a Bastille', and went out again. That meaning that was his reaction to...

Mm. Yes.

A polite way of using another word for Henry Caldwell's programme the night before. [Laughter] And Sheila Reece worked for John Glyn-Jones, who's still around, and she went, she stayed with the Beeb for many years in drama. And that was my first one anyway, and then onwards we went. And I stayed with Michael through thick and thin, from then right up to when he left in '55 to go back, '55/56, to go back to the theatre, because he was very much a theatre man.

But we did the most amazing collection of shows in those days. There were a lot of variety because, and he, because he was called Light Entertainment, those poor fellows that had been like Royston who had to do, I don't know Geraldo and his Orchestra or something. Because they, he got, he was called Light Entertainment they used to come in and asked his advice and sort of, they'd got this running order to do and, and he used to say 'I don't really know, but if I was doing a show for the Navy I'd have just put the running order a bit like this', and, and used to sort of put down anything, send them off and they thought he knew it all. And, of course, he was finding it, it was the blind leading the blind really. But I mean he, he did, he did have a flair. But he was a goer was Michael, he'd boundless energy. He, he frightened me to death.

He was a whirlwind.

Oh he was.

Absolute whirlwind.

An absolute whirlwind.

Yes.

And he was only twenty...

Yes.

I think he'd have been about twenty-seven or something and, but very articulate. He, I mean he was Westminster School and he could talk on any subject, he was interested in everything and he used to, a huge capacity, you know, for, for, for, every, every sort of thing. And his, he did all these different sorts of variety shows but he was always, he was an innovator of his day and in, at the field of entertainment. And he, I mean we did the first situation comedy, family situation comedy, soap I suppose you could call it, ever in 1948, I think it was, called *Family Affairs*.

Mm.

It was the story of the Conover family who lived in Northwood, and it was written by Eric Maschwitz and it was produced by Michael. And it, it had in it Heather, Heather Thatcher and Michael Shepley were the mother and father and Madeline Thomas was the nanny, who lived till quite recently and was a Welsh, well known Welsh actress. There are, there are billings of that in this book. And, and Stephen Bundy designed, Stephen Bundy designed most of Michael's things, James did a few things, but James and Barry Learoyd did most of the drama and Stephen did most of the LE, although James had done a bit. But Stephen sort of specialised because he was a theatre man and he got on very well with Michael. And so Michael started pushing it around a bit. He did a series called, a sort of cabaret series called *Regency Room*. And one of the classic things he did and, and shortly, oh, thereafter his arrival we then had joining us Pat Hillyard who was head of Light Entertainment in Radio and they brought him across to help sort of set up a Light Entertainment Department. And he arrived on the scene, because I think Cecil Madden couldn't do it all, you know, and so they, they were beginning to have that.

Mm.

And, I mean OBs in those days I think, well you've probably talked to Peter, but I think that was sort of Ian Orr-Ewing and Peter Dimmock.

Yes.

And Campbell Logan, and Keith Rogers, I think, about that time, there were only about four of them. And so the department I think was beginning, was starting and, you know, then they, they added, as I say, Henry joined and Graham Muir, who was

ultimately a producer in Light Entertainment and joined sort of around about ’50 was an actor before that, and he was actually in one of the instalments of *Family Affairs*, and when he died a few years back Michael did an address for him and he came to me for some help to research and he said ‘Do you remember Graham was, the first time we worked with him’? I said ‘I don't remember’. He said ‘Oh yes he was in…’ And so I got on to Caversham and sure enough I got the script out, it was in Caversham, my, my original script.

[40:20]

Yes.

When, when a cold shudder went through me, and his name was there in this episode, Graham Muir.

How many episodes did it go to, do you know, can you remember?

It, it was, I think it was thirteen because the, the, the...

Was it...?

I think we did two, I think we did two series of it, whether we did a six and a, a six and a six I, I really don't know, and the silly thing about this book is that it doesn't always have dates. But it's got *Meet the Conover Family*, and that must have been the first one. It was not a huge cast, Wallis Eaton, that was a, a name where you would always, and Daphne Oxenford and...

All radio, yes.

And they're actually on that one. I, I have to be corrected myself, it says settings by Richard Greenhough, Richard R. Greenhough

Was it every week?

Yes. And then the next year we did a, there's some more here so it must have been the pictures of them, these are the old *Radio Times*. There was a nanny, there were two young children, two sort of teenage children and the, and the, the mother and father. So, so there were two, yes, it would have been. I, I can't remember but I can remember Michael saying something like that we did, whether we did two performances of it. We, we’d rehearse one and then they'd come and change the scenery and we did a, did it again.

Yes.

The next day or something. I really can't, I can remember when Michael was doing that and, and why he thought of Eric to write it I don't know. But of course, Eric Maschwitz is a highly respected writer and, you know, musicals and things in the theatre, it's probably where he got the idea but he, Michael rang me one Saturday afternoon, because he lived in those days in Farnham, in Surrey, he has, mother had a house there. And he rang me to say, about five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon ‘I have

left my briefcase in a phone box on Waterloo Station'. 'Yes Michael'. 'And all the scripts for the series are in there'.

Oh.

I don't remember, I must have set off to do something about it, I can't remember whether I found them or whether we all… Eric fortunately had copies, I don't know what but I do remember that he left because he was hopeless at putting things down, and I was everlastingly going around picking up his lost bits. And there was another classic story of Michael when we were working in this awful theatre dressing room. Are you alright?

Yes.

And, and, I mean, as I've said, you know, you had to go out with the script, you'd typed it, did everything, did the finance, did all the letters and, and you walked out round the building into this tower and you went up to the fourth floor where there only one of those things with a handle, and you put these skins that you typed on to on to this and duplicated your own scripts.

Mm.

And then you brought, took them all back and you had to collate them. But Michael I, I think it was this evil thing he had in him, I mean it wasn't really evil his bark was worse than his bite but, and he was a very kind person actually at heart, although he didn't always give that impression to everybody. But he used to, you'd just think you were about to go home and he would decide to dictate, and he dictated everything, if he was writing the scripts for things you, he dictated it all, he never wrote it out, and if he'd written it out you wouldn't be able to read his writing anyway. He always used to start about a quarter to six, and just when you thought you were going home Michael would say 'Oh I think I ought to do…' So you say 'Oh alright Michael',, and out came the pencil. And because the office, and he walked up and down endlessly, again, another pipe smoker, biting the end of his pipe, up and down. It wasn't as big as this, it was half the size of this room, our office, just enough for his desk, my desk and the typewriter. And he would walk up and down but, but because there wasn't enough space he opened the door and he walked out as far as the passage would, would go. And, and he quite often used to walk out into Henry and have a chat and come back again you see. And he did this, and one night he'd been rattling on about something, whatever it was, and I was struggling, and I was probably concentrating, because he used to use words like 'Machiavellian'.

Mm.

Now I mean, you know, I'm not very well read and very academic and I mean I couldn't have spelt it, let alone write it in shorthand, and I'd got to read this back and it, and when I read back what he'd done, you know, I used to, obviously there would be howlers galore and Michael…

[End of Tape 1 Side A 00:45:12]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 1 Side B.

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 1 Side B.

Yvonne Littlewood, Side Two.

So, so as, as I was saying, you know, I, I would be desperately trying to read my shorthand if there was a pause while he was, was thinking of the next sentence and trying to write in shorthand the word 'Machiavellian' so that I could read it back later because I would have difficulty spelling it. And I thought 'He must have gone into Henry's a long time talking into Henry and coming back', but I was quite pleased for the pause, you see, to get my, look back and get a few things sorted out. And I waited, and I waited, and I thought 'God he's a long time', and I thought 'Oh this is ridiculous, you know, I want to get home'. So I got up and I went in, he wasn't in next door at all, he had gone in and had a chat but he'd gone home, he'd forgotten he was dictating, and he'd gone home. And I was there still waiting to, you know, that was, that was typical. So that was my, that was life in the, in the, it was...

Yes.

It was primitive that way we had to work.

Right. I mean you're in Light Entertainment, and of course you are always, Yvonne, associated, naturally, with Light Entertainment.

Mm.

But was it, it seemed to be a slight coincidence that you went into Light Entertainment because that was the job where a secretary could have got in to, it might have been any other department.

Yes. It might have been.

Or any word departments at the time.

Yes. Well I suppose in a sort of..

Sort of…

Sorry, well, well it was luck. I mean what a lot of luck there is in our business. I mean there's no question it's, you, you were, happened to be there at the time. I, I mean, this

was, as I say, it was probably a God send to me that I actually took the job with Sidney Budd otherwise I probably wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now. But we, we struggled on, and I, I think it's important to talk about some of the things that Michael did because I, I mean it wasn't me, I was just, you know, one of his, his right hand. But there was just a producer and a, and a secretary and you did everything, you did the costing and the, you did everything. You, you, although you had a floor manager on the day, the people like Jacko and, you know, who was, Leslie Jackson.

Yes.

Father of the now famous Paul K. Jackson, who's dropped the 'K', because it was T. Leslie Jackson and it's now, it was Paul K. Leslie, Paul K. Jackson. But we did it all and we did all this range of things. And then Michael started doing things, and he did a series called *Regency Room*, which was a kind of cabaret series with Ian Carmichael in it and others. And, in those days too,, we used to do things and we used to get music and lyrics written and David Croft and Cyril Ornadel used to write for those.

Mm.

And there is a name, David Croft.

Yes, mm.

So…

Indeed.

Famous and successful ever, you know, I mean he's grown hugely in all these years, but he was around at those times. And we then did a series called *The Passing Show*. Now, I'm trying to remember, I can remember us rehearsing the, I can remember us rehearsing *The Conover Family* I think it was, in Beaumont Mews at the back of where *The Radio Times* is now, because Michael used to say 'We can't have people go all the way to Alexandra Palace to, we have to rehearse', you know, there were, there were a lot of things at this point that, I suppose Drama must have done it, but Light Entertainment didn't rehearse you just, they came on the day and you did it, you know.

[Laughter]

People I can remember in the variety shows we did was Stéphane Grappelli and The Hot Club de France, which, I mean, was famous, it didn't mean a row of beans to me because I don't think I'd ever heard of Stéphane Grappelli, my musical interests at home that my father were fascinated by was Carroll Gibbons and Victor Slvester, we had, we had records of them, and I remember him being fascinated by Gracie Fields and going off to hear her in a concert in, in Cardiff. But those people I didn't really know about, but they were in shows we did at Alexandra Palace. And in latter years, when I worked with Steph several times I asked him if he remembered, because of course the association with Django Reinhardt was, was really very important in, in retrospect because he was so famous. And we did a series called *Stars In Your Eyes*, which was a variety series we did with...

Terry Thomas?

Yes, Terry Thomas. Cliff Gordon was a Welshman of talent which we did a, a big programme called *Choir Practice*, which was about a dispute in the local choir in Wales with, with who was going to get the solo tenor or soprano parts in something which Cliff wrote, and, and in which Stanley, Stanley Baker and Donald Houston were in, or if there was anybody who was anybody in the, in, in the Welsh line of talented actors they were all in it. And Madeline was in it. And we did, and we did a couple of revues with Cliff called *Once and Twice upon a Time*.

[05:08]

Mm.

And he did the whole thing, book, music and lyrics. He died quite early, but, but he was, Ian Carmichael was in that. Ian Carmichael, in fact he was lovely because he gave an address at Michael's memorial and, and he said that really Michael sort of set him on the road because he came out of the, out of the forces and he had thruppence to bring his family up and Michael gave him some sort of regular work. I mean he was, seemed very multi-talented, because he could act and he was a good singer. He was a, like, he was a sort Jack Buchanan-ish type of person in those days. And he was, seemed to be ageless, he never, he always looked the same, right up until the '60s when he was doing, when he was doing Jeeves and...

Yes.

Wooster. He, he was still very youthful wasn't he?

Yes.

I'm happy to see that he's just been doing a new series in Scotland, a sort of sequel to, you know, the Herriot things.

Mm.

The farm series up in Scotland which he's on that. But I'm just thumbing quite quickly through some of the shows because there were endless, Geraldo and his Orchestra, who was, you know, very big in those days and we did lots of things. And his concert orchestra it says here was, it was like a bit of *Music for You* type of thing. I mean somebody playing a part of the Grieg Piano Concerto, John Gilpin, Sally Gilmour, Jack Billings and Diana Chase, they were sort of, Campoli. And then *Saturday Night at the Palace* was another variety series we used to do, you were invited to join the audience for bills like Richard Murdoch, Jimmy Edwards.

Yes.

And others, and Doreen Austin's Gaiety Girls. And other ones similarly, Ronald Franco, Anne Shelton, Claude Dampier and Billie Carlyle.

Mm.

Those were the sort of variety things. *Late Night Final*, Jessie Matthews and Bill Fraser and Gayle Kendall, *Late Night Final*. *Telescope*, a little revue.

Were you the secretary on all these shows?

Oh yes, yes, because I kept this book for him. And the other thing we used to do which was, which was, we didn't, you see nobody knew quite where to get their material from in those days so they looked to the theatre always.

Mm.

And there were, it was an era just after the big musicals in the theatres that were things like *Jill Darling* and *Tell Her the Truth*.

Mm.

And Michael seemed to think you could translate those to television and so he did, they were three act musicals.

Mm.

And *Tell Her the Truth* was here with people like Charles Hawtrey, Roma Beaumont and Willy, Wylie Watson, 'a play with music by Frederic Isham, adaption by R.P. Weston and Bert Lee', and that was… And *Lady Luck*, with Zoë Gail and George Gee, those were, were the sort of things, Michael Balfour in that. Bill Stephens, Ian Carmichael, Desmond Walter-Ellis, Eunice Gayson, Zoë Gail, Gibb McLaughlin, big, Michael Balfour, I can remember him. And then the, the joke was *Jill Darling*, Vivian Ellis.

Yes.

Well, was one of his. Now the things was, I mean it was quite ridiculous because they were three act works and we used to do Act 1 in 'A', Studio 'A', which was the biggest of the two studios, a little bit bigger, there wasn't a lot between them as you'll remember. And then we used to go into 'B' and do Act 2. And while we were in 'B' doing Act 2 they changed the scenery in 'A'. And we had a little interval, probably for the news or something, and we went back, and he took us all back into 'A' and the cameramen went back on the cameras that were in 'A' and we did Act 3.

Didn't 'A' have one more camera than 'B'?

I think it did, I think there were four in 'A' and three in 'B'.

Yes. Three in 'B'.

Weren't there?

But, but there was a central control room wasn't there?

Yes.

Yes, yes.

That's right. Well we had to have one control room.

Mm, sure.

We could just about plug.

Yes.

But I mean you could work, I mean you didn't work 'B' with, if 'A' was on the air.

Yes.

Because, because it, there was only the one channel.

Mm.

So if you'd got 'A' going out live, and of course as we all know, the pictures were all upside down in the viewfinders and if you wanted a closer shot you had to move further back. And it was in those shows I can remember when, certainly when we were in 'B', that Michael couldn't get the shot wide enough and he put the camera in the corridor and opened the studio door, and they were those big doors you used to have to push.

Yes.

They were heavy as hell weren't they? Push them along to get, and he put the camera, and I can remember the note coming the next day, you know, from head of something, saying, you know, 'Michael Mills put the camera in the corridor, this is a ...', you know, 'breaking the fire regulations and would he please do not do that'? And so of course, Michael who had to answer everything, he didn't take the rebuffs said 'How do I get the shot if I don't put the camera in the corridor'?

[10:06]

Mm.

But I suppose you see that was helping remind people that we had to have more space, I mean we couldn't go on, he just had to get it better.

Right.

And the only way of getting it better was that way. *Stars in Your Eyes* was another series.

It sounds as a sort of a...

It had a sort of musical theme.

It sounds as though Michael, is this true, managed to do pretty well everything he really wanted to do? I mean…

Yes, I think he, I don't know….

What was the, what was the hierarchy if that's the right word?

Yes.

I mean things changed, obviously. I mean who was in control?

How, how do you mean?

Well he was, he was obviously...

He was left alone, I mean freedom.

Oh, well, yes I mean I think he...

Creative freedom.

I, I think he answered to, to Cecil I suppose in those days.

Cecil Madden?

Yes, it wasn't, we didn't have, I can't remember when people like, would have been Kenneth Adam came on, because I can't remember now quite the...

Well Cecil McGivern was head of programmes on TV.

Well Cecil, was Cecil McGivern before Cecil, well before Kenneth Adam, or were they both the same?

Yes, yes. Yes.

Was he?

Yes.

Well it must have been.

Long before, yes.

Cecil McGivern had quite a, you know, I think he reckoned Michael, but I mean we were doing a bit of everything and I suppose it, well the entertainment was the word, and there we are, there's Django Reinhardt, Stéphane Grappelli and The Hot Club de France and a picture of them. Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, The Wendy Toye

Ballyhoo, now Wendy Toye was famous by the fact that she was actually in the demonstrations in BH, you know.

Yes.

And Rawicz and Landauer, I, I mean these, and fortunately I, I have… Sara Luzita, now that's interesting, only the other day there was a, I read an obituary for Tutte Lemkow

Mm.

Who, in those days was a, was a, had a dance act with Sara Luzita. Now we, this was a good one, we did a, we did the first ever, it's called *Give us a Clue* now, in terms of television today, but in the, Michael started that on, in, in Ally Pally, as *Play the Game.*

Mm.

That was done there and the billings are here. And we used to have teams against like the screen versus television, that would be the movie screen versus television with names like Sally Ann Howes, Hazel Court, David Tomlinson, Dermot Walsh, against Joan Gilbert, Jeanne Bradnock, John Glyn-Jones and Peter Dimmock, and then America versus Britain and then so on. Had another game show we used to do called *Consider Your Verdict*, in which the viewers at home and the jury in the studio are invited to decide which of three witnesses is telling the truth. And he did those and, and they were adjudicated by either Robert McDermott, who was a, a writer.

Yes.

And, and now what was his wife's name? I'm trying to think, they were both, Diana Morgan.

Oh yes.

Robert McDermott and Diana Morgan, who were both writers and did quite a lot, and also Leslie Mitchell.

Yes.

And I have to say that I actually did the timing, I used to sit in vision on that.

Mm.

And, and time it. I don't know who was doing my job in the gallery, nobody I suppose. I suppose on a thing like that it didn't really need anybody to, to, there were no shots to call and Michael was directing it and...

That was...

I did the scoring, as I've got pictures of me in, there was a magazine called *Play* something, a little funny magazine that was with biographies in it and little crits about the programmes and I've got, got a couple of copies of that too.

You mentioned about calling the shots, now you see, now this is the first time anybody's mentioned that. Would you like to explain that?

Calling the shots?

Yes.

Well in latter days, when we all got ourselves organised with scripts, you had to work out your camera script.

Mm, mm.

The producer, and he had to decide where he was going to, how he was going to, if, to make it more understandable for people, photograph the show.

Yes.

I mean it, it, direct, it isn't just photographing it because you should direct it and construct it so that it's for television. But I mean you do really have something if you're an, an OB event, you do photograph it, don't you really?

[15:00]

Yes.

So it, you have to sit down and you have to sort of say 'Right, well I'm going to start there, and I'm to show a full shot of that table with those people sitting there'. And then the next shot is going to be a, a close up, well it's us three talking that, we'd have a master shot, which would be a three shot, and then they want a close up of me, and then they're going to cut to a close up of Alan.

Yes.

To ask me a question, and there'd be a camera that would have the master shot, there'd be a camera on me and a camera on you. And if that was going to be in the order of the master shot first, then me, that, the master shot would be Shot One, and the next shot would be Shot Two on me and the next shot would be Shot Three on you. And it, that's developed, whatever sort of programme you were doing you had, had to sit down and commit yourself to how you were going to photograph it in advance.

Mm, mm.

And then you were going to sit, get in the gallery, because remember the director knows what he wants to do but there are however many, well at least one camera on each camera, even if they're only, but once we got cameras that elevated and, and moved about and had jibs that could swing right and left, they had to have operators,

so those people had to know what they were going to do so they would wear earphones, like the floor manager who gives the instructions to the people on the floor which he can hear from the people sitting in the control room. And you were going to say 'Camera One, I want a three shot of Norman, Yvonne and Alan sitting there. Then Camera Two, you're going to take a shot of Yvonne'.

Mm.

'Of Yvonne. And, and Camera Three'. You work your way through that. Now when you're coming to do the, the performance in toto, non-stop the PA, as they are now, and secretary as they were then was, would, what is a preview of the shots, and they would say, when he'd say 'Cut to One', she'd say 'On Two', 'on One, Two next'.

Mm.

You see, and then Two would know that he'd got the next shot on me. And then she'd say 'On Two, Three next'. And then, if you were going back to three shot, 'On Four', you know, 'on One, Shot Four'.

Yes. Yes.

'Shot Five next, Two on Yvonne', and whatever. And true, that's a simple way of doing it, but that is in fact the...

Yes.

The basis of, of a PA's work in the gallery. And, of course, when the producer writes a script, they don't necessarily put down 'One, Two, Three', but as she types it she puts in the numbers, and I mean you go up to three hundred and sixty-five, or if you were doing, you know, a three hour job, you can be well into the hundreds. And it's her, you know, or if it's telecine next.

Yes.

And if it's tele...

You're previewing really.

Yes, you preview it.

You're previewing?

And, and confirming to them what they're on. And, and of course, it's become very elaborate in current day because if you were doing music...

Yes.

Say you were doing an orchestral programme, you have to script. I mean the, the interesting thing about the world that I've been part of is that you don't have a script. You see if you do a drama you have a script and somebody writes it for you and sends

it to you and the words are all down there. But if somebody says, 'Johnny Mathis in Concert', that's all you got at the top.

Yes.

And you think 'Oh, well now, what's he going to sing'? Now I mean you may be photographing a concert you know that beforehand, or if I'm going to do a special effect arc we, we have to build up a programme, so you, you get to build your programme up. Then if it's, if it's her, and, and it's lyrics, you, you had to type out all the lyrics in, in the order that you're going to sing them, and it, whatever the arrangement is you arrange that number and you work out how much you've got to put the lyrics down exactly. If there's going to be an eight bar introduction at the front you've got to put that down, and you've got to put a space for how, because you've got to put some cameras on it, so you need some space to write them in. And today in things like pop music they have it scripted to the, almost finite detail. I mean if somebody sings a phrase that has sort of, you know, music is in bars and you get the last word, but then has three bars of that extends on before you get the next word. I, it, for people who don't understand music this is a little bit sort of complicated, but there are beats in every bar. Or if you're doing dance routines.

Mm.

That don't have words, the music has beats in it.

Yes.

And you have to put down, not only the bars but usually quite often the beats, so that you, you have a, a word that goes 'Day, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight', and then you'd get, because there's that much time.

Yes.

And so it's very sophisticated now

Mm, mm.

And that's, when you say 'calling the shots', that's the sort of what it is about. And not only you, but, and the cameramen, it's not only the, the, you see if, when I was directing, ultimately, I didn't really want to ever look at my script because you don't have time, you really memorise it.

Yes, yes.

But, but what you need from that person is your, the cues to, to say, you know, what it is, and she says 'Four next', and you look at the monitor, because I've done shows, say Royal shows particularly, where I've had twelve cameras and it's...

[20:00]

Mm, difficult.

It's impossible to look at twelve, I mean you can scan, you get used to scanning six monitors at, in once, but if the physical thing that, that they have to put in extra, you know, panels it's very difficult to, to, to cope with those, particularly in the, in the limitations of a scanner. And so this person next to you, and then of course, if you deviate there it throws a spanner in the works.

Yes.

Now it's not all as simple as scripting it like that and it's hard work, because you've got to work it all out. I like, people quite often get the girls to routine the songs for them. I'd actually used to like to listen to them and routine them myself. That means literally write them down, because while I would write down the lyrics I'd have a sheet music that's got them on but I'd listen to if, you know, you're lucky enough that somebody has recorded something anyway, and even if they haven't and you have done it round a piano you've got the routine worked out. I liked to go away and write out the lyric myself, because in doing that I learn it, and I've got a sort of photographic mind, I, even to where it is on the page I can kind of remember where the, I also like to put, I don't want it all in a run straight down, with all the phrases joined up, because music usually goes A, A, B, A, you've got...

Yes.

The same music phrase twice with different words and then you've got a middle section and then you've got a reprise of A again or something and an extended coda. I like to work all that out, write it out, then the girl types it out, but that way I learn it.

Mm.

And it makes it much easier for me. If somebody gives it to me already done it takes me much longer to learn it, it's...

You obviously had the right training, didn't you, from being a secretary upwards.

Yes, I think it probably helped me.

I had an entertainments secretary, those, in those days was...

But I know equally when I got to the end of my work as a secretary, then a P.A., then a Production Assistant because in… We had secretaries only till about the mid '50s, and let's just keep a pattern and a sort of an order, I, as I say, I worked with Michael, we went from AP, we went to Lime Grove, and we went, we were then in Lime Grove for some time and we had offices there. And then in '55, and I must mention quickly for Michael, because I, Michael I think, I mean it, I'm not as important as, as he is and the people I learnt from. You know, really and truthfully, I mean I've done my own thing later but if it hadn't been for his schooling, as it were, because I didn't really know anything about show business and I learnt so much from him. He did a, a fascinating series in, in Lime Grove in the early part, it was '51, which was forty years ago, and it was called *A Passing Show*, and it was fifty years of entertainment and five, five programmes, and I've reviews of them here. And it was, it really was, you

know, they, they talk about the pace of it, now those were live programmes and there were a hundred and five scenes in the one we did, we did, we did the *A History of Tele…, of Show Business from 1900 to 1950*. We also did *The Story of Marie Lloyd*, we did *The Story of George Edwards*, we did *All Our Yesterdays*, which was I think, to do with Coronation years, and we did *The Story of Cochrane*. And probably the most successful of those was, was the Marie Lloyd, but because, you know, she was, it was an amazing story. And I just want to churn this up here because it, it was important. Oh there's another thing I was happy to have done, that was at The Palace, Alexandra Danilova and Leonide Massine.

Mm.

Were famous dancers, as you know, and we had them in as stars of the ballet. Leonide Massine, Alexandra Danilova, Frederick Ashton and Svetlana Beriosova. And that was Michael, with Eric Robinson conducting. I mean I do remember that very well, and I'm very proud to think of it. And we did a, a re-staging of *Spectre de la Rose*, which was supervised by Karsavina, who was an elderly lady then and, you know, were, were legends in their, in their time.

Yes.

And Joyce Grenfell, Elizabeth Welch and Max, Adrian Tuppence [Inaudible 1B 24:45] but I'm just…

You were looking for Marie Lloyd I think.

I was looking for Marie, sorry about this. I told you this would happen.

Not to worry.

I'm sorry.

No problem.

I'm sorry.

No problem.

But *The Passing Show*, mm, there was a thing about how pacey they were, which was what was so important. I can't find it there, sorry Alan.

[25:13]

No, it's alright, no problem.

There it is, Pat Kirkwood.

Ah.

There's *Crazy Musical*, that was about Cocky, and Cocky… No, George Edwards was played by Tony Britton as a very young man, which, that was October '52 there he is.

Mm.

Michael suddenly thought of him as the right person for this, and that was an interesting piece of casting. And there are certain people, you know, like that who would be for the series we're doing fascinating. Ian Carmichael would be one, and, and, and Tony Britton and people. There is the *Cochran Presents* one, directed by, Cochran one, oh, that was when we took under our wing a young trainee called Peter Graham Scott and he directed that. That had in it Frank Lawton and Vanessa Leigh and Bruce Trent, people like that, and also Dennis Price.

Mm.

But I'm trying to, I must find this reference to Marie Lloyd. '*Passing Shows*, a series of five ninety minute programmes, Michael Mills divide and reflect the history in '51 of popular entertainment for the turn of the century. Notably elaborate and fast moving it made use of as many as a hundred and five sets per programme, which could be by, be why some of the technicians he enlisted look back on the series with a respect that still contains traces of trepidation'. But it, it, it, the, that was in Lime Grove, in Studio G and it was designed by Stephen Bundy, who quoted 'Terrifying they were those *Passing Shows* the scene boys had their shirts sticking to them'. But it, he did it and, and the cloths were all stacked, one behind the other, you know.

Yes.

I think we probably mirrored it in the studio, I can't remember, although that we had to have a lot of, of interior sets apart from the performance area for Marie Lloyd and, and the cloths were primarily, because Nick, Bill Nicklin was, was a sen…, the sort of senior scene, studio scene shifter in those days. And he was, he was an ex-theatre and film man, he'd worked in the film studios because somebody was… Who did I hear quoting him? Michael Bentine I heard quoting his name on a radio very recently.

I remember Nicklin.

And he used to drop, we used to drop the cloths and of course, they all had to be hung.

Yes, yes.

And we used to drop them one by one. They were, they were in the order that you needed the next scene and so it...

It wasn't Bill Nicklin, it was, it was, Bill's brother.

Oh.

Bill, Bill Nicklin was in film department, it's his brother.

Yes, who was in studios.

That's right, yes, yes.

That's right. Now it was the Bill Nicklin that I heard his brother talking, they were twins weren't they I think too? I think they were.

I remember them both.

But, but they were, you know, the, the, it's the thought, it was the thought of this sort of amazing capacity to take this on in a live situation. And, and so many of the references in, in these revues were to the speed of it. I mean, it may have seemed pedestrianly slow to, by today's standards but, you know, it, it...

No, you make it, correct.

It was really, he really was pushing things forward, there's no doubt about it.

Earlier on you mentioned, sorry, you mentioned telecine, you had film sequences did you in this, well sometimes you did?

Yes we did because I...

Someone will know about them.

Because I found a reference, and I have to talk to you about at AP we'll just finish it, it will be the final flipping thing for AP. But one of his other things he did was he flew the Lido Cabaret from Paris, the whole Cabaret, they closed for a night. And they flew over to do a performance in Alexandra Palace Studio A, the whole cabaret performance, with the acts and everything. And Michael built up two proscenium stages, one at each end of the studio, because there again, you know, being live we had, they had of course, in those, even in those days it was a very spectacular presentation in Paris, it was **the** place for that kind of revue. And we used to do one act up one end and while that was being photographed the other one was setting up this end and they just used to turn the camera around of course, and photograph up the other end. And they came over, the whole lot, and we had to have bras made for those ladies that had bare bosoms, because it wasn't thought I, can up imagine Mary Whitehouse of the day. And...

[30:07]

Before her time.

It was, but even so I don't think Lord Reith would have approved.

No.

That at all. And we had, the next thing was they had to get back to Paris and there was a thick fog and they couldn't take off. They'd, they'd flown over and of course, planes must have taken forever in those days. And so there they were shut for two nights instead of, instead of one. But that was a, that was Michael. Can you imagine flying

the entire cabaret? What an undertaking. 'Paris comes to London, a cabaret from the Lido, Champs-Élysées', and they were all the acts. So that, the people, I think a lot of them are still there, they. I mean the people that, I think that Pierre-Louis Guérin, who was the director of that then, I'm not sure he isn't still there, but the bill is there with the people who were in it. But that was, that was famous. The other person we did quite a bit too with, was with Graham Payn in those days. And we did some old, we did quite a, a, Noël Coward, Noël Coward stuff, and, of course, Graham Payn was a great associate of, of Coward's. We did *Red Peppers*, which is a famous Coward piece. I was reminding myself about when they did it recently with Joan Collins and Anthony Newley. But that was there with the, it was done by Graham Payn and Patricia Burke.

And this was still Michael?

This was, oh this was all Michael, yes. This was in, this was at, that was Alexandra Palace too.

Well there's quite a difference between the people flying in from, from Paris, that performance and the Noël Coward.

Yes. Exactly. But that was...
Yes exactly, but that was…

Totally different.

That was Michael, he had the ability to take on and any sort of thing. And then he did have a flair for writing you see and although he didn't write *The Passing Shows* he, you know, he, he knew enough about how a script should be. There was another series we did called *Such is Life* with Bobby Howes.

Okay.

And, as I say, we moved, we were doing the main *Passing Shows* at Lime Grove by this time. We spent a, a short period of time in an office in Marylebone Road, it was 25 Marylebone Road I think.

Is that…?

And that's where OBs moved to when they closed down.

Was it right opposite Madame Tussauds?

Yes, exactly.

Because I was there, it was on the corner.

Yes, we...

Yes on the corner anyway.

And I can remember...

It was an old, a sort of Victorian house.

That was, and OBs were there then and..

It had a rope lift.

Yes, and, there was a man who used to come round and say 'Any rats or mice'? because we saw one or two in the lift. And while we were there, I can remember the day, Aubrey Singer and a nice gentleman who went to, to Southern, who was also in OBs.

Yes, somebody Smith?

Barclay Smith.

Barclay Smith, mm.

They joined while we were, we were there, I can remember Aubrey's first, we called him 'The Bishop', didn't we? I don't know why we called him 'The Bishop'.

They don't call him that now.

No, I know. But he, I can remember that. Now in Lime Grove we were there soldering on, most of what we did was in G because it must have been the first studio that became sort of pretty operational. But shortly thereafter we did the stu…, the show that, 'we' I say, Michael did the show, that opened Studio D, and it was called *Here's Television*, or *Comparisons are in Video*.

[Laughter]

And that was designed by Stephen Taylor I see, God love him. And that was written by Frank Muir, Denis Norden and Sid Collin, there's a, there's a cartoon of them there of an article.

Famous names there.

Yes. And in it, it was Clive Morton, Bill Fraser, John Stephens, Daphne Anderson, Freda Bamford, Vera Cooper and George Benson, Sydney James, Clifford Stanton and Ian Carmichael again, Herbert Mostyn and Nicolas Bernard, and many well-known television personalities, too numerous to mention'

What year are we now by the way - One?

Well that must have been I think '51.

I don't know whether...

Fifty-two.

Yes.

And there's another one that we did that must have, I don't know, I think, this probably was the opening of G, I don't know, it just says 'To open the new studio at Lime Grove television presents Delores Gray in a gala variety'. Now unfortunately that is not, is not dated either. But those, the others, another series we did at AP, I have to see, because this is not all in the right sequence, was with Petula Clark.

Mm.

Michael did her first series, it was called *Pet's Parlour*.

Mm. Yes, 'Pet's Parlour', I can remember that. Yes.

We did that in, in AP, she must have been about eighteen or nineteen. So that was my first association with Petula, and her sister Barbara was in it, Joe Henderson was at the piano.

[35:04]

Yes.

And I can well remember we used to smuggle pickled onions out of the dive, which was that corrugated roof place across, because Leslie, her father, wasn't too pleased at her eating pickled onions and she had a passion for pickled onions and we used to smuggle them back in at dinner break and sneak them into the dressing room. But, and, so that was the opening of, of D. I seem to have been, and also around that time Michael did, was doing variety and things and we did two series with Jewel and Warriss. You see those were important because we're probably getting down to the rims of, realms of that era of the variety and the, and the, well you know Jimmy would talk about them being and doing a turn but all those people did turns. But they were the sort of partnerships that began to build on television. I mean we knew them and we'd known some wonderful ones like Morecambe and Wise and The Two Ronnies. But we did a, the first series was called *Turn it Up*, and we obviously had nowhere suitable to do it and we did it at the Bedford, Camden Town.

Okay.

And then we did another series with them called *Return it Up*, and we did it in the Television Theatre. Now that must have been '53 because it was the first show that opened the Television Theatre, and I discovered that with doing research when they closed it recently and who was on it but Ben Warriss, and I had the billing in here and I went down to that closing night and took the billing with me and showed him. Jimmy was, there's the billing for it. And we did some of those from The King's Theatre, Hammersmith where we also were parked out at a time, when the theatre had to have things done to it we used to, we used to trot off to The King's Theatre, Hammersmith. But those, we did two series with them and they were, and then they did another series, we did some shows, we used to do shows at The Radio Olympia, that was a good place for trotting out the sort of entertainment shows weren't they?

And of course, by the time we were in Lime Grove Pat Hillyard, who moved with us to Lime Grove as Head of Light Entertainment. And also during his reign he brought from radio Ronnie Waldman, and Ronnie was certainly at Alexandra Palace and he used to do programmes up there called *Kaleidoscope*, and *Monday Night at Eight*, I think it was on television, which he'd done very successfully on radio. And it was during that period that one day Pat Hillyard went back to radio unannounced and Ronnie Waldman who was, was Head of Light Entertainment Group, that was all on the fourth floor at, of…

Lime Grove?

Lime Grove. And there's, there is an interesting, there's a few interesting pieces of paper in archive about the comings and goings of people because when I did some research for Michael about Graham Muir, I remember saying that he was joining the ranks which brought the Light Entertainment producers up to five in number, and that was about 1950, and they were getting a thousand pounds a year. There's little things like that which were quite interesting quotes, you know, that lovely lady at Caversham dug me out some bits of research. I think I should have found them, I think I kept them but it added Graham to the names of Michael and Walton Anderson. And D H Munro was a name, but he disappeared quite quickly off the scene.

I remember, yes, there was some scandal about him.

Was there a scandal?

Yes.

Oh, I was obviously too young to be understanding of these matters, but I wondered why he… We didn't have many scandals, and I mean you really had to do something absolutely desperate didn't you to get fired? I mean people were very tolerant of people. But we, we soldiered on down there in, in Lime Grove and Ronnie took over and built the department. And by this time we had people who I can recall like Bill Ward producing, because he'd been in, a technician in his early days. Have you done The Bill Ward Story.

Yes, we've got him to do, yes.

My God you'll take yourself a week to do, to do that. Because he, he's got a great sense of recall.

He's on our list.

Well he's got a great sense of recall. And he started in Bristol I think and of course, he was a boom swinger and eventually, I mean I remember him most when he was a producer. And that corridor had names like Bill, Bill Earnshaw.

Mm.

Brian Sears, who obviously came from radio, Dicky Leeman, who used to take over and do things like sort of game shows, there were some, there was always game

shows weren't there? And John Warrington, because I think Warrington was part of Light Entertainment Grove and of course, eventually he did *The Grove Family*.

[40:08]

Yes.

Which would probably have been the next, the next, or was, I think that, was pre the *Compact* wasn't it? I mean so many people are interested in the history of soaps that I just mention these things. And Michael was there and we had at one stage Peter Graham Scott attached to us, and so that was quite early to, to, to learn to be a director because there was no school yet for training. And he was, he was with us and then he moved on. And Michael started writing things himself. We did a series called *You Are There*, which I can remember, which was re-constructions of, of famous cases and stories like the, *The Story of The Mary Celeste, The Charge of the Light Brigade, The Dreyfus Case,* he was fascinated by all these things and of course, you know, that….

It's hardly Light Entertainment.

No, but he, he got, you know, he was, you know, he just thought these things should, ought to be done. And I mean, so it, and of course, in those days, you know, Ronnie started *Dixon of Dock Green*, and that wasn't exactly Light Entertainment either was it? But, you know, we, we, departments used to do that, they used to try and wheedle their way into some things which they felt should be being done and weren't. I can remember going on location with, when doing *The Charge of the Light Brigade.* [Laughter] I mean it's, it's interesting in, we are at, down at Salisbury Plain I mean, and we were filming it and we had all of about twelve horses and men. And, and we, he had them charging up and down endless times so that he could cut all this film together and, you know, make it look… There was Patrick McGoohan, and there was, was in it, was Nolan I think he played, and I'm trying to think who, who was, who was, you know, Raglan. But in this, this famous book there was a little note, '50, I don't know what year it is, twentieth of the fourth, and it was from Cecil Madden 'Michael, I thought your Crimea effort was very good and most skilful. My grandfather was at Scutari as a young doctor, with Florence Nightingale, the British Navy were never near. Always go and refurbish Lord Raglan's grave, Love Cecil'. Isn't that funny, you know, just these little...

I didn't know about that before.

There you are you see little bits of things you find. But it was this idea and, and with us, I mean there's the odd billing, there's *The Dreyfus Case* billing here with us on that. *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, do you, Leonard Marsland Gander, do you remember him?

Yes, yes, very well.

'Yet another American television programme idea was introduced by the BBC. Last night the first of the historical series *You Are There* reported The Charge of the Light Brigade as if broadcasting correspondents had been there. The result was an odd, often ludicrous mixture of realism and fantasy, I felt that the BBC in tackling this

subject were first, were as brave as The Light Brigade, and the results were somewhat similar. The chief absurdity was the supposition that radio reporters, even as ghostly voices, would have had the chance of hurling critical questions at my Lords Raglan, Lucan and Cardigan. The only remotely a credible interview I thought was that between Wynford Vaughan-Thomas and a surviving trooper. As for the actual charge all the skilled photography in the world could not disguise the fact that there were only about twenty horseman. Perhaps, personally I thought the feature would have been better as a straightforward reconstruction without the foolery of introducing modern war correspondents.' But I mean that's very contrary to the, to the reaction which you'd actually you asked me about being filmed. There was film in the, the '20s, which was, you know, the, the inter cutting of footage from the 1914/18 War and things, which was way back at the, at the early part of the '50. Goon reel I see here too.

We're, we're going to stop now because it's at the end of the reel.

Okay.

[End of Tape 1 Side B 00:44:35]

NB: The codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 2 Side A.

Okay.

Yvonne Littlewood, Side 3. Right.

Yes, I suppose that series of *You Are There* was about the, the end of my association with Michael because it was about that time that he left to go back to the theatre, he wanted to get back to the old stage and live theatre, and he went off to Scotland and worked for Howard and Wyndham. But he came back to the BBC later, in fact at one stage he even worked in, I think, I think they were called Current Affairs then, but if they weren't the equivalent of and directed things like *Panorama*, which I think was called *Window on the World*. But then he came back to Light Entertainment and he had a distinguished career, very much in the situation comedy field. In fact a, a series he did called *Clochemerle* is currently being trans…, re-transmitted, and I think that was as early as about 1970. But he, in the '60s, did many very successful situation comedy series and he was responsible for getting *Dad's Army* on the screen, which, he, he was then in a position where he could go up to controllers with ideas and projects, and people couldn't believe that something like *Dad's Army* would ever make good television. And, you know, it was thanks to Michael because he became Head of Comedy in the Light Entertainment Group subsequently and he did, himself, also do a lot of very successful productions. He did, he started *Some Mother's Do Have Them.*

Mm.

He was also responsible for *Monty Python*. That was then again pushing forward the boundaries, all of his life he, he would take a risk, and that's what you had to do.

Mm.

To move things along. He was taking a risk at Alexandra Palace putting the cameras in the corridor and he was still taking risks with comedy thirty years later. He moved, he, he got fed up sitting behind a desk being Head of Comedy and he went as being a producer and then he left the BBC and he freelanced and he, he worked for Thames for some years and did some very successful productions for Thames. But he was behind many successful projects that have since, since run on to be, you know, are legends and take repeat after repeat after repeat. Because, you know, he had the courage to get Michael Crawford to do some of those hysterically dangerous sort of stunts, which he did himself, he didn't have stunt men to do them, you know, he never did. I mean I think he, he also had near misses when boats, you know, sank that he'd got people in rowing across lakes and doing things, but, never mind, bless him, he was a, he was an amazing character was Michael. Anyway at the time, to go back to my association with television, he left and as he left and Ronnie Waldman was still in charge he asked me to take on a new recruit called Francis Essex, and he was another

innovator. He joined television as a young, young man in his late twenties who'd been in the theatre. He wrote quite a lot of material, Francis, he was, he did work for revues and he produced revues. He had quite a big association with Richard Waring, who was another very successful situation comedy writer. But they did revue writing in those days because there wasn't an outlet for comedy as such as we know it. On radio, yes, but certainly not so much on television. But the '60s was a huge period for the wonderful development...

Is this…?

Of, of comedy in television.

This is the '60s?

The, yes, the end of the '50s. I mean there was Tony Hancock you see around that era, and Duncan Wood...

Mm.

Was a producer in Light Entertainment who was very much in a comedy field. And I have a feeling he, I mean a bit proud of him leaving for Yorkshire, he was Head of Comedy and he of course, also produced Tony Hancock and he produced the original *Steptoe* series, which was another. We were talking about double acts earlier weren't we, and…

Yes.

In terms of comedy there, there were union situations, there was Hugh and, *Hugh and I*, which was Hugh Lloyd and, and Terry… Oh, de, de, de, de, de..

Yes. Quite, de, de, de, yes.

Oh goodness me, how dreadful it's left us. Because he, he also did a series with, I'll remember it as we go along, with June Whitfield.

That's right.

Terry and June. But comedy pairs, and there was Sid James and Tony Hancock you see wasn't there? So Duncan was, was very, very much respected in that field, he really knew his onions. And of course, young people worked on series that with him, that have in their own right, gone on to become extremely talented directors and producers. Syd Lotterby, who in latter years has taken on that role and done so well. We had I suppose, and I can't remember exactly when it was a directors' course started so that people could get to do the course. And it was, as I remember it, run by a, a gentleman called Andrew Miller Jones.

[05:00]

Mm.

And you, it was about a three week course, and we went to do our stuff, because although you sit alongside if, if you're somebody like myself or if you've been on the floor working closely with people you don't know what it's all about till you actually have to sit in the chair and do it. And so it is very good to go to a course and learn the grammar of television, and it worries me a bit today when I sit and watch some things sometime where it seems sometimes people wake up one morning and think 'I think I'll be a television director today', and they go off and that's what they seem to do. But I don't think they really know what they're doing, a lot of them.

Didn't, didn't Royston Morley run that same course at the time?

I think he probably did.

And there was the...

I think he probably did but in my day...

There was a PA, the chappie was a PA.

Ronald...

Roland Price.

Roland Price was there also when I...

Yes, that's right.

But, Francis came anyway, and I'll go back to being, his being an innovator.

Yes.

And whereas Michael who had a, a too, a wonderful flair with artists and a great respect for artists because his background had come from, you know, working with people I suppose in his Navy shows and things he really did realise that if you didn't have the artist you didn't have a job because they were the people who actually did what you had, wanted on the screen.

That's right.

Put it on the screen, and they were the people that appeared. But he had this great respect, he never left a rehearsal room until everybody else had, had gone first, you know, little things like that rubbed off on people. But Francis came along and because then we'd got, television was, was beginning to expand, you could link up with the Continent and you've got the of course, the technique, the technology developed and, you know, you could put two cameras whereas we in the old days we only had, you know, lenses that didn't move and if you wanted to get closer to an artist you had to move the whole camera in, or if you wanted to go you had to move it back to get wider and the, the picture in the viewfinder was upside down. Gosh there were limitations when I think about it. But by this time, in the late '50s, things were moving on a bit. People were, you know, experiencing and experimenting, and

Francis discovered you could put two cameras on the screen at once and have the same person talking to each other or singing with themselves and he was absolutely captivated with this, I used to think sometimes at the expense of the performance. But it was a good, I mean he again was pushing forward the boundaries. And he, he loved the, the, the technical machine of television. I'm not so sure that Michael was so absorbed with the technicalities of it or the technology of it as...

The content?

The wonderful thing that you could, you know, present ideas on a screen was what captivated him. Francis loved the whole sort of mechanical experience of it and the, and the possibilities of it, he was always trying to see what else you could do to make it visually exciting, as I say, not always enhancing what, what he was, the story was trying to tell. But, however, that was good, good news. And he came along and, and he was, designed always to, to be the one who had to go and link up Europe. We did things called *Pictures in the Sky* and we'd have seven countries, we went off around Europe and formed links and then we'd do a hook up with the whole thing on the night. And I remember some of that coming from, I think we were, I think we must have done that from, that the actual link up from Riverside but he was all… We had people dancing round London. He was, he, you know, we were now opening it up, we were really getting outside the studios, and I can remember us doing a dance routine down The Mall with Wendy Toye, Irving Davies and Sally, Shirley Eaton, Shirley Eaton, blonde girl, very attractive blonde girl and disrupting the Life Guards on their way to the, to the...

[Laughter] Palace?

Palace to, and I, we never left The Mall so quickly.

Yes.

Because I don't know that we'd asked permission, and certainly today you can't even put a tripod up into any Royal Park or The Mall without permission, and you seldom get permission. But anyway, and we, we had him dance from somewhere, Alexandra Palace or something all the way to the Television Theatre and they eventually danced in down the aisle and on to the stage, and that was just the opening titles.

[Laughter]

However that was Francis, he was lovely. And we did, with Francis we did the first ever record series, I remember him being asked to do that. We thought records were beginning to take off in the mid '50s and the, they were, you had charts and, and best sellers and things. And so we started this series, it was called *Off the Record*. It was introduced by Jack Payne, we did it in Studio G on Monday nights, I think, at seven thirty. And I remember the musical director was Stanley Black. We had quite a big orchestra and people of course, sang live, we didn't mime to our records in those days. We got the, the performance as near to the original as possible. And of course, most of them had made their records in the studio with live orchestras not the old drum machines and synthesisers, wasn't heard of in those days. I can remember a few of the people on that first show. I can remember Alma Cogan, and I can remember Ronnie

Hilton, who is going strong to this day and, and presents a programme called *Songs of the Fifties* on the radio on a Saturday morning. And we had Harry Gold and His Pieces of Eight. And I can remember George Shearing, who then was on a rare visit to this country, playing piano on that series, on that first show. And that went on, I can remember the floor manager was John Street who became, in his own right a, a respected producer in, and his background was films wasn't it Alan?

[10:53]

Yes, yes.

And he came in and he was the floor manager, and Francis did that. We also did a series called the *Tin Pan Alley Show* which reflected, you know, as its name suggests, the, the music of Tin Pan Alley. And that was introduced by Bill Cotton Senior, who had great difficulty trying to get the script right and, I think we had a form of, I think we had a form of autocue for him, which was a very pedestrian affair invented by a man called Douglas Mair, it would be the forerunner of teleprompters….

Yes, yes.

Word prompters or whatever you like to call them today, and goodness knows there are enough versions of it, but I believe that's what we used. And dear old Bill used to have great difficulty getting that all, he read it off and it sounded as though he was reading it off. But he introduced it, and while we were doing that series I can recall, and *Off the Record*, we used to have visits from the boys, they were called in those days 'the song pluggers', they're not quite the same they're record pluggers today but in those days the music pop publishing business were song pluggers and they used to plug their songs, not their records so much, though records were beginning to take over. And one of the people who used to do that was a young man called Bill Cotton Junior who came to the studios as and he was part of Michael Ray Music, which was run by him and a colleague called Johnny Johnston who was to become a very important person in the world of jingles when commercial television started up. And by this time of course, we'd lost quite a lot of people to ITV, which had begun in the mid '50s, including people like Bill Ward who were talented producers and they'd gone off to ATV and started off, and including a lot of, of our talented technicians like cameraman and that, he whipped a few of the ace ones. Of course, that's always happened and people said 'Oh dear, oh dear', but it was good, it was good I think, and we, I think everybody believes that in the BBC that it was a very good thing for the BBC because we had competition. And it was, there was nothing better to, to get the standards raised you had to work a bit harder that you, you couldn't be complacent about it. So, but it also gave people opportunities for a few more jobs because there was nowhere really you could go if you didn't, if, or get, it was very difficult to get promotion.

Mm.

So around about that time I was very fortunate in being moved from being a secretary to getting a job at, job titles have changed over the years so we have to be, we have to be clear that a producer's secretary in those days did it all. She typed, she did the letters, she did the correspondence, as we said earlier, and she typed the scripts, and

she sat in the gallery with the producer alongside him, timed the shows and, and it was a real, you know, dogsbody there that did, did everything, Jack of all trades. And about, we also had floor managers who were the people on the floor, as we said, communicating with the artists from the instructions from the gallery. But then we thought 'There's too much work now, it's all building up for these two people we must, sort of, get more posts'. And so they, they, and the floor managers ought to be working full time in an office alongside the productions because there's, filming was being done more it, things were building up, the, it was a much bigger operation. And so they created a post of a production assistant who was somebody to help the producer do all his day to day planning, and usually, when it got to the studio, do the floor manager job on the floor, because he'd lived with the show and he knew it better, he knew all the artists. You always had a stage manager if you were doing a drama, was the equivalent of a, and they were still called stage managers there, they came from the theatre and it was the same sort of job you did in the theatre. You were there, responsible for the props, for hand props, for ordering props for the action and also for cueing artists, you held the book and if they needed their word cues and they forgot their lines you cued them.

[15:00]

And of course, that happened in television too, because when we were live, you know, you couldn't stop when you forgot your words, somebody either had to give you a quick nudge, you know, an, an off camera cue. And they used to have a little, a little button on their microphones that they could cut out the sound so that if they had to give somebody a cue they could give them the cue and release the button so that the public, the viewers didn't hear them being cued. But that was the, the, the sort of line up in the office. And I, I mean everything, like finance became much more important because things were just beginning to cost a little more. Mm, and they had these jobs and I applied for one and the people really didn't want to know anyway. I went for a board eventually on another occasion and I think I was really very fortunate. And I only really got the job because of Ronnie Waldman's belief in me, because he'd known me since forever. He'd been at AP and he knew that I think, made quite a big contribution, and had done a lot of jobs that these PAs were going to do. But I hadn't done the floor, and because most of the PAs that were appointed were floor managers being brought upstairs or up to the office the rest of the people on the board didn't really think I was capable. But Ronnie believed, I think, and I, anyway I got a job. And it was also, I wouldn't like to put too fine a point on it because I've never been a sort of, you know, a feminist banging her drum about, you know, women are hard done by, it never really worried me I just… But I think there was a sort of an anti-feminist.

Mm.

Attitude in the BBC in those days as, apart from being secretaries I don't think people believed. And yet you see it was strange because most of the, unlike the film industry all the makeup assistants were female and all the people who worked in wardrobe, the, the costume designers, the dressers, except they had male dressers, they were all woman.

Mm.

The, the, the Head of, of Costume, for years, was a woman called Jeanne Bradnock.

Yes.

Who was at AP. The Head of Makeup was Tommy Manderson, who is still going strong this day and works in movies now and has, not recent, only recently been nominated for an award I think it was *Little Dorrit* she did that was a very successful series. And they were all around, but it seemed in other fields, including producing and directing, there were very few women. But I got this job and so, still with Francis, I was his PA then. And we had a secretary as well so that was luxury. And it was also quite a big jump financially for me, it was like jumping four grades or something, which of course, my colleagues didn't, I wasn't too popular with some of my other fellow ladies.

What was the, what was the, roughly what was that in those days?

In terms of hard cash?

Yes.

I, you know, I can't remember Alan, I lost count from when I went down to four pounds ten and ten pence.

[Laughter] Yes.

From my four pounds sixteen and six pence, I didn't sort of worry too much about the money.

Yes.

I used to, I can remember when I got a, a job, I think it must have been of a PA, I actually said 'I can't afford to be established staff', they invited me to be established staff', I said 'I can't afford the contributions because I need a holiday', so I think we were pretty hard up.

Yes, yes.

And by this time they really had thrown me out of hostels.

Yes.

I mean I had really been given the big boot. So it was probably quite expensive for, not like today, but I mean it was quite expensive to have rooms in London. But I couldn't tell you, I could tell you because I've got every pay slip, you know.

Probably about fifteen hundred a year?

Up grading and things, I shouldn't think it was as much as that.

About a thousand?

I couldn't tell you, but...

Roughly about a thousand?

I've, I've got all my bits and bobs.

Yes, well next time.

Because I can remember finding when I browsed through that at some stage when I was saying what wonderful qualifications I'd got for this job I said vision mixing. So I think when we did the OBs with Jewel and Warriss and we had go to the Camden, Bedford, Bedford, Camden Town.

Yes, yes.

I must have vision mixed it, because I don't know when else I would have done it. I don't remember doing it in the studios, but I think I must have done it there, I don't remember. But I think I, you know, I don't think I would have put down if I hadn't. I'm, was always quite honest.

Yes.

I'm quite surprised if I actually got, you know, that I was doing the job at all. But, so and I'd, I'd applied for a few things like OB jobs, I always used to think that if I didn't work in Light Entertainment, people used to say 'Why do you stay in Light Entertainment'? I think, I thought 'I don't think I know where else I'd like to go except possibly OBs', Outside Broadcast, because I felt it, it was, variety really was what Light Entertainment was about, we never did the same sort of show twice, it was, there was always an element of difference about it. And I mean, I know if you do drama that it would be, drama's a bit different, but Light Entertainment you really, it was variety. And we were in, you know, you got a chance of so many different things and you met some, so I didn't see any reason to move. So I was PA with Francis for a while and then I was sent for again and I was told I'd got another new chap they'd like me to, I think it was because I'd been there so long I had got this experience, you know, I got another new one who was coming in, and his name, Francis was quite a small gentleman in stature, but not in talent.

[20:22]

Mm.

And his name was Stewart Morris, this new one, and he was the other scale. He was, it was like, you know, talk about Tweedledum and Tweedledee, he was the Tweedledum, but he was really a very large gentleman and a, a great showman was Stewart really. I mean he, he came along and we'd been doing some shows, Francis and I, down at Riverside with Bob Miller and the Millermen, which was a band, I mean that sort of in that vogue of, this was all the era of *Six-Five Special* was going on, and it was, we'd gone through sort of skiffle, we, we weren't into the rock scene

yet, but it was skiffle and Lonnie Donegan and all those people, you know, and, and the *Six-Five Special* and, it, we had this show with Bob Miller and the Millermen where Francis would insist that, I mean bands always play from music and sit down in rows, not Francis, innovating again 'We shall have everybody stand up and memorise the music'. Well, dear Lord, you know. Anyway Stewart came along, he followed in, and it was *Saturday Night Show* at six, and we followed Francis's with *Drumbeat*, which people in the business will really remember. And he went off auditioning and I can remember the auditions in the boys' club in the Uxbridge Road and we auditioned Adam Faith, he came along, sang his song. Vince Eager. We auditioned a young sixteen year old lady called Sylvia Sands, who eventually became Mrs. Stewart Morris, and she sang *Apple Blossom Time*, I can remember that, in her audition. And Adam, and The John Barry Seven was, you know, to people in that business legendary names in that line up. Like Les Reed, people have been very good songwriters since and done a lot of good things. And anyway, John Barry of course, who is in Hollywood now and is a very established Hollywood music writer and orchestrator for big movies, *Born Free* and the Bond things he started the Bond theme.

And Stewart did this series and he was again, he was another, you know, he, he brought a new style. And by this time, and we did these all on Saturdays, by this time, I meant to go back to the sort of day to day operation back at base back at the ranch, although we did them in Riverside I, we were, by now we'd move from Lime Grove, and I can't put a date on it exactly when we left the fourth floor of, of Lime Grove, but of course, with the expansion and everything we never had enough studios, but we did have a block that BBC bought, that big site at White City.

Mm, mm.

And the first block they built was the Scenery Block, they called it that because ultimately it was going to be just for design, and it had the workshops at the bottom of it where they built the scenery, because in Lime Grove it's, I mean it, I don't really have to say Lime Grove were the old film studios which the BBC bought. And we had, we had, up there we had 'G', we had 'D', which we'd opened in the early '50s, and 'E' and 'H', which little programmes were done in, cooking and Philip Harben and, I don't know, *Muffin the Mule* and a few other things moved down there, and which of course, ultimately became an experimental studio for colour.

Mm.

For years. And that was Lime Grove. And then, so we went up to the Centre into the Scenery Block, we didn't have a studio as I remember it to begin with, but we needed the offices. And then they dug that big round hole, the pile drivers drove us mad because they dug that up and started building, which I suppose was the late '50s, it must have been. And when, then everybody started to drift up to the Centre we ran out of offices there because we got the studios going first, not all of them but some of them, I think Three and Four were the first to be opened. And we were shunted out to the back car park in caravans, our offices became caravans. I've had a really varied career in, in where we worked. And they'd sort of three little sections in them and, dear they were dirty because there was sort of cinder outside.

[25:00]

Yes.

And, oh, and the cars parked all round us. There were about a dozen there, and we each had one. And there was Stewart and his PA, I was his PA, the floor manager called Nick Burrell-Davis, who was brother of Derek Burrell- Davis.

Mm.

Who was, by that time, an OB engineer. Sally Gillman, who is now Sally Askey.

Mm.

And who is, she was sec…, sort of production secretary.

Mm.

And she's now a, a PA, still working actively in the business freelance, she's done a lot of work on *The Bill*, and she's just about to do a production, co-production for the BBC. And we worked in this caravan for a year, well he did for years, I worked with him for about, about a year.

Mm.

And he was obviously destined for big success, Stewart. He was a, he really was a showman and he, he'd sort of bombed his way into… I mean every, I think people were a bit scared of him because he did shout a lot, but his bark was worse than his bite, you know. But he, he was, he was great, and of course, he's done, I mean I don't have to tell people the shows that Stewart's got credited up. But I left him, it must have been late '59, after about six to nine months, got him on his way, and of course, Nick and Sally sort of looked after him after that for quite some time. And I went on the directors' course, which I've mentioned a little while ago which, which was most important, where you went, you did your, you had to sit in school. I can't remember a lot of people who were on that with me, but I'm pretty sure I'm right in saying that one of the people, there was a gentleman I think called Barry, Barry Brown. He, he had, not Barry Brown that's in film, but he was, something he did, he, he did the first programme called *Top Gear*, he did a thing about cars and motorcars. But another name I'm nearly sure was on it was called Michael Bukht, and Michael Bukht is now, I think, Michael Barry, who is a very well-known chef on television [Laughter] but he set out to be a producer and a director doing something quite different, but I'm sure that that is the same person. I can't remember about many, anybody else on the, on the course. We were about, I don't know how many? There were about twenty. And it was a three week course and it was very hard work it was like going back to school, and if you nodded off, my goodness, you, you were in trouble, when they…

Was that where, Woodstock Grove was it? Or not yet?

I think it must have been, I don't remember.

It was later on, certainly.

I don't remember Norman where it was.

Yes, I think it was Woodstock.

I think it was Woodstock.

Woodstock, yes.

And at the end of it you had to do a production exercise, and you got thirty pounds to do the production exercise. And I chose to do one because, you know, there was me on my old hobby horse song and dance. I got a very nice choreographer called Irving Davies to do the whole thing. And I found a pianist who'd, he'd done some work for us on shows and I said would he play piano and get together a drum and a bass or something. And we concocted this little show with Irving which was sort of song and dance and I directed it and I, I got my diploma for that.

That's a bit extra…

And ..

Is it?

Then Merrick Mashwood [ph 2A 27:17] said to me 'I've got a little series for you to do and it's called *Soft Lights and Sweet Music*, and I don't know, what I want is a nice, restful, melodic, late night half an hour when people come in and before they go to bed they want to have something nice and relaxing to listen to, and there you are you've got four hundred and fifty pounds a show and get on with it'. So I was, you know, Riverside too so I said 'Great' and off I went. And I can remember a very talented young designer, Lionel Radford, God love him, he's, he went far too prematurely with some dreaded thing. And I had, the lighting director was Geoff Shaw. and his console operator was Ken MacGregor, and I mention that because Ken MacGregor must have been associated with me, I've done to date something between five, six hundred shows, must have done, and I know it's well over five hundred, and Ken must have done more of those than anybody else, was associated on a long term basis as lighting director. A gentleman of great, good taste and excellence and, you know, a quiet operator but he was just wonderful, he had such, such wonderful flair for it, and, a, a good friend. And I really believed since those days that you built up a team, I'm very, very much for the team operation because then you move on from one thing to another, you don't have to get to know people. And making television programmes which, whether I learnt this when I was with Francis and, and Michael I don't know, but my belief was that, you know, together you made something special because you understood what everybody was, you almost knew what they were thinking without them having to tell you.

[30:14]

And you didn't, every time you approached a new project, have to think 'Well I don't know quite how he's going to approach that', you'd, you'd, you're sort of, you know, you're anxious not to tell people how to do their job but you know that what you want,

so you try to communicate what you are trying to achieve. But you know that they're going to inject themselves to it, and you're not sure when you don't know people whether what their ideas are going to be is quite what you want, but you must give them the credit for making a proper contribution, and not just because they've probably got much better ideas than I have but it's this collective discussion of how to get the best result which is so important. And on that first series was Hugh Barker who did the sound, who I was aware and he was still then when Ken retired prematurely a few years back. But Ken, Hughie is still there, one of the best of the sound, as, you know, supervisors. And we were in Riverside Two and I can see Leo, in those days we hadn't, you know, we, we used to do the old, old scenery going up and down. I mean we, we actually, because we had so little we were doing what was motifs and a lot of lighting on the cyclorama and we had a ground row and, you know, and old Leo was running up and pulling up bits of cut outs and things because we had no money for big built scenery to, to get the effects, you know, to make a, compose a picture with a piece of something. And it was Carol and these four musicians, I can remember Dennis, Dennis Wilson on piano, Kevin somebody on drums, Dave Goldberg on guitar, Tim Bell on bass and we had a guest each week, and on the first programme was Kenny Baker, the trumpeter, who is still going strong and probably still the best that we've got in this country. God, and it's not, you, very few people stand at that length of time at their peak on a trumpet.

Mm.

Where, your embouchure, you know, goes after a time. And we had guests in that like Tubby Hayes who's, who was subsequently a very good jazz vibraphone player, and tenor sax. And John Scott, a flute player, and Stéphane Grappelli came over for it. And we did that series, and we did another series the following year. And around about that time, I really was given a chance, I did a big band show with Ted Heath when four phase stereo started in the recording business, it was called *Big Band Concert*, because it was called *Big Band Percussion* was his disc, and I called my show *Big Band Concert*, which the initials were BBC, not that that was but it was just coincidental. And in that I had Irving, and we interpreted the music. We had Carole Carr and we had Anita Harris, both, well certainly Anita's still going strong, we'd to do a couple of vocals in it. We did it in, in, I think, I don't think, we must have done that at the Centre, or did we do it at Riverside? We did it at the Centre in one of those studios, Centre, it must have been Three or Four.

Mm.

And it was entered for the Montreux Television Festival, and we'd won it in '60 with *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, because that was going strong and, mm, and I, they entered my show. I was still only a PA then but I was very proud of that, but I, I really, because I think I had my musical training I really enjoyed, yes I really enjoyed cutting to music and knowing, you know, I could really… The music motivated me, let's put it that way. Music gave me all my inspiration, and always has done, to make pictures, I love it. I, as soon as I hear music I, I can see visual, visions in it and then...

I've got a question. You said when you did the, the Ted Heath Show you were still a, a PA.

Still a PA, yes.

Still a PA?

Yes, I...

Or had you passed across?

Oh yes, I was still doing my apprenticeship, yes. And I, after my *Soft Lights and Sweet Music* I directed six months for, after the first series I came back. I, I was also, I'll tell you, I'd forgotten, I edited before I, while I was still a PA and before I became a director I was editing the commercials out of *The Perry Como Show*, which the BBC was showing with great success from about '57ish.

Mm.

John Street started doing that. And they used to come over, these kinescopes they were called, sixteen millimetre kinescopes. And they came in on the sort of Monday and we used to transmit them on Wednesday night at, at seven o'clock or seven thirty, and I used to have to whip out the commercials because we weren't, then join them up again, and I used to do that. Alan Richardson, but primarily Richard Berkeley who was a...

[35:03]

Yes.

A film editor, he used to, to look after those. And I used to rush down there and edit them and tidy them up for transmission here and put them on the screen. And at one stage too Harry Carlisle, a producer in our department was responsible, but anyway I ended up getting it all because it was, you know, I enjoyed doing it and they were pleased to unload it. It was the sort of thing people thought was a bit of a chore but...

Yes.

Because it had got, it was full of people's names I knew and there you could see them for real, you know, people from, American artists that you didn't, you'd heard of but you, there they were all performing because he had the best, I mean wonderful people. And in 1960 he came to London and made a show for his series in, in the April he came to London. And I worked on that because I had been working on a show, Bill Cotton was the executive producer, Michael Hoe [ph 2A 36:00] was the stage manager, I was the PA and we had a secretary. And the, the floor manager was Dougie Argent, Douglas Argent.

Mm.

And we did a lot of location work in Covent Garden with Ralph Richardson, Margot Fonteyn, we did a ballet, ballet insert. And the last segment of it was done in the theatre, because we'd taken The Television Theatre around about, as we said earlier, 1953.

Mm, mm.

And we took that over and by ’60 it was still operating, everything was 405 lines.

Mm.

525 in America. And we recorded the third segment in that show too, we did a, we did a sequence at The Old Bull and Bush, with Harry Secombe, Russ Conway, Fenella Fielding. We did a sequence at Woburn Abbey with the, the older, the father, Duke of Bedford, the one now retired not the present one.

No. No, no.

And, well isn't he, he's not anyway because he, the original Duke of Bedford is still alive isn't he? He lives in Europe, I think, it's his son.

Yes.

The Marchioness, anyway he had that terrible stroke.

Yes.

It was the Marchioness of Tavistock.

Yes.

Who, Henrietta Tiarks who was, was recently talking a lot about, then there was the book. But anyway we, we went out there, we did a sequence there with, with her, and that was not with film that was with a, with a unit. We took OBs, the things we did we used to, and arriving at the airport and we did that with OB cameras. And then, and on four, and on 525 lines.

And telerecorded?

And telerecorded.

Yes. Because it was recorded, yes.

Yes. And we, and we did the final segment in the studio, in the theatre, the last sort of, music sing, him, himself, because part of that he’d been talking to people and other people had been singing, although he joined in in *The Old Bull and Bush*. You, you know, it's lovely, you can think of the, the people that, the places that the Americans with the landmarks in London because I mean since it's been flogged to death, everything like that, but this was the first time anybody had come to London and done this sort of thing. And we did this in five, on 525 lines in the theatre, this last segment, and the interesting point here, Alan, we edited the tapes, for the first time we edited tape here. We edited in, in Television Centre, and I can remember the place, they had got just enough equipment with there was sawdust on the floor, and it's where Telecine is now in the main block. They had a videotape machine and they brought

their tape editor from America to edit it here because we had no tape experience. And there was a boy called, I forget his first name, but Jenkinson, Jenkinson. I think he's still, and I can remember Don Kershaw being around. But this boy Jenkinson was there and he was an observer because he was one of the early tape editor people there who was learning the trade, and they were all fascinated watching this man.

Yes.

Ed Smith, I think his name was, edit this tape. Because I mean, and this, this was still scissors time then, this was not electronic, this was, 'Is this where you want the cut? Sure you want it here'? Bash, and so the scissors went through it. Now that was a, a landmark. And so we did that and they went off back to The States and of course, we got it back.

Yes.

To show it here as part of, as part of the series.

Right. Let me correct that. I said was this telerecorded, and you said 'Yes', it wasn't telly recorded.

No it was tape but I'm trying to...

Video, video.

I'm just trying to think where, what we used on location, it must have been tape as well. Mobile I suppose, I mean what...

Or tape bringing back?

How did we do?

It may have been later that.

I can't remember, I can't remember.

Which...

How we did that.

Where, are we about 1960 now?

Sixty, it was April 1960.

Mm.

It was before I did my series, but the, it was, and we rehearsed all the bits that we had to rehearse in The Sulgrave Boys' Club in the Goldhawk Road.

[40:00]

Oh, yes.

Which was a famous place for...

Which is still there.

For, yes, there was...

Still there.

There was the billiards room downstairs and the gym upstairs.

Yes, yes.

And many people rehearsed in there, that was that. So, sorry, but that was important that little bit, because that was a landmark.

Yes, yes.

And Bill Cotton, Clark Jones was the director, producer for the, for the Americans. And now after that because I had done that the BBC sent me, and I think it was the September after that series I'd done, I did my own series in the July 1960, which was my song, *Soft Lights and Sweet Music*, and then they sent me to America to see if I could persuade the Americans not to integrate the commercials into the last bits of the segments before they went in, because he would stand there. It was Kraft Music Hall was the sponsors, and he used to work his way into, I don't know, some Kraft Margarine or something and then we, you know, you got it to edit and it was the payoff to the previous thing and you'd say 'How do I deal with that'? So they sent me over there to see if I couldn't persuade them to try and help us a bit because we were a good market for them taking this show every week. So I had the, they did it in The Ziegfeld Theatre in New York and I sat there for a, for a few days with the, mm, with the company. And in those days 'Mr. C.' had just got himself a new production unit and the producer was a man called Nick Vanoff, who became very famous in Hollywood terms in the television business out there. The designer was a man called Gary Smith and the director was called Dwight Hemion. And in latter years Nick sort of set up his own company but Gary Smith became a producer and Dwight Hemion is still directing, and they have probably produced in America the best quality specials in terms of the light entertainment music specials, Streisand, Julie Andrews big Christmas shows, Sinatra, they'd done, if, if there's something to be done that's going to be the best. And only last week I watched Barbra Streisand doing a show, first show for nineteen years, live performance and at the end of it who had done it, but Smith and Hemion. And it was beautifully directed and I sat and looked at it and thought 'A lot of people should be sat down to look at simplicity, when today everything is so frenetic, how it is still important to put one camera on somebody and let them actually use the, the screen and let you observe the way they, their faces work and, and what is to be said, without all, you know, moving, cutting away every three or four seconds, you know. Are you wanting me to stop?

[End of Tape 2 Side A 00:42:57]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 2 Side B

It's on isn't it?

But I just think...

Yvonne Littlewood, Side 4. Right. Okay.

Yes, just, just to add a small rider to that whole saga about Como who, who...

Yes.

Which I think is important, and, and direction and Dwight Hemion and Gary Smith, who have done marvellous things, I am a great follower of them. But Dwight Hemion just recently, as I say, I saw his work on a special done on location in the grounds of Barbra Streisand's home and the direction was just great. So much time, just the use of one camera for minutes on end to the greatest of effect. And it reminded me when I sometime see such frenetic camera work all the time these days, people don't stop and think how something should be directed. That some things want a lot of coverage, a lot of movement, a lot of action. Some things are more effective with one still shot, and, and, you know, you can be just as effective with one camera as you can be with five or six or more. And cutting every, you know, three or four seconds. In the very early days of television I can remember, and I'm sure other people can who remember those days, Fred O'Donovan was a famous director of drama in Alexandra Palace, and I suppose probably into the early days of the '50s in, in Lime Grove. And he used to do whole dramas on one camera, and that doesn't mean to say he left the camera in one position and shot the whole thing on a wide shot, he moved his camera and he directed his action that the whole thing could be covered with one shot, that you didn't actually have to keep on changing direction. It moved with the action, was, was actually tailed, dove tailed to, to work to this, and it was so effective. And I always believed that good direction, you are unaware of it. If you are aware of what the cameras are doing it's not good direction. Direction is there to enhance the performance that, or whatever the premise is on the card you're trying to present on the screen whatever it is, you're there to make it, to, to give it its full flowering, you are not supposed to get in the way of it. If you, if you've been aware of the direction, I mean that's, we say we don't care and we don't notice, you do notice something that's got a bit. I mean if you become suddenly terribly aware all the time of what the cameras are doing I don't believe they are doing their job correctly. And today, I know everything it needs to be pacey, but I think it's gone berserk on a lot of occasions, and so many people direct everything the same.

Yes.

And there should have, be a different way of directing whatever is, it's appropriate.

Yes. Individual style.

Yes.

Instead of...

And you must adapt...

A machine.

The way you use the cameras. But people get carried away with it, it's a toy and, you know, it's sort of. And this thing, you see, uncontrolled direction, where people cut away from moving shots who are on the way round something with a shot and it, and before it's settled and stopped you cut and it gives you such a jar. Anyway, 1960, to go back, and the *The Como Show* and I directed after *Soft Lights and Sweet Music*, and I still went on editing with Como every week. But I directed for people like Dennis Main Wilson and Harry Carlisle various things. I did six months on *This is Your Life*, and music shows in Riverside and, and Lime Grove. And then I seemed to get the chance to specialise more on my own productions, and it wasn't until 1963 that I, I mean I think when posts came up I applied for them but I never got the jobs. I mean there, there didn't seem to be, there was obviously much more, you know, better potential than me. I've got a file full of rejection slips I've had over the years, not that I've applied for that many but every now and again you think...

And all light, sorry, all Light Entertainment of course?

No, once...

Or you're still considering Outside Broadcasting I imagine?

Once, well once, once, I had forgotten, yes, I did find when I was searching through, looking for something a few weeks ago, I don't, I try not to live in the past. I'm really not, not good at this, this is why I can't remember anything. Because I didn't actually know we were all making history, we were just, we had a lovely job and we enjoyed it and we got on with it. And I, you know, I had such trouble keeping up with the people I was working and I pretended I knew what they were doing and they were saying, but I didn't really, I was just having to run hard and faster to keep up.

Yes.

But I did apparently apply for a few things and I was always rejected. And they, I mean by the time I was producing, you know, we've always been thumping on the bar haven't we? on the counter thinking, 'I've been doing this and he's only been here five...' And, well anyway I never got any jobs. And then, you know, it's, luck's always been, had a big part in our lives, they decided to start BBC 2 and we had, the Light Entertainment Group had, I don't know what it was, weekday meetings or monthly meetings and we used to go along and not, we were, Syd Lotterby, who used to be a cameraman...

[05:20].

Mm.

Of great talent started, he became a PA. He was more in the sort of comedy field than… And Light Entertainment in those days, I think, was just all Light Entertainment, though it did become a split department into Variety and Comedy ultimately. And I went sort of the Variety route and he went the Comedy route.

Mm.

But we were sent for by Tom Sloan, who I think must have by this time been, yes I'm sure he was, Head of Group, because Eric Maschwitz didn't stay very long, he was, he was a wonderful man, he was still Head of Group in 19…, in '62, because he was Head of Group when we all sailed off to Montreux with my entry for The Montreux Television Festival.

Mm.

Which didn't win a prize but was highly commended for its 'Co-ordination of the vision and sound elements', and that pleased me, I think, as much as anything because I felt that that's what I was setting out to do and it had, it had done its job. And then the same year Norman Jewison, who was a television producer then, in those days, for Canadian television, well a Canadian he was, and still is but he was in, into America. And he, they entered his show he'd done with Judy Garland in New York, and it was also highly commended at the same time for 'Its communication with the audience', and, and that was her communication with the audience so that was… And Eric was still there then, but Tom, who was his number two, the Assistant Head of, must now have been, so around '62, '63 he must have, must have been about '63 he took over. And he sent for Sid and myself and he said 'At the meeting today I'm going to announce that I have made you both producers'. Well, we were kind of pretty relived about that, because I think he'd had about as much success as I had. We used to meet at boards and we always said 'Heard anything'? 'No, I didn't get that one', you know. And so off we went, and we were kind of pretty thrilled. And I had a lovely time because they opened around about that time TC1, and Michael Peacock must have been Head of, Controller of Programmes of BBC 2 then when, I think he was the first...

He was the first Controller of '2', yes.

Yes. That's right, well he was, because I have a picture of him and Tom and me and Leo Radford, who I mentioned earlier, standing looking at the grid in TC1. And, and I did a big series in there when it first opened called *The Best of Both Worlds*, which was an orchestral series of the best of, of the sort of, music, composer, director, arrangers for, from America and here. And people like Mantovani and Stanley Black and Robert Farnon and Frank Chacksfield here, and from over there, Nelson Riddle, who was just becoming to be a very good name because of his association with Sinatra. Percy Faith, David Rose and Henry Mancini, who had just broken, as it were. I mean he'd just about written *Peter Gunn*, and that was about as far as people knew him.

Yes.

But he was big in The States. And we'd, that big series because the studio was big enough to put a big orchestra. And just before that I had been lucky enough to do some things with Duke Ellington, I did four or six shows with Duke Ellington, including a tour of… But then Terry Henebery came along, who had been doing *Jazz Club* in radio and took over the jazz element and did *Jazz 625*. But on the opening night of BBC 2, the, there was a power failure. Can you remember, they had *Kiss Me Kate?*

Yes. Yes, it was a famous event, yes.

Which Jim, Jimmy Gilbert produced.

That's right.

And David Askey I was talking to you about lunchtime, he directed it, because we were discussing that last night. And, and around about that time he was directing things like *Dixon of Dock Green* of course. But we, I was the only one that got the show on the air because I was late in the evening and by about eleven o'clock they got the plugs in the right place and on came the, on came the juice, power. And my *Ellington*, got on screen, and it was called *Ellington in Concert*. And I'm very proud of having done that because he was the most, you know, charismatic person to have, I've got some wonderful stories I won't bore you with of trying to get a running order together and spending most of the night sitting in The Dorchester in, hotel trying to find out what we, they were going to play the next day, and eventually leaving the hotel at six in the morning thinking 'There's not much point in going home now, I think I'll go straight to work and get this typed'. Because when you got those people [10] they came in on tour and, you know, you couldn't make any contact before they got here. And they'd had one, one empty day, and that was the day they did a television, and there was no way you could get any sense beforehand. So he went to the concert the night before.

[10:30]

Mm.

And he'd say, 'Will you come back to The Dorchester then and we'll talk about the show for tomorrow'? And I said 'Well yes, I could use a running order', you know, because, you know, jazz musicians don't want to know much more else and, you know, and they were fifty minute shows. And we went back and he, he always stayed in the same suite, The Audley Suite at The Dorchester. So you're sitting there 'I'm going to have a quick shower'. And, and you'd sit, and you'd sit and sit, he had a quick nap he didn't just have a shower. And he'd appear about two hours later and say 'I think we ought to eat something'. And I was sort of past eating by then and he'd order, I can remember us having caviar and fried eggs at two and three in the morning. Then, eventually we got some sort of running order.

How much, this is quite off step a bit, but, well not quite. I mean how rehearsal time would you get for...?

No, well no, he..

For a performance like that, I mean...

Oh practically nothing. You know, as quick as you could.

[Inaudible 2B 10:25]

Because you couldn't, you wouldn't get them in at ten thirty in the morning, not jazz musicians anyway.

No.

And they come in about twelve and shuffle, you know, shamble in, they usually sent a bus for them and usually somebody, somebody missed it. But you, you were lucky if you played through everything once, just about, and they'd only blow it half, they wouldn't blow their full thing. And, but I mean most of that kind of big band jazz that they did in concerts had a sort of form, although solos would go on as long as Duke felt that they were in good form that night. And if, and, you know, another chorus, and another chorus, and another chorus. But you had to be ready to improvise that. And I mean whereas we talked very early on about how you did a camera script, whereas I'd have an impeccable camera script for my *Big Band Concert*, and my *Best of Both Worlds*, because I would get, if there were any records of things I would get them and play them. I would borrow the scores, because I can read a score.

Yes.

And I would make my scripts and I would can the script. Those things though of course, when you actually see it all on camera sometimes the shots don't work because you, you know, the, the, I don't know, the horn players are masking the, the trombones or whatever, and you've got to sort of do some adjustments.

Mm.

Basically you had a frame. There's never been a camera script you haven't done an alteration to somewhere but you try. And even in cases where I've gone and done an OB of something in a theatre, be it an orchestra or maybe a singer in performance, where you've some basic idea of their, their routines and you've worked out a script, it's always been a Godsend if you haven't had chance to rehearse it that you've got the framework because if not, and you've got a really good, you know, crew with you, they can shot, read the cards.

Mm.

And it's amazing how it's better than having five screens or six screens, or with a close up because if they're not, if they're not actually geared to preconceived plans and shots

they always go for the close ups, they always go for where the action is, which is kind of right but it's hopeless if you've got five shots all the same on the screen.[Laughter]

Mm.

So I have done shows where I've, I've had a framework written and it may have not been perfect but it's got me out of trouble because it, it basically works, you know, you know if you thought about it carefully, and when you've had a bit of experience that you can, know you're going to, you know, you're going to make it work.

You, you talk about the, you know, you, you can read the score.

Mm.

Now did you bring that from your school days that?

No, I mean I, because I learnt piano at school.

Yes.

And I took all my grades.

Yes.

And right up to Intermediate on a piano.

Yes.

At school.

Mm.

I, I never studied a, I'd never studied a full orchestral score.

No, no.

And I couldn't tell you to the very last note that I know. And of, and of course the, the range of instruments is different, but if you spend enough times with arrangers, as I have over the years, and you've had to have arrangements made, and you've, you have arrangements made for smaller orchestras, they're called like 'booth sheets', which the sound engineers, I mean once upon a time they didn't have the privilege of those but you have them now where they're cued up with where the lead is and things. And I mean I, you know certainly the rhythm parts you can read, and you can read where the figures are and you can also read who has got the melody line. And I mean if in doubt you usually go with where the melody line is. [Laughter]

[15:06]

Yes, yes.

I mean even if you… I mean I can, but of course there are many singers who can't read a note of music. You put a sheet of music in front of them and they say to me 'It's no good you giving me this, I can't read it'. I mean they can see if they notes go up, that they must be going to sing up a bit or down a bit but they don't really know where. But, I mean I learned Tonic Sol-fa at school when I was doing singing, you know, we, I suppose perhaps that was because there was a certain Latin thing being a Catholic school we learnt Tonic Sol-fa, which is..

Yes.

But a lot of children don't today.

No, no.

Do Re Me Do Re Me Fa So La Ti Do.

Yes.

Mm, and that was of course, I've always said, although I never, you know, sort of took up dancing and music and, as I say, I worked at the BBC for a year till I made up my mind what I wanted to do. Here, forty seven-years later, I'm still working for them, so I don't make decisions very quickly.

Yes.

But I didn't expect it to be a career but, you know, it was, it was irresistible wasn't it? You couldn't afford not to, not to keep going with it.

Yes.

And, so that was the, that was the early '60s and, and Ellington and all that period which, which was wonderful. And so, I mean I didn't get much more. I did, in '63 I did the one and only show that Nat Cole did in this country, which I'm very proud to have done. He only did ever one in this country. He came and he was on tour and I got that to do. I really got some plum jobs I must say, I was lucky. And that was marvellous, he was a gentleman, both as a performer and as a person, he was just… And of course, in those days he wasn't as, as much a legend as he is now. He was highly regarded, but he wasn't a legend.

Mmm.

And I'll tell you an interesting story there. Now that was on tape, two inch, very early days of two inch. And we, you know, we, as I say nobody thought too much, and, and of course, we started on to, to tape in those days. And some years later I was in the editing rooms and the editor's doing something, the editor said to me 'I didn't know you worked with Stanley Dorfman'. And I said 'Oh yes, Stanley Dorfman', you know, a great designer ..

Yes.

In a place.

Yes.

That was a tremendous era for young designers.

Mm.

And he said, I said ‘The, probably the most memorable thing I ever did with Stanley was Nat Cole, a special’. He said, ‘Yes, that's what reminded me of it’.

Mm.

And I said ‘Why’? He said, he said ‘I had a pile of tapes to wipe’, and he said ‘every time I got to his I put it at the bottom of the pile’.

Mm, mm. [Laughter]

And I said ‘Oh really’? He said ‘Yes’, he said ‘I kept on, it kept coming up to the top and we kept putting it at the bottom’.

Mm, mm.

And he said ‘It's still there if you want to have a look at it’. And he said ‘It's amazing’. I said ‘Well I suppose it is really’.

Mm.

And then some years afterwards Neil Pittaway, who was a great editor and is now Head of something, but, because he went on, he'd got that sort of flair for managership, you know.

Mm.

And he said to me ‘I've got to do some conversion work wipe’, and he said ‘could I borrow that’, he knew that they'd got it in a cupboard I think, I don't even know whether it was in the building, I think they got somebody’s garage. And they're very glad, aren’t they now, that some people have got some things in garages, because it's, I mean look at these repeats they're doing.

Yes, yes.

Retrospective Sounds of the ‘60s, they're all only because people couldn't bear to wipe the things. And they, he got it out and he said ‘I want to try and convert it’. And so he managed to get a good 625 conversion. That was a wonderful sound because it was the old EMI, EMI tape.

Yes.

Which actually had very good sound quality. And so they converted it, and he said 'If you ever want it', he said 'I hate to tell you this', he said 'but I borrowed a project number off that that you're working on at the moment and put it down on…', [Laughter] and on my desk arrived a Phillips square box, you know, recording of course, which they can't play now, and said 'I thought you might like to have this'. And so I said 'Thank you very much'. And then latterly, some years ago, I was doing a series with Oscar Peterson and, and we were talking about Duke and, and, and about Nat, and he sounds very like Nat if he sings, which he rarely does you see. And I told him this. 'Oh, I'd give anything to see it'. So I said 'Well why don't we try and...'? So we included it, one of the numbers from Nat, *Sweet Lorraine*, and, and also one of Duke's numbers, and Oscar just sat there like a child fascinated. He said 'Oh I'd give anything for a copy of those'. I thought 'Well you can't', but I got permission to use just the one, the one clip.

[20:03]

Mm.

But it was in the days of Ellington with the line-up was at its best, and I knew every one of them, Paul Gonsalves and Johnny Hodges and Russell Procope and, you know, that group, Carney.

Mm.

Harry Carney. And I did, that year after we'd done Ellington I went on tour with them in Europe, and I followed them all round Europe and did a, a sort of *Ellington in Europe* and, and put it, the little bits of documentary and got him to sit and talk.

Were they on tape?

They...

On [Inaudible 2B 20:36]

They, they, they were on, they are on tape now, because in the repeats of *Jazz 625* they used the first one. But only, we did two at a time, and we brought them back and we put him in the theatre and did a, a concert performance. He had also got Billy Strayhorn with him, who was, of course, he co-wrote with. And, I could do you half an hour on *The Ellington Story*, but..

Sorry, what did you shoot them with?

I think, well we did film on, in, in Europe.

Ah.

Sixteen mil, and then, I know that, I know that they're partly on telerecording, but they are also on tape, because we had to do a telerecording because they entered it for two festivals, one in Prague or something at one time, one of them so that's how we know that they exist. What they're on in, at the minute I'm not sure. But I know that

the *Ellington in Concert* is now on tape, because that strange youth department who did some *Jazz 625* retrospectives recently, last year resurrected them. And, unknown to me, they said, you know, 'We've restored them'. So I said, 'Oh', you know, I'd, I'd heard from Terry this had happened, I said 'Oh, thank you for telling me'. And they'd put their own titles on, they'd lopped off my titles. And there was quite a distinguished audience in the studio, and if they'd really been clever they, and it was introduced by Steve Race, who is still very active and, and, and there were people in the audience like the Dankworths, and all sorts of people. And if they had thought they might have actually got one of those people, like Steve today, to, to, to think back to that, and to talk about, because everybody in the line-up was unique.

Mm, mm.

And there's about three of them left now, you see. But they got some young boy who is in the group Simply Red to introduce it, and it was like reading the sleeve off, the biography off the back of a record sleeve.

Yes, yes.

Whereas somebody who knew...

Yes, yes.

And for people who are interested in jazz were fascinated by who the people were that were actually in the band, because it was Ellington when he was at his absolutely supremely highest, and that I felt was a shame. But, and to answer your question I'm, I don't know whether they're all in library, all four of them, but certainly I think two of them are. And I think the *Ellington in Europe* is still there. And that had Duke doing a little bit of talk to camera for me. But it may, he also did a few, I mean Duke did a few other interviews, and they have since then done a, they did a few years ago quite a big compilation on Ellington.

Mm.

And they used quite a lot of bits of material of my programmes. They tend to get them out and carve them up a bit, I'm sure it's happened to your things.

Mm.

They don't actually ever tell you that they're, they're doing it. Not terribly sure quite what's still in the library and what isn't. And around about that time too I started and did four films in Scotland. I used to, did a series, two or three series with Kenneth McKellar. And Tom asked me to do a show to open BBC2 in Scotland when it went there, and I did something called *The Road to the Isles*, I'd never shot a film in my life. And I arrived up there and we started six thirty, Glasgow Station, with a lovely cameraman called Alex Scott, who is still, just retired but still operating, he's been doing this series with Ian Carmichael I was telling you about up in Perthshire.

Mm.

And I learnt a lot from them. We did, we did this *Road to the Isles*, in black and white that was. And then latterly we did another series of four in colour, and we re-shot it in colour. And we did one on the Outer Hebrides, one on the story of the '45 Rebellion in, it was documentary and music, narrative and music, about half and half. The music of the '45 and so many songs which people don't realise actually, they sing them and they don't actually know they were associated with the story of '45. And we did one in Italy, which was *Songs of Naples*, and was all in Italian, all the wonderful songs about the area, of that area.

Mm.

And with, on those four films I did with Ken I think they could probably get those out now, they would stand repeating, you know, how they're digging out things. Because, certainly, even Ken doesn't really date. I mean it, the clothes were a little but it was only him, it was a total solo, he did the story.

[25:00]

Mm, mm.

The narrative line, which was well written on a couple of them by a man called Eddie Boyd, who was a very talented writer. And those I hope are, I keep on meaning, they did copy me *The Road to the Isles* one, four years ago when I officially left and gave me a copy, which was kind of quaint. But that was my initiation into film. I hadn't done much film and I enjoyed **that**.

Mm.

But basically most of the things, I'd done bits of film but I, you know, largely it's been electronic and mostly studio or OB.

[Break in Sound 2B 25:42]

Am I loud and clear, or clear enough?

Yes, you're loud and, loud and clear.

Good. Those four films I did with Ken, round about the late '60s were, were my initiation into making films, which I enjoyed very much. I liked working with a sort of tight, small unit, it's a much bigger one when you're in studios, and you don't often, you don't so often, certainly in our field now, get to make those sort of programmes. Although they do of course, in Light Entertainment now make almost like little mini feature films with some of the comedy they do those big one hour, one and a half hour epics, as we shall probably get another of *Fools and Horses* I expect at Christmas. And they're very successful. At, once upon a time nobody believed that those would hold up, but they do now.

How big was your crew? You say a small crew, how big was it then?

It was, well the whole thing was ten people when we went around, there was only one artist, because there was only Ken. There was myself, and I produced and directed. We had a PA then, which is the Production Manager now. We had a Production Secretary, the question of the PA equivalent of a PA now. We had one cameraman and a camera assistant, one sound man and a sound assistant. We usually took about one sparks, or maybe two depending on how much interior we had to do, but it was very minimal lighting. And we did very minimal interior because one kind of felt that if you were on the road if, you know, you could be in a studio if you started doing too many interiors. I mean if we went to Inveraray Castle we had to go inside and look at all the armoury and all the wonderful interiors and decorations. And then we had one make-up lady, we didn't take costume because Ken basically wore his own clothes. And then we had, I think that was it, I think that was about a dozen people. It's nice and compact, even though that, you know, is quite a, a little...

A small circus? [Laughter]

Small circus. I used to have a production car and perhaps I, I used to try and take mine because it was, but Ken was very amenable, he wasn't grand, and he didn't have his limousine to, you know, ride round in.

Mm.

But we used to manoeuvre him back to hotels if we could, you know, get him finished so, because it was so cold, I mean it's so cold up in Scotland and doing a series. We always try and do it in April and May because usually he was going off to do summer season so we didn't have the pick of, I mean always the best availability time is the winter which is the worst time to go if you want to get beautiful scenery, and even sometimes in late May you can get dodgy weather up there and, but it, when it's nice of course, it's beautiful. I can remember doing a re-shoot up there of *The Road to the Isles*, and we did it in September, early October, we had one fine day in five weeks, it was terrible. And the same thing when we did the '45, we had so much rain, in the end I made a virtue of it. Like when we did *Will Ye No Come Back Again*, I was shooting the rain in the puddles, you know, teardrops, all very symbolic it was. [Laughter] However, apart from those films, we mustn't go on any longer about them, although I do think they would probably repeat today in, you know.

Yes.

Quite successfully.

Were they black and white or in colour?

They, the, the first one that I made for the opening of '2' in Scotland was...

Yes.

In black and white. And then we re-shot that again later, and the other three which were all in colour.

Mm.

Sixteen mil, Long Island, which was the Outer Hebrides, the story of the '45 Rebellion, which started in France, in Nantes, with him leaving to, some of those there to come back to England, and we went all the way round and down to Derby and turned all the way round and went back again. And there was, and the Neapolitan one, which was done all around Naples, which was gorgeous, and the music was just wonderful. We did all the music in Italian and all the narrative in English. Nobody batted an eyelid 'Oh you can't do English translation', we didn't show subtitles, but everybody knows all those songs.

[30:00]

Yes.

Come back to Sorrento and *Mari Cair* aria [ph 2B 30:03] and, and so on. Anyway, there is that. Then we, we'd started by, I mean I'd started by doing some series with Ken in the '70s, in the '60s, studio series, *A Song for Everyone*, it was his, and we did four series I think altogether. We did them down here, not in Scotland, because he had done some up there and he very much wanted to come south and work with people. Most of the music was arranged and conducted by the lovely Peter Knight, who was a wonderful arranger, musician, so talented and so well respected by everybody, not only here but in The States as well, far too prematurely taken from us. So that was Ken.

And also around the '60s, I don't know, I can't remember now if I mentioned it, we can lose it if we did of course, I had quite a long association with *A Song for Europe*, and *The Eurovision Song Contest*, because I worked on the very first one in 1960. It wasn't the first one ever, but it was the first one we participated in when we did it at The Festival Hall. And Harry Carlisle was producing then, I directed and Innes Lloyd, the very first, I was the programme co-ordinator on the first one, and Innes Lloyd directed it. Then I directed for Harry the next year and in '62. And then in '63 *The Eurovision Song Contest* was held here and we did it in, in Television Centre in Studios Three and Four, and we had a, in fact we had a third study for the jury. It was a very big multi hook up, I mean it was eighteen nations, I think, even in those days there was a very big, it, it still is probably the biggest hook up that the The Eurovision, you know, facility, uses in the year, I would say. I mean now it's usually about twenty-two countries, twenty-three countries. But we were doing about, and, and it was very complicated because there was a wonderful man in the switching centre in Brussels called Eric Griffiths who was the only man that really knew how to make that system. I mean, I'm sure it's so easy now as falling off a log, but then the, the system you had to go, the route you had to go to get round all those countries. And we were nearly always saying, you know, 'Hello Madrid', and Madrid was never there. But it was wonderful of course, it was live too you see on the night. And we had, that particular year we were in Three and Four and we hadn't opened TC1 then, because that didn't open until '64 when we started BBC2. And I landed a helicopter on the top of the roof of TC1, which was, which was actually piloted by the chief pilot for helicopters in, it was then, I think, BEA. Because we did an aerial arrival we were doing, you have to do something to establish the country wherever it's being held and so what better we thought, there was really something to be doing aerial shots in those days, and we landed this helicopter on the roof. The only reason we, we couldn't do it

now was that in those days they hadn't got the rig up in TC1, so there wasn't the weight on the roof hanging, that was still to be done so they allowed us, it, all the measurements that had to be, to go on about whether the roof would take this. They weren't too pleased about it in some of the offices because the next day, it had to stay there overnight and be battened down, and the next day it took off to the dismay of most people who didn't know it was there. [Laughter] But, I'll tell you who the cameraman was, it was Tony Legg, not, yes, Tony..

Yes. Tony.

Leggo.

Could be, yes.

Yes, Tony Leggo it was.

Famous name, an old friend of ours.

Yes.

And I've got a picture of us standing on the roof observing this monster there. That was kind of, that was kind of fun, and it was, you know, it was, it was exciting to do that, it was a really big, big hook up. So that, I had a big association with *Song for Europe*. And then we did, I did some more of them and went off with various people. I remember going to Denmark with Matt Monro, and even old Ken MacGregor, Ken MacGregor, Ken McKellar, was the entry one year, singing in his kilt because Tom Sloan thought that that was what he should do, and it wasn't what he should do in Luxembourg but had a lovely song written by Bob Farnon. When they're, in fact, you know, people would be amazed to know, there are a lot of people, there was a lot of, huge amount of talent in Design Department in those days. There were wonderful designers, Marilyn Taylor, Stephen Taylor, do you remember them all? Cliff Hatts, when Cliff Hatts was designing.

Yes.

Later to become Head of Design. And a boy who worked for me a lot called Lionel Radford. But there was a designer in there then called Ridley Scott, and he designed the sets for *A Song for Europe* one year. I've got in those books with all the pictures, I could show you his, his set. And Ridley Scott today is one of, you know, the, the top international film directors. It's surprising, you know, like so many people in Current Affairs and *Monitor* who, the, the young directors who did so well. But quite a few, and Stanley Dorfman…

[35:22]

Mm.

Was another one who eventually, he designed quite a lot of things with me, and then he decided to take the, you know, the plunge. I can remember him saying he'd been asked to do Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday* movie, and did I think it was a good

idea? That was as a designer, but then of course, he came back and became a very good director. He disappeared off to The States and we haven't seen too much of him lately. But that was a, it was a rich period for design, there were wonderful people, and they were such personalities. I'm sure there probably are, perhaps it's because it's got so big we don't, they don't have quite as much opportunity to, to sort of blossom do they nowadays as they did in those days. And probably too the challenge was so great, because, it was old Dick Levin, wasn't it, running the group then.

Mm.

And he used to be responsible, he quite often got himself on to a few of the, the prestige things like *A Song for Europe*, or a *Eurovision Song Contest*, it was 'Art Direction, Richard Levin', had a special title. But it, it was a very rich period then and, and they were being innovative and finding new ways of doing design, which was very important because we had been so trapped, and of course, it was the start of getting a, more effects as design with lighting, and particularly when colour came along. So that, that was the sort of '60s. I did quite a lot of, you know, one offs, music shows and singers and, as I say the, *The Big Band Concert*, I think we talked about. And the things with Nelson Riddle, Johnny Mathis, I suppose Johnny Mathis I've had a, it's the nice thing in my career is that I've had kind of ongoing production relationships with people, which is lovely, it's lovely to have started with somebody many years ago and still be able to work with them at quite a future date. I mean there haven't been too many gaps between the, the occasions we've worked. And that I really like because you get this tremendous sort of knowledge of each other, trust of each other. And you can progress onwards, and there's not this sort of getting to know you, that by the, you know, by the time you really know someone you've done the show. You wish you'd known them as well before you started as when you begin, because it makes it much easier. And I've have one or two like that, which has been nice. The Ellingtons we talked about. Then at, alongside I talked to, I think, I remember about *The Best of Both Worlds* which was the big orchestral series.

Yes.

Which we started in the, in TC1, that was the first, and I have a picture in the book too of me looking at the grid with Michael Peacock, must have been Controller of BBC2 at that time. And Lionel did the set for that, Lionel Radford.

Mm.

Then alongside that, around about that time I did a series, I was responsible for a series called *Tonight in Person*, which also came about because of BBC2. And that was really the, presenting the best of the world's folk singers, the people which were very much the idiom in those days to stand up with a guitar, most of them wrote, a lot of them wrote their own material. And I'm thinking of people like, Peter, Paul and Mary.

Mm.

The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem from closer to home. Theodore Bikel which was…

Yes. Yes.

Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton, who was totally unknown in those days and I think I might have, I probably did his first television, and Judy Collins. They are all people who have grown with the years and in, in their presentation and their material. And in fact in that series, it was important, and there was a lovely Israeli group called Esther and Abi Ofarim, very special people, and I did several shows with, particularly with Esther. They split but Esther remained, she was, had a very special quality, I loved working with her, very special voice. And it was in that series too that I did a one off with Nana Mouskouri, which I mention particularly because I then went onwards to do many series with her, in fact I suppose I've done pretty well ninety-eight per cent of any television she's done in this country, which was very rewarding and very successful. I noticed the tremendous response that there was to the one show she had done, I'd seen her once before in a show with The Limeliters, who were a folky group.

Mm.

And she sang for Luxembourg, though it wasn't important at the time, in The Eurovision I mentioned earlier that was done here, she was singing for Luxembourg. But I saw her after this *Tonight in Person*, the huge reaction, and we used to get those viewer reaction sheets and how popular she had been with the public and she was very unknown in this country, although she'd had this big success with *The White Rose of Athens in Germany*. So I said 'If anybody had a little spot that they wanted, a nice more economic little...', because she was self-contained with her own four piece group of musicians called The Athenians, 'I'd like to do a series with her'. But, they said 'Oh well, okay', and so I got TC7 given to me and six programmes. And I remember the set was designed by David Chandler who I think is still with Central now, he went from the BBC to, then he had a big association with *The Muppets* series', after…

[40:58]

Mm.

When he left The Beeb. But we did this love, with a flavour of the Greek, the white and all that marvellous atmosphere they have. And I remember it well because when I asked Nana if she would it, she said 'I've only got three English songs', English language songs. I said 'Don't worry, we'll sort that out'. And we did this little series which was, you know, it was successful. And a promoter, a concert promoter saw them go out and he went to her and he said 'Would you like to do a concert at The Albert Hall'? And she said 'Me'?, you know, so he said 'Yes'. She said 'Do you think anybody would come'? And he said 'Yes, I think they would'. And within about, oh, a month to six weeks of her doing the series he booked The Albert Hall and she filled it, and she never looked back. And then we did, I think about, oh, I don't know, we must have done at least six or seven series after that particularly right through the '70s. And I did a show for her in, in about 1970, we did a co-production with SFB in Berlin, which was for there and here, which was with her, because she's a very big international star. Sadly she doesn't do as much here now as she does, because she's, she, her base is in Geneva, but she works very much out of Paris so, and she got so

multi-lingual, she speaks seven languages and sings in seven languages and she does huge tours and things in Canada.

Am I the, sorry by this time the Head of the Group was Bill Cotton, was it?

No, the Head of the Group...

[Inaudible 2B 42:32]

In the late ‘60s was Tom Sloan.

And then...

And he, then it was Bill, because...

Yes.

Tom died, I think, in 1970, and so...

Yes, we’re talking about early ‘70s now so it's Bill Cotton.

Yes. Well the first series with Nana was ‘68.

Ah.

And then we, we, we branched over to, with her. And also then, a, just a key point, in the ‘’66 I had done the other person which I had a very long ongoing association with was Petula Clark, and we did her first series together in ‘66. And then she was busy making things like *Finian’s Rainbow* in The States. And she did a second series, it, I think it was ‘67 and just shortly after that, or ‘68, Claude Wolff asked me if I would like to go to America to co-produce a special for her for NBC.

I'm going to stop you.

Okay. Going to turn over?

[End of Tape 2 Side B 00:43:35]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 3 Side A.

Yvonne Littlewood, Side 5.

So, still just harping on the '60s, because such a lot seemed to go on then. One of my ongoing happier relationships I had with another artist was Petula Clark, who I first did a series with in '66 and then again in, I worked with her in '67 and Eight and around about that time she was also a big international success and she had been making *Finian's Rainbow* in America, with Fred Astaire and Tommy Steele. And she, and her husband, who is also her manager, rang me up one Sunday evening, I can remember it well, I was in the office getting ready for the next day's rehearsals. And he said 'How, how would you like to go to The States to produce a show with Petula'? So I said 'I need notice of something as exciting as that, but, but it sounds wonderful, I don't know when', he said 'Next year, early part of next year'. And the long and short of it was there was going to be a producer and director, it had to be, because it was for NBC in America, but he wanted somebody as a co-producer with them.

Mm.

Who really knew her, her work as well as her, as well as I did because he was a little nervous that, that, you know, that they would be asking her to do things that weren't really right for her and that he needed… As she couldn't be, he couldn't be there in all the preparatory period he wanted somebody who could be there to look after her interests, and well it was an opportunity not to be missed. So I said to, it would have been Tom then because Tom was still around 'May I get leave of absence to go'? And they said 'Yes, it's sort of an honour for us for you to be asked', so they gave me three months leave of absence and off I went. And then I was happy to say that the same thing happened the year later, so the following year I went and did it again. The, it was on the first one that we had this classic incident when we had as, we just had the one special guest Harry Belafonte, and it was very indicative of the times how the black/white relationship as far as artists was concerned was, had to be very delicately handled still in America. And we were doing a, a, a number and I should *The Power Pound of Glory*, or something it was called, I wish I'd thought of the title correctly, because I should. But it was a really profound song and it was, Steve Binder was directing and it was just one of those things to find a nice way of, of actually positioning the two artists to get the best out of it, and it was done as a duet. And I mean just the long and the short of it was we did three takes, and we didn't get it quite right until the third one. It, there was a sort of an intangible something about you feel when a number has just worked for all reasons and this time, the third take, it seemed to be. And at one stage she put, they was standing, I think she may have been sitting on a stool and him standing but she put her hand on his arm. And we said 'Great, wonderful', you know, I mean just as a piece of choreography if you like, I mean they weren't moving about but this was it, the way it was. And of course, when you work

in American television, which is one reason why I never wanted to go, there are millions of people around because everything is by committee and it takes forever to get a decision. And the, it was being sponsored by Plymouth Cars, the actual show, and the representative for the client was there and his name was Doyle Lott, I can remember it well. And they watch all through the day, we were pre-recording this in the afternoon as it happened, all rehearsals, well not rehearsals so much but certainly in the studio taping, and we were doing it piecemeal this show, it wasn't being all done at once, I think a segment was done in one piece live. But, we did it and we said 'Great, that's it, strike set for the next thing. Break, have tea and we'll come back and resume at five thirty'. And we'd no sooner done all that when the door burst open and Doyle Lott come rushing in and said 'You'll have to do that again because, you know, you can't have her touch him or him touch her', I mean one arm on her. When you think of today, twenty, only twenty-one years on.

Mm.

However this really was a tremendous furore and people were, you know, of course *Newsweek* and all those magazine people they all wanted to take pictures of the screen the next day in editing. and I rushed down quickly and wiped the other two tapes so we knew, we said 'We can't do anything about it because the other tapes have been erased'. But we made the front pages and even made the press here. And of course, Harry has very strong views as, as you know, I don't have to tell you that, and he was highly incensed and insulted by all of this. It all calmed down eventually and it, and it....

[05:00]

But the cut was, the cut was made?

No the cut wasn't made.

Ah.

And, what is more, when we'd had another committee meeting about it all with the phones were ringing from New York to the coast like there was no tomorrow, I mean from dawn to dusk. The producer, I mean I was co-producer, but there was an executive producer who was, he was there for just this sort of business, was to dealing with all these people. And they had to admit in the end that it was a storm in a teacup and Mr. Lott had really made a bit of a fool of himself. And I actually believe, though I couldn't actually swear to it, but I believe he lost his job as a result of making such a nonsense out of it. But it was, it was, you know, it seems like nothing now but at the time it was a huge drama. So that was...

Yes, I'm not sure whether it's nothing now.

Well...

Maybe?

Mm, I don't know. But I mean it wasn't as though they were walking off hand in hand into the sunset together, you know, it was just...

No.

Dear oh dear. I mean he's such a lovely man, Harry, I mean he really is, and so respected by everybody, he's an internationally accepted person. Some of them were though the, the black artists, I mean Nat Cole was, although I can remember him telling me when we worked together earlier in the '60s and he had his stage show in Vegas and he was one of the first people to have a mixed chorus, a mixed dance troop. And they came out of the theatre at night, or the casino wherever it was that he played, and one group of them went one way and the other group went the other way to go home, you know. I mean it, the segregation was very active there, but in show business it was as relaxed as it, it was ever going to be, but there were still tinges of it. So then I went back the following year and did another one.

What in '72?

In, no it was earlier than that, '69 was the, no '68, was the first one, which was just called *Petula*.

Yes.

And then in '69 another one was called *Portrait of Petula*. And that was another one we did, different production team, I had the same role. And we had in it Andy Williams and, lovely man who was in *Oliver*, you know, Ron Moody, who had just won an Oscar for Fagin, he was in it. And we did that in NBC at Burbank, it was the same idea. It was very interesting, it was a wonderful opportunity, I was terribly grateful to be allowed to do it because people round about this time, you know, used to say to you 'Why don't you go to The States and work, you've worked, you know, a lot of contacts', but I realised then that there is nothing as good as working in the BBC, where you're given a show to do, the nice thing was that I basically directed and produced pretty well everything till very late in my career. And so you're given the job to do and you're given, they trust you to get on with it, nobody interferes. I mean sometimes, almost, we used to feel that nobody cared. Well didn't we, we used to stand around saying 'We've never heard a word from anybody', you know, 'do they care what we were doing'? But the point was it was wonderful because they, you know, they really trusted you to get on with it and deliver a good job. And I mean basically there was somebody there to listen to you if you wanted to go and have a word. But not in The States, I mean everything was by committee, endlessly to make decisions, because there was never, you know, total agreement about anything. And I, I found that very heavy weather too. And, and of course, huge units compared with here, three times as many people, much more job sort of segregation than there was in this country. And, but also too, just to drag up that silly subject of the woman in television, there were very few in American television at that time too, there was only Carolyn Raskin I can think of who worked on *Laugh-In*, do you remember *Laugh-In*.

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

That was at its height in those days. And she was, I think, executive producer, but a, a lone soul. And I can remember Jack Good, who worked, and was a big name in television here, going out to The States and taking with him a girl called Rita Gillespie, who was his PA when he was, well she was a PA in the, well a secretary, production secretary as they were then, in, in, in our department at the BBC for a while. And she went off with Jack when he left the BBC and she went to The States with him and she directed for Jack. And they made it really hard work for her. I mean in, in the studios, because they did resent women, there's no doubt about that, in the studios.

Yes.

They did, and they, I mean a woman, and, and she was meticulously organised. And there was a certain amount of the not really liking the whole idea of camera scripts and shot lists and everybody knowing exactly how they wanted to shoot something, and so of course, if they wanted to give you a heavy time they could.

[10:12]

Mm.

Play you up and, and I mean they, they did. And they didn't like that too much, they didn't it because she was a woman telling them, and thirdly she was not even American she was British. So one way and another she, and they ran one of the things she was on into quite heavy overtime, which of course, time is money in a big way out there. And I think it was a bit of a devious scheme to let them know that they, you know...

Had the power?

They could do without her if… I don't know, she's, I think she still is in America but I don't think she went on directing for, for long.

Mm.

And she certainly isn't with Jack anymore. But I must say it sort of made me stop and think and I mean certainly, much as I loved California and there's a lot of very good things about it it is all the business. There was much more, I felt, genuine interchange of talented people. I mean it's a funny thing here once commercial television expanded you rather felt if you were seen in London Weekend Studios the word was round the grapevine you were looking for a job. I mean, you know, people...

It's still the case.

People left and, you know, you never saw them and you kind of, it was with fear and trepidation you sort of went up to Stonebridge Park to have lunch with a mate because they happened to now work there, before you could get back the word had got down the, the grapevine. Whereas in The States because old Fred's working at CBS I'm going to look in on him as I go home there was a lot less sort of jealous, I don't know what it was but it, it was, it was a much more relaxed feeling between the companies,

although when it gets up to the big guns there was, you know, how, if you didn't get the ratings you were, you know, very quickly got the chop, that, the shows did anyway. But that was wonderful. And in that year, which was that last year, and I have to mention this, apart from doing, did three things with Petula, I did the show in America and then I did a two part concert with her at The Albert Hall, part of which, or the whole of it I think, in the late, it would have been about the October, it was used to open BBC 1 colour. It was put on just after midnight, so it was the first show to be seen in colour on BBC 1.

It was 1969, I think.

Yes it was.

Correct?

Yes. And the first programme on BBC 1 colour 15th of November 1969. And alongside that, or just before it, it was obviously Pet's year, we did a, and also did a studio show because we'd been doing series with her and we hadn't had much chance because the American, see the American shows were shown here. We did one called *Just Pet*, which was just her, literally, and an orchestra on her own. And this had a, an important connotation too because we were, we were shooting it in the October in TC1 and it was, the, we'd done some filming and went back to Wales where her childhood had been spent during the War, early days of the War, and did some filming there. And we did a lot of things, we did a whole big thing about her film career up to date, because she'd just made *Mr. Chips, Goodbye, Mr. Chips* then and of course, she had a big film career in the '50s with that strange Rank Organisation scene. And I mean the first thing she did was *Medal for the General* when she was about six years old. So I did this whole big movie, scrapbook almost, which was interesting, and other things besides. Anyway we got in the studio, we rehearsed it, we'd been filming, we'd been working on it for about six months on and off with a really pressurised three weeks in, we did everything, the orchestra was there and we just finished rehearsals at a quarter past six, we'd a quarter of an hour to spare. And I said 'I'm going to pop down and do some notes'. And the audience is in, four hundred and twenty were due in for an eight o'clock recording, or whatever it was. And the lighting director said to me 'Well I don't think I'd go down to the floor if I were you, leave the notes till later'. And I said 'What's wrong'? 'Well there's a bit of trouble'. Well, to cut a long story short, they all went to dinner and nobody came back. And it was the, one of the first of the lightning strikes we had in the sort of tech ops area. And I mean talk about gobsmacked. She and I just sat in the dressing room and we stayed. And I was sent for and they said 'Could you talk to the audience'? because the audience all came, the orchestra all dressed standing there. And we were left with two junior sound engineers and she said 'I'll go and sing to the audience', and she couldn't even do that because we couldn't get the PA working because these two lads were so junior they didn't and I, I shall never forget that to my dying day because I, I saw all my friends and, you know, I'd...

[15:12]

Mm.

Said earlier that teams are my great thing in production. And they were, they just all went, walked out and went their ways with their briefcases. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry, we sat, stared at each other, Pet and I. And that was the October and so we did feel that was a terrible waste of time. I mean it's, it's not unusual now but it was very unusual then it was a, what they call a, you know, somebody came with the note at six fifteen and it was 'strike now', I don't know what they were all striking for. And, funnily enough, only a few months ago when the Director of Personnel left, and he was, in those days it was Roger Chase and he was just into establishment then. He, apparently the first strike he ever had to deal with was this one that had happened to me which I had no knowledge of until he was, you know, reminiscing just as he left. And he in fact told, *Aerial* did a huge double spread on him and he couldn't remember the name of the show but he remembered the occasion well. But it, it, you know, an ill wind that blows nobody any good because we remounted it in the December when the waters had calmed and Pet and Claude had got over it, and we mounted it and we had the advantage that we, anything we thought Pet, was a bit iffy we got rid of it, you know, and did a bit more preparation on it and refinement on it. And, and it won a BAFTA.[Laughter] It was, it was a SEFTA then, it wasn't a BAFTA.

Yes.

So I always believe that it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good after all that, that was my own and only SEFTA, which I got from Lord Louis, so I'm quite proud of that fact. I can remember, it was the days when we, the same year was Verity Lambert for Somerset Maugham, and Richard Cawston I remember, getting one. But I'm, you know, I'm very proud of that. And when they had the jury thing I can remember Wendy [Inaudible 3A 17:09] she said 'You made a terrible mistake'. I said 'What do you mean I made..'? She said 'You should have put the American show in', because it was much more glitzy and thing, and I said 'No', I said, because I was, they said 'which one do you want', you know, it was for my work with Petula that I was sort of nominated, from Light Entertainment, Musical Show. And I said 'I want to do the one that was entirely of our making here', the concert was a concert, it wasn't sort of an original, this was a conc…, a show conceived for television and it was just her and it was just our team, it was all made, home grown, you know. And so I was kind of pleased when it happened because I thought, because Wendy was one on the jury and she just said 'Oh I should have put in the American one'. However, that was the saga really with Pet. And then we went on to do another series in the, several other things we picked up along the way. And we did another series on Saturday nights in about '74 which was prime time on Saturdays which, and I've always loved working. I can remember her, and she looks very good still today, but the face, it's funny how you remember things when, as a director. And I, it, way back in '66 and I can remember the joy of having that face on camera, because you could be like this and it, she was just a naturally photogenic person.

Yes.

There are people that, Olivia Newton-John was another one that you can, that you could just leave the camera there for a whole number and it, and it works, you know, and, and it was sort of difficult to get a bad shot. I mean you hope you're never going to get bad shots of anybody but it, it's one of those.

Mm.

I mean some people you have to watch and think 'That's not going to do them any, too many favours'. But that was the thing with Pet. So that took us into the '70s really. And late '68, I should just say because this was important in the history of television, we, we worked quite a bit at Golders Green. The theatre was closed, and we went to Golders Green to do quite a lot of Light Entertainment. And we were sort of, part time at other places, King's Hammersmith, and earlier than that used to be used in the late '50s. But the, the BBC owns the Golders Green Hippodrome and they actually used it for television for quite a, a spell.

On an OB?

No, no, well I don't, I think...

It would be.

I think they put us, I think I, I think they put us in a sort of control room there, I don't know, I think we worked on scanners.

Ah, ha.

I can't remember to be honest with you, but it was, I think we did have a control room because we were there for some time.

Really?

I did an eight week series with Topol there just after *Fiddler on the Roof.*

Yes.

I can remember that very well because that was hard work, because he had, insisted that everything in it was of Hebrew origin. I sat through more nights of Hebrew songs not understanding a single word than I've had hot dinners. I, a wonderful man.

[20:12]

[Laughter]

A rogue of the first order, and delicious to work with, but gosh it was hard work. He, he got translations done but he used to give me a running commentary through all these songs, and they are special, some of them, but he was nice.

Yes.

And of course, he was a, he was a huge box office success after *Fiddler*. We did that there and we did, I did another one off woman show with a lovely lady called Marian Montgomery.

Mm.

Which was a, a one woman show. I remember those. And I did a, I did one of Ken McKellar's series at Golders Green. And it was a nice theatre that, lovely, lovely sound, very good layout.

Mm. That's my, that was my local.

Was it?

Yes.

Yes.

Yes..

That, I just throw that in because it's...

Yes.

In the history of things.

Yes.

People have forgotten maybe about that. We used to use The Talk of the Town a lot too for programmes, in concert type of programmes. I did a show there with Pet, I can remember that one for its fact that the lift, we thought we'd be very smart and bring her up on a lift that there is in the floor there, and it stuck and she was in the basement for half an hour with nobody except the, the floor assistant who was going to cue her, you know, after them trapped. That was, get very claustrophobic if you're down in a basement in a lift that doesn't work.

Mm.

But there we are. Anyway into the '70s. And then in 1970 I had… What did I…? My grace leave in 1970 and I collected my SEFTA, which I was very proud of. And then I did the first of my Royal Variety Performances of which I've have done quite a few.

Mm.

1970, 1980, 1984, 1986.

1990?

And, 1990, The Queen Mother's, that was not the Royal Variety Performance.

No.

That was The Queen Mother's Birthday Gala, which was a different show and it was, for different reasons. They were all ones attended by The Queen Mother because the BBC and ITV alternate and from the middle '60s we started getting involved about

‘62, the first two, before they settled into a pattern where The Queen Mother went one year, and, or I should put it the other way round, mostly The Queen went one year, and The Queen Mother went the next. And we drew the one with The Queen Mother each year because we were on the even dates and the uneven years were always...

ITV?

ITV.

Yes.

So that was 1970 and that was quite a, an experience for the first time, because it's as good as live television, although, I don't, no we didn't do it live because there’d been a few calamities with doing them live I think, you, you know, you do think what are we sitting through all these pauses for and anything that goes wrong so we used to record them and we used to just tidy it up. I hoped never to have to actually take anybody totally out of the show because they all give their services and it's the most unenviable task if you have to take something out, unless it's gone so disastrously for the artist that it really does them a favour for it not to be put in.

Did that, did that ever happen in your experience, for you running it?

Mm, yes I did have a little, to do a little trim once, which, what didn't go down very well. Unfortunately it was one little segment that we had to trim a bit for time, and there was one little segment didn't work very well for, there were one or two or three artists involved but unfortunately it meant taking out a lump, which involved, it was a segment that, you know, was about, I don't know, eight or nine minutes, ten minutes long and because you couldn't just take the front bit off of it and left, leave the rest, two or three other people got the chop as well, but it, in the end they were understanding, if you explained it to them. But initially they were very disappointed, which was fair enough because they work very hard. Artists in our business, you know, and they are terribly generous in the amount of charity shows they do. And it, they're, you know, proud to appear but it's, it's, it's always sad if you've got to take them out when they've been doing their best.

But you say it was recorded and, and transmitted later, it wasn't, it wasn't transmitted…?

We used to do it…

It's not the same night?

No, oh no. We used to do it, they nearly always do it, for some, I suppose historical reason which I won't be able to tell you the answer to, on a Monday at, as it was this week, it was done last Monday night.

Mm.

At, and for many years the, the majority of times it's been done, it's been done at The Palladium, The London Palladium. It's the, the earlier ones used to sometimes quite often be at The Prince of Wales, and the one on Monday was at The Victoria Palace.

Mm.

[25:00]

And I did one at The Palace there, Victoria Palace in '84, because The Queen Mum, we used to call it her local, you know, just round the corner. And it was famous in the days, and particularly in the '30s when The Crazy Gang were there, which was a high spot of, of the, for her and she, she always used to enjoy them. Mm, but no, we did it Monday and then we edited it, and it usually went out the following Sunday night. But it too in latter years to get the polish and to get the commentary done and to get the opening we always used to say, the editor and I that it was always the opening and the end that took us the time because fiddling with the, the length of time that you've got with the arrivals and everything and telescoping it down, and also the backstage line-up, which for many years wasn't covered but now we have hand held cameras.

Mm, mm.

You can do all that but it isn't half a crush backstage, even with the hand helds it's a terrible, and obviously those press photographer, photographers have no respect for anybody with television cameras they, you know, buzz their way in. But that has facilitated that side of it but it takes a long time to edit that down, and I always like to try to make sure that absolutely everybody that appeared is in there somewhere, even if you don't actually see them shaking hands. We, the editor and I, it was a challenge to try and make sure that they were always in the shot somewhere so that the way we went round this horseshoe we covered everybody who'd taken part, which it takes a long time piecing that sort of thing together. And, in latter days of course, as things are, everybody expects quality to be better we can do a little bit of tidying up on the sound if we have a bit of, you know, a bit of problem with the orchestra balance getting a bit untidy we can, but it's, it's a huge hook up to do. I mean you don't have that long really to set it up, and it's like a live show you, you know, that's, though it isn't, you can't stop and say 'Can we do it again'? I've only had one experience when I've restarted and that was on a Children's Royal Variety, I've done three of those, and I was doing one in '85 in The Dominion, and we had a power failure just before, after the end of run through and before the arrival, and all the lights went out in the foyer totally. It was Princess Margaret who always graces the Children's Royal.

Mm.

And she was due. We were curtain up at seven and she was due at five to seven I think, it might have been ten to, but whatever happened at about twenty to one light came on and, you know, I'm talking to Don, Dave Bowden who was the stage manager in the foyer and of course, there's a bit line-up there, and it was a year when Biddy Baxter's *Blue Pe*ter were in on the act and they'd got, children were participating in some way for some, you know, charity I'm sure, and probably for, in aid of The NSPCC, and they, there were, there was a group of them in the foyer, winners of a poster competition or something. And a lot of the helpers for The

NSPCC always get presented and then there's the BBC dignitaries and so on and so that the red carpet has to go down. [Laughter]

And, it was a terrible night and there was, there were works, road works outside The Dominion and it was raining like crazy, and it's always, well it isn't now it's in the spring now, but it was, this was just before Christmas, early December. And so I said to Dave 'Well can you…'? 'Well', he said 'there's, we haven't got enough light to work yet but it's looking promising'. So I said 'Well we've got about eight minutes', this would be about twenty to, and so I said 'we better start getting in line anyway', the lighting was coming on and I said 'you better get the carpet down', 'Well we'll roll as soon as...', because they didn't want to put it down early because with all this mud outside it would have been all, you know, footprints and so on. And just as we're, I'm saying, and the band in the pit, I remember we were doing a, a Christmas medley and we had a boys' choir on the staircases drape from Haberdashers' School and we were doing all these Christmas things and it was all timed at about three and a half minutes. We used to, the overture would be about four minutes and we'd, we'd time walking it round and see how long it would take in our rehearsals. And at about three and a half we, it was the point where everybody was going to sing 'We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a … and a happy New Year', you know, that carol. And I could see on the monitors that the, the band all standing around and suddenly Dave says 'Here's the car'. [Laughter] I said 'You must be joking', he said, and then of course, they put me out on the pavement you can see it's the car. Well, that was not a happy time. I mean the carpet wasn't down. Jim Moir, who was in the foyer, was heard to say 'Swallow', one of the boys was in the thing 'swallow it Fred', but there was no time to get it down. [Laughter] Then the lights sort of drooped on one by one, it was totally unusable that part. But until we got to the *Blue Peter*, which was the last thing, by which by that time, you know, the, the lights were beginning to get in our view but trust dear old Biddy was going to get her bit okay, you know. She's she's a legend, is dear Biddy in the place.

[30:36]

Mm.

But I said 'Ron, cue the music', you see this was Ronnie Hazelhurst the conductor. And you've never seen such a shuffle in your life, and the rate of knots that this medley went that, there she was, half way up the stairs past the boys just as we got to the bit where they could sing 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas', you see. Well we struggled. Now once, once you've got going you can't stop anything you see with a Royal occasion, everybody, cameras or any of it it's all precise, we'll move up the staircase, we'll go here and whatever has to be done in the anteroom. And then they come into the, into the auditorium and then we've got the timp roll, then when she's in position we have The National Anthem and we have fanfare of trumpets on the stage, it's all very dovetail, and that goes into the show. Well when I tell you that we were into the show by about three minutes to seven, you know, we were running ahead of time and we had this big, we had a prologue, which do you remember *Adrian Mole* was the story? Yes, well the boy Gian, I've forgot his name now, I've forgotten it well the, the young lad with the spectacles that played the lad in that, he was doing the speech of welcome, and all through that people walked through the cameras because, because she was early there were still people on the pavement who couldn't come in,

because you can't let anybody in till Royalty have, have taken their seat, and they are supposed to be in seated but because of the weather and it was Christmas lights everybody was late, every time I went to a camera somebody walked through it. And we had a bit of coverage with, we always have a master shot on these sort of things, which is another interesting point for per..., there's always a master camera that you have a, hopefully a wide angle that you isolate to a separate tape machine all the way through to try to get you out of trouble if you have a disaster on any other camera, and we sort of got through that. But we went through the opening which was full of dancing and singing and there was a crazy knockabout act, Johnny Hatch, they're people that use a trampoline, crazy, zany, crim..., dressed as policeman and people and they'd do overs and things and on this trampoline. And as they were doing it the lights got less and less and less, down to one spot and then finally all went out. And it was now about fourteen minutes past seven and I had no alternative but to say 'Hold everything'. Because we couldn't go on, there was no way and so we stopped and the, the comperes for the night were Mike Smith and Roland Rat, who was big at that time, it was Roland in the box. And they improvised for about a quarter of an hour with the audience, over the top, you know, Roland with, it was really very good they did a stalwart job and of course, the kids loved it they, you know, roared with laughter because it was the whole idea of having him there as, as fun. And one of the most wonderful audiences of course, is the, is the Children's Royal because you get all these wonderfully enthusiastic young people in and they do respond, they're, they're marvellous. A wonderful atmosphere, you know, they, like a pantomime audience in a way, you know, it's 'Oh yes he is', 'oh no he isn't', and they do, they do participate. And that was it and that, I mean can you imagine anything worse than…

What year was that?

With, with Royalty present. It was 1985 I think.

Oh yes.

And so...

So we're now in the '80s?

Well no we're not I, I was talking about The Royal...

So we've jumped, there's a bit of jumping.

Royal Varieties and, and...

I'm sorry, yes.

And occasions such as that.

Yes.

With that was, I suppose, you know, when they ask you what was your most embarrassing moment I could say one fairly high on the list of my most embarrassing

moments was actually having to stop a show and get it all going again, and then, of course, we had to go back to the beginning of the opening routine, we didn't do...

You're lucky it wasn't live aren't you?

We didn't do the prologue but we did have to go back to the beginning. So that was, that was started, just sort of I digressed, because I was in 1970 talking about Royal Variety Act Performances.

Yes.

Mm, '71, well I did a Christmas show with Nana in '70', which was memorable for me in as much as we had Margot Fonteyn in it, and with being very fond of the ballet, and thinking what a wonderful lady she is, or was I, I kind of remember that. And the first appearance actually in this country of Michel Legrand.

[35:11]

Mm.

First television appearance, he was in it too, because he knew Nana very well and he came over and did that, played piano and she sang one of his songs with him. Little firsts you forget, you know, I forget them until I catch up with them again. Then the next year we did a very interesting series, well we did that year do, we do a Como special over here for the first time ever with him, purely for British television he came back, he hadn't been on screen for eleven years at the end of his American series that were shown here. Mm, and he, he really, as they say 'cleaned up', he was so popular and wonderful response, they I really do remember him with affection. But the same year too I did a special with Keith Michell showing his talents as a, a singer and a painter with Diana Rigg, Elizabeth Seal and June Bronhill and it reflected his more theatre career. And he had done The Henry's of course, and was very, you know, big in television terms, and he was just in the theatre at that time doing *Abelard and Heloise*. And that was important because we did another one the next year, we did a Christmas special next year with his two young children, Paul and Helena, in it who, and Helena now is a highly successful young actress in her own way, own right. And it led to the following year I think it was, in '72 I was doing a theatre series with Keith, we went round the London theatres and we told the story of London theatres and did extracts from various shows, both musical and dramatic that had taken place in the theatres. We did the Her Majesty's New, The Lyric, Piccadilly and The Adelphi. I really enjoyed doing that, it was marvellous. I love doing things that, necessitate research as sort of musical documentaries.

Was this, were these your ideas or…?

Yes, well yes, I mean I think...

I mean they weren't given to you by your bosses?

No, no.

So to speak?

I suppose in these days I can actually say that probably seventy percent of what I did was of my own bringing to them, but it they were only concert performances of something or but, but primarily I did furnish the ideas, you know, and, and certainly that one was. And it was in the same year to, then, in '72 I did a, the, I think I mentioned it before with Nana a co-production in...

Yes.

Berlin.

Mm.

Which had Oscar Peterson.

No, you didn't actually before.

Did I not? Oh we, she I think must have motivated that. I'd done some, several shows with her by that time, and the Germans had said be is Berlin Station and they said we'd make it there, which we did. That was, again it's, it's strange, you know, so time consuming, working, and everybody in those days used to think the Germans were so efficient particularly in sound and all this and they could, chose how to do it, but not a bit of it, the sort of thing we would have done here in two days and with hopefully a day in to set and light up front we were there for a week. And I went backwards and forwards because, and this was interesting we were busy by this time, we used to tape and tape editing of course. And there you did shoot it on tape but you couldn't edit the tape sound and vision, you edited the vision and then you had to go and edit the sound in a sound studio like a dubbing theatre and then you'd put the whole thing together. They've just got some quite new studios and I remember we did it in this rather nice studio, but they hadn't got a control gallery and we did the whole thing from a scanner outside. I shot some film with Nana in Greece for it because they liked all that kind of embroidery, which is fair enough it's good for us all. But it was a laborious business, and because they worked, they didn't work late evenings I said 'Can't I stay at the end of shooting this and get on with the editing'? No way. I went backwards and forwards to Berlin every Saturday for a month, like you take the bus from Bond Street to Shepherd's Bush I went off to Heathrow and hopped the old aeroplane across there and went off and did my day's editing and eventually we got it finished. But it was very slow and very tedious. That was another good reason for staying at home. My life was, well it's the devil you know rather the devil you don't know, but took over with me Kenneth MacGregor who had lit most of Nana's shows to date and one of our best lighting directors, they allowed him to come over and light. Well she, she was fairly instrumental in saying 'I want him'. We took Peter Knight over with us to, to do the orchestra. I don't think we took sound, I can't remember but we certainly had the ND and I just took my own PA with me. And, it was, you know, it was, it was interesting, of course, Berlin was very interesting in those days because it was still…

[40:27]

It had the wall then didn't it?

I don't think I'd have found my way there any, for any other reason it was… So I did another, that, that took us through ’72. I did a Christmas special with Pet. In ’73 was more Nana and more, and a series with Petula called *The Sound of Petula* in which we used to take a theme when we did these series with her, you know, a different theme for each week. Mm, ‘74 another two part concert at The Albert Hall with her and another big theatre, yes.

And Legrand?

Yes, a Michel Legrand special I did then that year with guests, he would get whispers of Christina Legrand, who was his sister, and Norman Jewison, it was at the time when Norman Jewison had done that big movie with, with Steve McQueen with the chess game in it, what was that called? I can't remember it now. And Legrand had done the music, that was...

He is the Canadian film director, isn't he?

Yes, yes, he is, a film director, but he started in television.

Yes.

And, I think I mentioned when we were talking about the Big Band band concert in ‘62.

Yes.

That he had an entry in with, with Julie Garland. And, and so it was interesting to meet him after all that, and a nice man. Then I did a fifth series with Nana Mouskouri in that year so, you know, that we had plenty going with her in the early ‘70s. And another big, that was the ‘74 series I referred to with Pet.

Mm.

On Saturday nights as well. I suppose in this period with all the other bits and pieces thrown in I did about, anything between twenty and twenty-six shows a year, which is quite a big schedule.

It's one a fortnight.

Well if you put them like that, yes, you know.

Yes.

But they were usually weekly when you were doing...

Yes, of course.

The turnaround weekly series, because Nana had to come and stay here when she did a series, I mean she wasn't based here so she had to move here for about seven weeks, a week to get into the first one and then we did them one a week.

Right.

Are you turning over?

[End of Tape 3 Side A 00:42:34]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 3 Side B

Okay.

All this period of the ‘60s and ‘70s were very much punctuated by the singer and the song, I mean specials with people again like Johnny Mathis kept on going, and Tony Bennett, another one I’d, I worked with several times. And we came through, we did a one off with Keith Michell at Chichester, a one man show at ’74, he was down there by that time being Artistic Director.

Mm.

And he did it as his one man show, which was quite interesting, and talked poetry, dramatic pieces, songs and so on, we did a medley of that. Seventy-five I did a Charles Aznavour special, who was an interesting artist to work with too.

Mm.

I mean, I think I referred to, to *The Barber Comes to Town* before, which was a musical documentary with Como who came over to tour. And we did, I put that together as a seventy-five minute piece, he'd never done an interview before and he did a face to face interview with Benny Green and we did an OB from Drury Lane in concert and I had to cut the whole thing, and including some clips of his American television series which was so famous, because he didn't, he was a very private person, he wasn't very fond of chat shows, but he did in the end agreed to, to sit and talk to Benny. I just put two cameras on the floor, about an hour and a quarter and let them just talk about his life and his, his career. And that made a very interesting programme. We did, it was ‘75 in which we did Seventy Five Years with Max Bygraves, which I did with John Hammond, as a *I'm Going to Tell You A Story* it was called which was a resume of seventy-five years in entertainment.

And in ‘76 we did a sixth series with Nana, I did a, the first time I worked with John Denver, who was a person I loved working with, lovely artist, lovely songs, lovely personality, really great communicator. And he was, it was due to Bill Cotton really that he became, in a way sort of a very bold statement to say the success he is, but, but it was through Mary, Peter, Paul and Mary saying to Bill Cotton ‘I would like you to come and see a young chap with a guitar’, in some little club in Ladbroke Grove, some years before. And Bill saw him and gave him a series, which Stanley Dorfman did in the theatre. And he went back to The States.

Yes .

Saying 'I've been there and done and a series', and from that they kind of discovered him. So it was a, you know, really round about way, but then by this time he was very established and...

Mm.

I did, then I took *The Talk of the Town*. And then I started, I introduced a, a title called *World of Music*, which most people sing a world of music but it was, you know, you're always searching for titles and so it, it was *The King's Singers World of Music*, *Moira Anderson's World of Music* and *George Hamilton IV's World of Music*. And those were the start of what developed to be a much bigger series later on. The King's Singers are unique and I, I had had them, put them in to one of Nana's series as a permanency.

Mm.

They've always said it was due to that that they really got their big breakthrough. But then by this time they were already established in their own right and superlative musicians, and...

Mm.

They of course, they sing so much A capella, wonderful linguists and they're a huge international success. They sadly don't do so much now here, but they never stop working. They did do a final breakthrough in America.

Mm.

And they do a lot of touring Germany too, very big, but we did a series with them. Moira speaks for itself, Moira is always popular, she's got a tremendous following in this country.

Mm.

And then there's no doubt I was getting this sort of trying to get my foot in the door with the idea that the, that the public want to hear what they would call *Your Hundred Best Tunes*, or *Music for You*, another title which Paddy had done so successfully, and still want, and we really don't give them. And so I was trying to ease it in from the early manner and that developed later. That year I did some, it was an anniversary I think in America, what would it have been? Seventy-six I did something called *The Great American Songbook*, which Douglas Fairbanks introduced and that was kind of nice, it was as the title suggests. And we did a, the same another opening, another show, which again was interesting, it was *Chorus Line* had opened in London and I, these were, you said were they my ideas, they were, these are the sort of things where I managed to get it in, passed before they knew what I was up to. But *Chorus Line* had opened in London. Then I went around and found all the people that were stars in their own right now who had started life in the chorus, like Anna Neagle and Jessie Matthews, Dickie Henderson, Dicky Murdoch, Barbara Mullen, of course who was a big name then through *Doctor Finlay's Case Book*, but in fact was of that profession.

And it was linked together by Sir John Mills. He couldn't do the studio at the time, but what they did was, we had and Gillian Lynne choreographed it.

[05:06]

What was it called?

It was called *Another Opening, Another Show*, which is a good old showbiz number, Another Opening, Another Show, that one. And basically the sixteen dancers did all that, but then we talked about, to the principal… Oh, I'll tell you who were also in it, but they didn't perform were Cic Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert.

Mm.

Who were getting on a little bit then but were hysterically funny sitting talking, because Cic was, you know, the spokeswoman, and poor old Jack trying to get a word in edgeways. But they, at that time, were in rehearsal for what was going to be a biographical stage show of their lives which never… It was being done in Guildford and it never came into London, I don't know even if it ever got finished. But they, these people who talked about their remembrances of their days in the chorus, because of course, Anna Neagle was in the chorus with Rose-Marie at Drury Lane in, in...

Twenties.

In the Twen…, Twenty-five.

Mm.

And about this time she was on tour in No, No, Nanette, which had been back at Drury Lane in about this period. And I think she was on the road, because I remember her coming up with Herbert Wilcox on Sundays to rehearse for me, wonderful troopers. And Jessie was fascinating. And then they did a number supported by the young people of today, you know, not too testing for them but, but, whatever they could do. And they were all absolutely smashing and, and John Mills had been in Canada doing a thing called *The Good Companions*, which was a musical. And he did all the linkage, he couldn't do the studio, and it fortuitous because I, he said he'd, 'I'd love to do it but if you can wait till I've finished' whatever he was doing, he was on tour I think with a play, he said 'I'll link it for you later'. And so we did the studio stuff in August and then he and I went to Drury Lane, empty one day, and we did all the links for, in out of the whole thing in the theatre, and he did one song which happened to fit very nicely from *The Good Companions* sitting in the empty theatre, on the back of a seat and on the stage just looking out into the empty auditorium. And it was a very profound experience for him, because I hadn't realised that he had worked in the theatre once, and the only show he'd ever worked in at Drury Lane was *Cavalcade* in 1931 for Cochran. And he, he was for Coward, Coward's . And Dickie Murdoch...

Mm.

Was a sort of Fred Astaire in the '20s and John Mills used to stand in the wings watching him and wishing he could dance like Dickie Murdoch. So that was lovely and John Mills was just superb. I can remember to this day how lovely it was working with him, coming and saying 'You, you will tell me if I'm not doing everything just the way you want it'. Such a dear man so..

Mm.

All those people are, they're all, they're the best aren't they? And they're the most experienced, they've worked with…. And to me, you know, and he's worked with every great director there is saying, and he was so happy and so charming, he wrote me a little note after it had gone out saying how much he enjoyed it, enjoyed working. So that was, that was nice, it was, you know, and, and these people they've all gone just in that, it's not so long ago, there's not one around.

John Mills?

I just, except for John.

Mm.

Literally, and I mean because Dickie Murdoch was the last, and he went just recently. But, you know, it's a shame that we don't sit them all down for history and archives and just let them talk, because their, their wealth of stories and their recall is fantastic. They did do a film biography thing didn't they on Johnny Mills, when he was eighty I think which was quite interesting, but there's ever so many areas, you know. And of course he can still, he could then sing good, you know, he'll still deliver a song okay. So that was nice, I really enjoyed those. Did a Carpenters special at The New London Theatre, they were rather special people too. Another special with Pet. And then came the Doonican era. Mr. Cotton asked me if I would work with Val Doonican who was coming back to the BBC. He'd been in a very successful series in the '60s, which I didn't have anything to do with, he then drifted off for a little while to ATV, you know, they said they were going to make him a big star in America and did some series. He was, I think he enjoyed it, but he didn't become a big star. I mean there were a lot of other people over there of a similar mould. And it's, it's very difficult, it became a, a bit mid Atlantic I think, the show. So Bill asked him to come back and...

Was this about '77 was it?

It was later, well, yes, it was… Seventy-six we did a Christmas special with him and then in '77 I started a spring series and from '77 to '85 I think. Music Show, Series Seven was '83, and then '84 we did, and '85 we did. And then in '86 I think we just did a Spring special, but we've continued doing some Christmas shows, we did a Christmas show every year, usually on Christmas Eve, which was very nice, it was, he was very, I think, appropriate for that kind of spot. We weren't, to begin with always on Christmas Eve and then in later years it became the sort of traditional spot, which was a nice spot because we could… I mean I would have liked to have done them live, but we did the series live. Bill said to me, you know 'How would you feel about doing a live series on Saturday nights'? I said 'Wonderful'. Because there's not too

many, not everybody likes that you see, they're very scared of live television. I love it, and so do a lot of the technicians and, not all artists but some do.

[10:00]

Mm.

Val did, he used to like get it over and done with. And, you know, we had a few hiccups along the way. I can remember the time of the Iranian siege, that awful business. And I can remember the Falklands War and the announcement of, you know, Colonel Jones being killed just before we went on air. And we were doing *A Modern Major General* in the show and thinking 'Is this appropriate'? And, oh, you know, those, a few things like that hit you. But, but in retrospect, wonderful to do live television, the, the challenge and the adrenaline and that lovely thing you don't have to edit it afterwards. And it's true to say that far less things go wrong live than when you are recording. Occasionally we had to record and we always had long hiccups when it, you know, like three minutes in a mike would go, it never happened when we were live, it didn't.

[Laughter]

Very, very seldom, we had very few problems. I mean not just, not thanks to me but thanks to the technicians. But everybody gives that little bit more, right through to the stage staff, they know you've got to get it right and they just rise, whereas when it's recording there is something that they know in the back of their head 'If it goes wrong, we'll do it again'.

Yes.

And so they don't, I don't think...

Well that's true.

Just deliver that much.

Yes, yes.

As they do when it's so. That was, took us right the way through. And alongside doing Val's, oh I did an Olivia Newton-John special, a Belafonte special. And in, in '77 I did a co-production Perry Como Christmas special for here and America, which was shot in this country, which they had asked if they could come here to do, with the co-production of the BBC. And then I got into alongside the Doonicans, *My World of Music* series, sort of as it were in a much bigger way. And I did them with James Galway, who I subsequently did quite a few shows with, with Jimmy had just sort of started to make it on his own as a personality, as well as being a superlatively good instrumentalist on the flute, well he's the world's best. *Harry Mortimer's World of Music, Man of Brass*. Harry Secombe, The King's Singers again, Owain Arwel Hughes, John Williams the guitarist, Moira Anderson who did Strauss and Lehár I think. And then we, a few bits of sort of, not exactly folk but the pop, folk music had become more of the sort of Kenny Rogers, Don Williams, seen our executive

producers. We did a two part concert with Andy Williams at The Albert Hall. We did another big thing called *The Mathis Collection* at The Albert Hall. I did a seventieth birthday celebration with Stéphane Grappelli, with George Shearing and Julian Bream at The Albert Hall. That was kind of, anything with Stéphane is memorable. And I then subsequently did his eightieth birthday. And here we are, it's getting on, it must be '84 this January I think, wonderful, wonderful person, unique, absolutely unique. And playing better now I think than he was thirty years ago. Charming man too.

The Magic Flute of James Galway. And of course, with the sort of *World of Music* series we were doing we got a different kind of guest, which was what I'd call 'my light classical guests', and the, you know, the more classical artists, the Kyung-wha Chungs, and Jessye Norman and people like that, which was really just up my street. I suppose if I hark back to my musical background, although I enjoy all kinds of music, as Duke Ellington once said 'There's only good and bad music, there isn't anything that's different from another, you don't put it into compartments', you know, it's just, good music is good music whatever its style is. *Tony Bennett Sings*, we did a series of six with a little quartet which was a kind of unique idea, instead of a big band it was a much more intimate thing. *Don Lusher's World of Music*. And another singer in the sort of John McCormack style, American, who was very popular here for a while and he didn't really quite last but his name was Robert White, he was a tenor, sort of, lyric tenor. And we had a little, we did two, several shows with him.

Then we came into the '80s. By this time of course, from way back into the early '70s, Bill Cotton was in the chair, and it was only when he left to become Controller of BBC1 that James Gilbert took over, and I can't exactly pinpoint the year that happened. I suppose it must have been early '80s, maybe a little bit before, because Jim Moir has now been in the chair for some time, because Jimmy, Jimmy Gilbert left to go to Thames, and John Howard Davies was Head of Light Entertainment Group for a brief while and then Jim took over, and Jim's been in the chair for quite a little time.

[15:06]

So going back to the '80s then, in the beginning of the '80s I mean I, I did another, I did another *Royal Variety* that year, I think. Yes I did. Oh it was a biggy, it was a big year that year. Black Dykes Works. So I did a strange little, well it wasn't a strange show it was successful. But do you, do you remember Captain Beaky and Hissing Sid?

Mm.

Well that was all based on a book of poems of Jeremy Lloyd's and it became, you know, into the charts. And I looked at this album and I thought 'Gosh', you know, 'those people', there was Harry Secombe and Noel Edmonds and Penelope Keith we got. And I put them all together as a read, sort of as a reading with the book. But it was now, we were getting into the days when we could use sort of colour separation, and we could instead of just having to mix to a picture you could put, you could compose with the picture and the drawing and the face and it was the old special effects, just, you know, the desk, we, we did some nice things with that. And it worked awfully well, it was quite charming. Keith did, because Keith Michell had

done the drawings for the book and so we did this Volume One, we called it *Captain Beaky's World of Music Volume One*. And the first one was Keith, and Penelope Keith, and Jeremy Lloyd and Gordon Jackson, Noel Edmonds and Harry Secombe. They rang, I mean they'd all done, they hadn't all, Penelope wasn't on the album but the rest, and Gordon Jackson wasn't on the album, but they, I cast them appropriately too, they did more than one poem each. And that was charming. And then the following year, was it? Yes, the following year we did Volume Two because of, because of the success of the record and everything they did a Volume Two, and another book of poems. Jeremy Lloyd's writing, and he and Keith had met originally on a, in a stage show. And so that happened. And the second show had…

[Inaudible – Interference 3B 20:00]

It was… Then… Are you having trouble?

It's alright.

Enterprises put it on in the theatre, we did it as a Christmas show in The West End. It was the only winter I can remember when we had three rail strikes and two blizzards in the four weeks, it really didn't help business, but it was kind of nice. Mm, '80 I did a very nice special I was very fond of called *Harmony and Music* with Cleo and Jimmy. Apart from more King's Singers, *A Century of Song* and Black Dyke.

Yes, yes .

And '80 I did a series with Oscar Peterson, which was a wonderful experience, six programmes with him talking and playing, unique man, wonderful. And we had people to talk to, I mean we had Ella Fitzgerald on one, Joe Pass, Count Basie when he, he was over. By this time not well, he was in a wheelchair but we did a pre-record and they sat, the two of them, these two great, they did a, just a dialogue, let the cameras run on them, you know, it was wonderful. Stéphane was on it with him. Yehudi Menuhin because, so he came. And a wonderful harmonica player called Toots Thielemans, he's Belgian. John Pierone Powell [ph 3B 18:36], Rodney Bennett, Louis Bellson, that was a nice series. And, as I say, he'd done that kind of thing once before, I hadn't done it, but we did that six programmes. There was *The Royal Variety* of course, celebrated The Queen Mother's eightieth birthday, because she goed with the century.

I did a special at Newbury with Marti Webb, with Andrew Lloyd Webber, when it was the beginning of the emergence. And I also was, I mean his first successful thing was of course, *Never on Sunday*. No, not *Never on Sunday*, the thing that… Where am I? Oh goodness me, the thing Marti Webb did, which wasn't called *Never on Sunday* was it. *Tell Me on a Sunday*, *Never on Sunday* was the thing of Nana Mouskouri's. And he had been in touch and Jimmy, Jimmy Gilbert must have been in the chair then because we went up to Willesden and Andrew played through the score for us on a piano in a recording studio. His, his theory of making the album first and then, then doing the performance was happening even then. And in fact it was done by the BBC, Herbert Chappell did it, it went to the Music and Arts, as it were, because they had a slot and he did it. But I remember sitting hearing Andrew play that. Well that

developed to quite a good association and I did a show at The Watermill at Newbury, with Marti, and it was built around Marti.

Yes.

[20:00]

And Paul Nicholas would, they were then just about planning *Cats*, we did a number that was already written for *Cat*s, and Julian, his brother. And then, it would be, that was in ’80. Mm, I did his, in ‘82 I did Andrew’s sort of, it was *An Evening with Andrew Lloyd Webber*, which he wanted to do with strange casting, Plácido Domingo, John Lill, the pianist, who was a friend of his for many years. And a girl who’s a rock and roll singer called Suzi Quatro and a little girl called Finola Hughes, who nobody knew then but she was the White Cat in *Cats*, and that was just when *Cats* was being, you know, it was taking, taking shape. He was still writing it, it opened the following spring. But in ‘81 we went on to do, I mean every year we did Christmas specials with Val. And ‘81 we did more James Galway, *James Galway Solo*. We did another *Robert White Worlds of Music*, *King’s Singers International*. And *Jessye Norman and The Spiritual*. That was really when people might have almost said to you, the average punter ‘Who’s Jessye Norman’? I don't think there were too many people. And she did practically no television, and I had had her as a guest with Jimmy, because they’d done, Jimmy Galway they’d done something in Edinburgh, at the Festival together and she’s come and done some Ravel with him on one of his shows. And I said, I was talking to her and she said how much she’d love to do the story of the spiritual, and she came and did it. I wish they would get it out and repeat it because people who saw it were absolutely amazed by her, because she's such a, you know, a really strong personality, and the delivery, and she wrote it herself and she had very strong feelings about the background of all of that. And the choral director came from America, a man called Willis Patterson. We had just a choir of thirty-two and, and just for a couple of things an organ and piano, other than that it was her and voices, just.

Mm.

It was very inspiring, that was *Jessye Norman the Spiritual* ’81. *Benjamin Luxon’s World of Music*. Tommy Steele, I did a twenty-fifth anniversary compilation on Tommy. Or Jim, Johnny Mathis, another thing, a little bit in presentation like Captain Beaky had done called *A Dream of Alice*, which was based on *Alice in Wonderland*, done Marion Montgomery, with music by Laurie Holloway, with Michael Hordern, Jenny Agutter and Nyree Dawn Porter and John Clive, reading, it was not the whole of *Alice*, but it was a section of *Alice*, done with illustrations which Keith did, which is again was charming. I did some Strauss and Lehár. I did Tony Bennett and Buddy Rich. Harry Mortimer’s eightieth birthday programme, which were… More John Denver. And then a sort of a, just for a change of title *Hooked on Classics* was the in thing, so when they were iffing a bit and butting about more *Word of Music* and they said ‘Well, you know, but better titles’. So I said ‘Well you can't say *Hooked on Classics*, because that's the title of all these records they’ve got out so what about *Here Come the Classics’?* So it was the same mixture as just before with a different title. We did Strauss and other popular composers. We did American, evening of American music, and we did an evening of totally British music, with big orchestras. The things with, with Galway and these sort of programmes were all with, the

accompanying unit was usually a section of The Royal Philharmonic or The London Symphony Orchestra or the Philharmonia, one of those sort, sort of orchestras because you needed that kind of weight. And it, they weren't necessarily more expensive because if you have the right combination of musicians to play the written music, you've got the, the music written anyway. It's, in terms of making television programmes when you have to orchestrate everything specially that's where you spend a lot of money, and so if you have an orchestra of about thirty or thirty-five it costs a lot of money writing the music for them to play, orchestrating, it's not, not composing it's arranging. And I did Pet Clark's fortieth anniversary concert from The Albert *Hall.* Johnny Mathis, *A Tribute to Nat King Cole,* we did a *Bob* Hope *Gala Evening,* I went to America to do the first televising of the international Emmy Awards which I see British Television did very well again this week it was...

Except the BBC.

Except the BBC. Yes, I was rather sad to say. But that was, it was Aubrey Singer who then was running, I think he was MD Tel [ph 3B 24:30] and he had an idea that we should televise this and it was not a good idea if I'd…. I think he would agree in retrospect, it was done in The Sheraton Hotel, and it was, it was really not devised for, for television and was a very difficult operation. I did it with the help of Peter Fergus in the New York Office but the editing of that was, that, they had got production facilities and I think what they hadn't realised, which happens a lot in America, they don't really use in-house facilities, they use…

[25:00]

Mm.

House facilities, which are far more efficient than the NBC, I, I think it was NBC, where really they're used to doing news, current affairs, sport, but not things with complicated music editing, and when you're trimming down those sort of shows and you've got, and you've got fanfares and bits of music running you really need that editor that's got ears better than mine will ever be who can just do that dovetailing of the music edits that nobody notices the join, and it wasn't like that really over there. They were willing but it was a, it was a bit of a grind. Mm, '84 was, oh, Doonican was still going strong. Eighty-four we did *The Royal Variety* from The Victoria Palace, which was, Comedy Tonight was the theme of that. And another Christmas Val. And '85 was the first *Children's Royal* that, that I told you about, which was the one that had the lighting disaster.

Yes.

I mean it was very successful when we got it done. [Laughter] I do like doing the children's programmes, they are, they're such, I mean, you know, it, it's, it's the participation because sometimes on the other Royals the people have come and they pay such a lot of money for their seats and it's very hard work for the comics, particularly to get them to, you know, relax because they're all rather… It's not easy sometimes they, they say as we say sitting on their hands a bit, you know, so it takes a bit to break them down, but not with the children. Couldn't hear it, you know, you can't hear for the, the talk back for the noise. And then that year I did, it was my first

thing, I think, I did with Kiri Te Kanawa, which was nice, I did a… It was the first thing I… No I lie, I'd managed to have her as a guest on one of The King's Singers programmes, that was before The Royal Wedding. Again a bit like Jessye, you know, it wasn't quite a such, very much she's a famous lady and she's always done a lot of LE. She used to do a lot of things with Harry Secombe, and she did a Harry's, one of *World of Musics* with me. Mm, and then I did a Christmas Barbican concert with her, which was a co-production with a company in London, with Carl Davis conducting the Philharmonia, and, that was lovely, all Christmas music. And she's, she's, she's just gorgeous to work with, and she's a lovely lady. Mm, not easy, just to talk about the problems of a director when you're doing that kind of work with an artist, because you know how it is you get, you get, you do get into a, a concert hall, you're usually just doing it on the day, overnight, get in. And of course, people might wonder about how you, you rehearse it. Well you have to do a bit, but you can't ask somebody like Dame Kiri to sing all day and then give a performance of two hours music at night, and so you do have your problems a little bit, you have it with any singer because it's, it's very demanding to ask anybody to rehearse all day, that's why you nearly always try to get two days so that least on the, say, the afternoon and the evening before you can do the spade work and get the bulk of it done, and then, say, do one run through on the day. But where you have only got an overnight get in, and you've only got one day, there's no way you'll get an opera singer to sing all day. I mean, so you really have to do your homework and know exactly what they're going to do and have yourself really very well covered with a camera script that if, if in the, and the end you haven't rehearsed things, or, or of course, it is possible to get a stand-in to, you know, do, but it's never the same because, and it isn't very helpful to the conductor because they don't know the phrasing and it's essential for the relationship between conductor and artist to be so, you know, refined that they are very comfortable and relaxed. But that was a lovely, a lovely show to do. It went out, I think, on Christmas Eve and, on Christmas Day on BBC2, and it was repeated the following year again, which was nice and was… *Song for Europe* I came back to '86 and worked on that. More Val Doonican, another *Royal Variety*, and this time was ''86 was the, from The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and that was the celebration of Fifty Years of Television. Been in on the anniversaries one way and another.

Yes.

We, I was looking through Francis, Michael's book and it was the Twenty-first Anniversary, there's been anniversaries, the BBC loves anniversaries don't they? But they are kind of nice because it gives you a real hook to hang things on, you know.

It does.

And we got a marvellous line-up for it. It was, we got our lovely Ronnie Barker in the foyer a flunky with her programme, which very seldom do you get in, you know, a little. That we've done the comedy one too with Jimmy Savile taking the tickets on the door when they went in. But that was a nice, nice evening and it was a lovely show. I like, Drury Lane's a lovely theatre it's… I mean The Palladium is very much a variety theatre and it's got great atmosphere but Drury Lane is a, is, is nice too.

[30:05]

So that was ‘86. Then I did a Christmas Galway at St. Alban’s Cathedral, that was a co-production, for PBS in America and, and world distribution. It was him and some choristers, and he introduced it and it was all Christmas music with a section of The Royal Philharmonic, nice atmosphere.

And ‘87 Children’s Royal again which was obviously was around Easter time, we had an Easter theme. And then I did a nice, another nice one with Kiri which was *The Music of My Fair Lady*, at The Albert Hall. It was a two part concert and the first half was classical with classical arias, six classical arias. John Marcheri [ph 3B 30:48] who’s, I think the resident artistic director with The Scottish Opera, he conducted this American gentleman. And we had the London Symphony Orchestra for that. And the second half was fifty minutes of music from *My Fair Lady*, which had been made as an album and Kiri with Jeremy Irons, we didn’t have all of the people, John Gielgud was on the album but we just had Jeremy in the hall and we, we did about fifty minutes of that, and then we had a big choir. She was, I mean I thought she was very good, it was, I mean it wasn't, it wasn't staged it was an in concert.

And then I did a musical documentary to celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of Stradivarius, that was another co-production, which was very interesting. I was, by this time, officially off the full payroll and guest producing. That was, we did some filming in Cremona, where they were having an exhibition of Strads, mm, and it was linked to a concert at The Barbican in aid of The Royal Academy of Music Foundation Fund, conducted the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Yehudi Menuhin. And also they did *The Four Seasons*, the second part was *The Four Seasons*, the first half had various artists all giving their services and *The Four Seasons* had a different pianist playing every movement. But the whole idea was that everybody on the stage playing violins were playing Stradivarius violins. All the soloists owned them, well if they didn't own them they, they had the right to use them through somebody sponsoring their, their use of them. And I did obviously talked a lot to a gentleman called Charles Beare, who’s the authority on Strads in this country, they have a little shop in Beak Street or Brewer Street just round the corner, a lovely man. And he was, well largely responsible for the exhibition in Cremona and any, its going onwards...

Yes.

Because they're bringing out a big catalogue of that. And we, we were lucky actually because at the time there was a big story about the stolen Strad that had been stolen in 1947 in, in New York, which suddenly appeared when the gentleman who’d stolen it… Well, it was, they, nobody knew that, who’d stolen it, and Lloyds paid out and then they discovered that there was this gentleman who, who had in fact bought it for, you know, that stolen it, somebody had stolen it and he’d bought it for a few dollars and he’d been playing it for years knowing it was stolen, and then he died and his, his second or third wife, because he said ‘You should go and look in the violin case and do something about it’. And she found all these old brown cuttings, which were the story of it being stolen and of course, they brought it over, or they sent Charles over to see, to verify if it was this the famous violin. And it was, and eventually, and he restored it because it had been lying on tops of, you know, piano bar, pianos and it was all drink stained and dirty and in a terrible state, but it was an original. And he restored it and then he, it was out in the exhibition and Pinchas Zukerman who, who

tied up the whole of the, the whole thing and did the dialogue and was in the exhibition with, with Charles. He took the new, the restored Strad and played it for the first time, you know, on, on camera and played a little bit of it, it was a nice story. And then the last part of it was *The Four Seasons* and things, about a seventy-five minute. It would really stand a repeat it was, it was nice. We went out on Christmas Eve in '87, we had little bits of Anne-Sophie Mutter, who also owns one, and Pete, Yo-Yo Ma, who had at that time, and she was still alive was, she, he was playing, mm… A lovely girl who died, multiple sclerosis. Jackie, Jacqueline du Pré.

Du Pré, Jacqueline du Pré.

Yo-Yo Ma who was the young ...

[35:00]

The wife of Barenboim?

And because she wasn't using it all anymore Yo-Yo was playing her cello.

Cello, yes.

Which was a Strad, and so we did a piece with him too round actually in Charles's place. And I did the piece with Anne-Sophie at The Royal Academy, because she takes a Master Class there every year. Anyway, I could go on forever. From, we're nearly there, we're nearly there.

Mm, '88, *Song for Europe,* I did again and I did The Variety Club Lunch for Bill Cotton, in honour of Bill Cotton, who was that year retiring from being Managing Director of BBC Television and my old mate. And, and they gave a Variety Club Lunch in his honour, for his thirty-two years at BBC Television, and services to showbiz. And I did Stéphane Grappelli's eightieth birthday, which we did a two part concert at The Barbican in which Yehudi was a guest and Marion Montgomery and Laurie Holloway and, and others. And he did an in, little conversation for half an hour with Humphrey Littleton, we packaged it as three with the first half of the concert, then the conversation and then the second half of the concert. Then I did a bit of, did a, helped them out with *The Choir of the Year*, on the jury of that, which was nothing to do with, well the BBC televised it but Sainsbury's promote it and they asked me to be a judge. They did *Song for Europe* in '89 and *The Children's Royal Variety* again in '89,which we did at The Dominion again, that was the third one of those I'd done.

And then of course, the pièce de résistance in July 1990, which was *The Royal Birthday Gala for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother*, to celebrate her ninetieth years, ninety years. Attended by The Queen as well and The Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Margaret. That was wonderful to do, it was such an honour, and it was just such a lovely thing. Because we didn't, it was not just another *Royal Variety Show* it was, it was a different sort of show and I just reflected. And I, it was, you know, a gift really of ninety years of show business, not show business but just taking the decades and, and finding an excuse in each one to present the music that took us right round through the century. So it began at the beginning of the century with the sort of shows that she, that were on stage at that time, you know, *Tell Me,*

Pretty Maiden, all the lovely clothes and a bit of Gilbert and Sullivan and so on. And we worked through the War period and, and the '20s and the '30s, and Noël Coward and Ivor Novello and then we finished Act One with a big shena with Vera Lynn, which was the start of the War. And Robert Hardy did a little bit of Churchill's speech. And then we started Two with Howard Keel walking on the stage, as he, as he did in 47 in Drury Lane in *Oklahoma*. And we went through the '70s right up to present day and did a tribute from the West End Theatre today, so that was a...

Mm.

A nice hook to hang it on, you know. That was wonderful, it was, it was really nice. And the pleasing thing was we had to do the show. I mean in the early days of *The Royal Variety Shows* we used to just photograph them, they weren't produced by the BBC, we went in and televised them for, so that they were able to be seen on television and they got the revenue for the Fund. But in latter years, since about the mid '80s we've been responsible really for producing it on behalf of the Fund, so that gives you a lot more work, and this was the same thing although the Fund was there and it was a charity night for various funds which she is patron of, you know, The St. John's Ambulance, Red Cross and services that she's associated with. Mm, we were actually responsible for putting it together and, and doing it. And I mean I, I didn't direct it I was executive producer and I was responsible for the whole shape of it and making it happen. But I haven't been allowed to direct for the last, and then I did a compilation at Christmas, which was *Thirty Years of The Royal Variety*, because there wasn't a *Royal Variety* last year, because of the Gala, so we did a compilation of thirty years, the ones she's been at, because if it, there'd been one she would have been attending. And I don't know whether she will go on attending any more.

But that was very interesting, it was very interesting looking back at thirty years. I mean it was hard work because they all run three hours and I was up to here with reels of tape but it was quite interesting watching A:- the artists and people who have drifted off a bit in latter years perhaps sadly but, you know, at, were at times at their peak, I mean and were fantastic. And you kind of forget how, how, how special they were. So that was that, and I, I'll rest my case in a minute, I'm exhausted.

[40:08]

Well I'm going to stop it now.

[End of Tape 3 Side B 00:40:12]

NB: The time codes given here are estimates based on readings from the original cassette recording.

Tape 4 Side A

Yes, it's ever suitable. I mean I ...

Yvonne Littlewood, Side Seven.

When I said in latter years I, I was not directing, I, I'd just like to say that I've been really lucky and happy that practically throughout my entire career as a producer I've been a producer and director and I've directed as well as produced my shows. And that doesn't happen so much today, and because of the type of television I'd primarily been working in, which was Light Entertainment, brackets Variety, we had a sort of blank sheet of paper with sometimes a title on it and, and you conceived the show, and I believe that, with music, so much of how the production worked out was inherent in how you directed it. And not that there isn't another person that's just as good a director and probably better than I am it was very frustrating to try and accept the idea of somebody else directing the work I was producing. I had to in the big things in the end because there was too much executive work to do, you've got to be in, when it's in the theatre you can't be in the scanner, when you've got a very big international cast of, you know, celebrity guests and people coming you've got to be there to look after them and, and you can't do all the jobs. But I did like to direct my own shows because I did really feel that people would, because when you build up an image in your mind as to how you, you see this in the, when you're producing something, you know, how it's going to look on the screen was part of what the production was, because, as I say, you didn't have much on the sheet of paper to go with. If a writer's written you a script you've got all the words there and you, you've got to interpret them, but so much of the time you were having to think of ideas. Sometimes they were ideas that were visual ideas that you found them material to work for, most of the time it was material that you had to then visually present, and that, that I found very important to me, and, and I miss not directing at the minute, I haven't directed for about three years and I, you know, actually in the gallery. And I love getting together with the team when you've gone through all the agony of the costing and the bit and the that and the getting it there, the fun is all sitting together and seeing the thing open up on the screen and, you know, the fruits of everybody's labours. The, the, the, the rubby drawings that people have shown you how the costumes are going to look, or the set's going to look, until you actually see it on the screen, and then they put the lighting on it and everything, all that comes together, it's, I mean there's nothing more exciting is there? It's like, you know, it's like giving birth, I mean it's so, so rewarding when it goes well and, and everything happens, yes. Haven't I been lucky?

Yes.

Well, more than that, clever.

No, I haven't, I've been very lucky.

No.

A lot of it's been, you know, I joined the BBC for a year till I made up my mind what I wanted to do and forty-three, seven years onwards I mean I'm, I was still there. I still am a bit, you know, when they've got a bit for me to do. Anyway, what do you want again?

No, that was sort of almost a cue for my, my, the first thing I was going to say, was going back to one of your earlier statements really to the 1950s, and you did mention, obviously '55, when ITV began.

Mm.

And I seem to think you remembered it very well and said it didn't really matter very much. I seem to think you said it was almost a stimulant, as though it was...

Oh it was.

Competition was stimulating.

Yes, of course it was.

At that point...

It was very good for us all.

It wasn't a, , a problem?

No, no. I mean people might have thought 'Oh look, oh, you know, he's going and he's going', but in fact when it, to begin with people might have thought 'Oh dear, gosh we've got competition', in fact it was good because it was a challenge and it made you work harder to make sure you were doing it better than he was over there. You know, I mean it, this, the competitive thing has never been bad it's always been good I think. Certainly up to now it has, I mean I don't know, I wouldn't like to speak for what's going to happen in the future too much, but who knows it's so big. But at those days, I mean there was only two channels, and even when there's been four it's been very good, I think.

Yes. And you of course, the follow up from that, obviously, is that you remained always with the BBC?

Yeas.

I mean I speak as somebody who has worked for both sides.

Yes.

Almost 50/50 since the early '60s, I mean fifty per cent one, fifty per cent the other.

Right.

But you never did.

No.

I mean did you ever think about it?

Yes.

You must have done.

I did, and I did think about it and, and in some ways I think perhaps I'm a, a bit, my experience is a bit narrow because of not having had the courage to go. I'm not a very, I, I, it takes me a long time to, you know, take the plunge. But I did once discuss going with somebody from Thames who, when I'd been asked to, to go and do a series there for somebody and they, we met and we talked about it and, and he said to me 'If you really want my honest opinion, much as I'd love you to come and do it', he said 'I think you're better with the BBC because the sort of things that you like to do and you're very good at doing, they do them there, we don't have a chance to do it, we wouldn't have anything like as much output for you to do as, as you have at the BBC, that seems to be your particular métier. And therefore, you know, I, I think, you know, much as they would have probably paid me a good bit more money, I don't know, it's never been the thing that's been foremost in my mind, it's been job satisfaction and the fact that...

[05:27]

Yes.

I've got a great loyalty with The Corporation because they've given me all the chances and I thought 'Why should I go and leave them if, if they still want me', I've always said if I wasn't delivering the job please be quick to tell me so I don't want to be doing, I don't want to be sitting around being found something to do. And I still feel that. And I must say today, because, sadly, I just rattled off and, you know, had to telescope a lot of things, but, as I say, I was doing a lot of shows.

Mm.

And I've done probably, I don't know, I've lost, I don't count them up, but certainly I would think in the area of six hundred shows over the period of years that I've been producing. And they are largely of a kind that are not very easy to find on the screen today. They were in fashion, it was, it was fashionable in the '60s and the '70s to do the sort of music shows. Singers, personality singers were in vogue, it isn't that any more. It's, you know, very much a comedy world these days and, and there is, there's no doubt about it, the question of ratings which everybody has to worry about. And music shows are, they aren't cheap and, you know, they don't get the same sort of size of audiences that, that…

Mm.

Comedy will get and soaps. And, and so I suppose, and we all know only too well the problems of the economics of it. People have to, you know, put their money where they're going to get their biggest, please the audiences most. I think there's a lot of people starved of certain things which they would like to get, and I think it is a pity that there isn't more what I call 'middle of the road', good light music stroke entertainment, music/entertainment on the screen.

Indeed...

But maybe it will come round and they'll...

Is there really serious evidence that the audience...

Oh yes.

Is bad for that?

No, they don't just get big audiences, the audiences that watch will love it, but they, but they're not big in comparison to, I'm afraid to tell you, anything like, I mean certainly nothing like the big series like popular dramas, and...

Mm.

Pop, you know, you know quiz games and things like that, *Strike It Lucky*, or *Jen Game* 4A 07:46] or all those things, will clock up...

And they're cheaper...

Many, many, many more.

They're cheaper too.

Well, I suppose overall, I really don't know, I'm, you, you get very quickly out of touch with the, with the day to day....

Well I mean...

Finances.

I mean...

I'm sure they escalate, nothing gets cheaper.

Well a quiz show is cheaper than some of the programmes...

Oh yes, because you can deliver...

You know, if you did your programmes today…

You can deliver them, but I mean I, I've always sort of said, said 'Oh well look, you know, you've, nothing, everything has to have a fifty piece orchestra'. And if you, I mean if you took say, for example The King's Singers who can sing *Acapella*, you can put John Williams on with his guitar and, you know, and have an entrancing half an hour, but it's very difficult to find even that sort of...

[Inaudible 4A 08:16]

It's a, it's kind of sad, but it will probably come round. But I'm, I've been, as I say, slaving away. I still go in there, I mean I was in having lunch the other day with my ex-boss and I'm not saying, I'm not trying to muscle in but I was just saying there are these sort of things happening and, and just bringing them to the notice in the hope that something might happen. [Laughter] But I don't think even with the independents, although a few things get done. And I must say some of the things that now, I, I do like doing the sort of research jobs and the retrospectives and things because I think you, it's because you've lived through the periods and known the people and watched them grow up and grow in stature that it's, it's interesting to watch them. And I mean if you see something like The Carreras thing on, that *South Bank* did the other day, and they do quite a lot of those. Occasionally *Omnibus* and, and *Arena* do some things that… But it's got much more departmentalised in the BBC now and I think, I don't think they would, I don't think they'd want me in Music and Arts somehow, I think I've come from that, you know, the song and dance lot over there, you know, a red nose comic department.

No. [Laughter]

Don't reckon you're a, you know, no it's, it's funny, you know.

Well it is.

You can be tainted with a brush if you, your background is...

It's interesting that, because I was once Head of Arts in London.

Mm.

Arts Features.

Yes, yes, I know.

It was, and from my side of the fence, if that's the right phrase, I always felt a lot of the people, inevitably, the people that you would call Light Entertainment artists were also anyway, artists.

Mm.

And therefore I was the Head of Arts.

Mm.

And so we did programmes about, oh, Tommy Steele, Morecambe and Wise, Bob Hope.

Very well. You did those wonderful...

Because they were artists.

You did those lovely Tommy Steele and things, didn't you?

That's right, because he's an...

[10:00]

And, and they were, they were wonderful. And when I did his compilation I saw all those again, John Gibson, wasn't it?

Yes.

John, a lovely man wasn't he?

Right. Well they were, they were 'Omnibus'.

And Charlie Chaplin, yes.

They were 'Omnibus'.

Well, as I say, I mean occasionally we get a few, a few things like that out of there, but the, the sort of general, I feel musically they do think that it's a bit sort of, I don't know, you know, who needs Lehár?

They do now.

And, and those kind of Strauss and Lehár.

Because obviously they think that way, right or...

Strauss and Lehár, they would go bananas if somebody but, you know, you've only got to listen to *Your Hundred Best Tunes* on radio and then say 'And what is wrong with hearing *One Fine Day* sang magnificently again? It doesn't matter how many times it's going to still be there long after some of the strange sounds that we get today which will not. I mean we're right to think The Beatles will be with us for a while, and I think it was wonderful the thing that Paul did with Carl Davis.

Mm.

I mean those sort of people are really, you know, breaking new ground and carrying on a tradition, but I mean so much of the music is so totally forgettable, I don't think it's going to be...

No, the trouble is...

Lasting the, as that...

Sure. If Music and Art today aren't interested in, as you've just said, and I agree with you, in particularly, as a department, in what you used to do and Light Entertainment aren't interested in it either then there is a whole area...

It doesn't get...

It goes right through the middle.

Absolutely.

Gone.

And the, and the biggest person to, to support this, this argument is Bill Cotton. And the only person who actually publicly stands up and says exactly that, he has the courage to say it and he's right because it is entertainment, and I think it's sad for a public service broadcasting organisation who aren't giving a little bit of everything to the public. And there's whole areas of it that there is, there is zero now. And they pay their licence fee and I think what is sad, and I mean it's been proved in the concert halls, there's old Raymond Gubbay there who, who knows popular concerts in The Barbican and has kept The Barbican very much afloat by the fact that he can fill it with putting in popular light music. And not all of it with, you know, astronomic names but, and the other thing too is we never do any sort of co-productions with radio. I mean The Proms are done, but we don't get any co-productions done with Radio 2, say, and they do a lot of very good things there, we could explore that area. 'We', you see I still talk as 'we' as though I'm still part of the staff.

But it's, I think it's sad because the people who need that live in little terraced houses in the back of beyond in the country, they don't go out, they can't get to the concert halls, and, and they, they're terrified to go out anyway these days with life as it is and at night they don't want to always be sitting watching some rather tough heavy drama and people bashing each other about on the screen, they would like to have something a little bit soothing and, and melodic and puts them in a, a restful frame of mind in, you know. But, unless one day we get to a point where we get a channel that can provide for those sort of people I can't see too much of it happening. I listened to John Williams on the radio last night, he was on Radio 2, I'm a great radio fan. And it was just, I just, it was just so wonderful to hear this quality of music coming from, and he wasn't just playing his classics, he was playing quite popular things that had been arranged for him, and quite modern things too. I mean they might be, they're not all playing in the past, there will be young musicians, there are great young musicians around today like Paul Hart and people who are young, exciting, terribly talented and, and advancing with music all the time. But it just, I don't know, it, perhaps it's just me, I just feel there is a, is a, you know, a vacuum in so much of that area. And certainly the people like the, the popular singers like the, the Tony Bennett's and the, you know, the people equivalent, oh I mean Oscar could still come here and do a...

Mm.

A, a half a dozen programmes and before he finally can't travel any more, I mean he must be seventy-ish now, but he's still playing, but he's not as mobile as he used to be. I mean, and there's nobody like him. I mean I know a consultant who's, who's much younger than I am and he, he's his, you know, he just thinks that Peterson, I mean he was a young student and medical school he, he'd stand in Ronnie's for hours just to watch this man and, and he'll cross London to see him if he comes in and does a concert. There are people who...

Yes.

Who would really like this kind of thing, but I mean… [Inaudible - interference 14:42] And then somehow or another when we do get it we get very young contemporary people who, I suppose, the, *The Late Show* does you see a bit, but it's very, it's always very, very new and very contemporary isn't it?

Yes.

A little bit like what I would call 'Way out'.

[15:00]

Yes. [Laughter]

Trying to be polite.

Yes.

But...

That's true.

Oh yes.

You know when I was Head of the Arts Department and Bill Cotton was Light Entertainment Head of Group of course...

Mm.

I had a very close liaison with him, had to because when I was doing things about Tommy Steele...

Mm, that's right.

What he was he like.

That's right.

And, and Bill was always extremely helpful, you know.

Mm.

He might have been hostile, he never was of course.

No.

And, and that relationship...

Was very good.

Well, well I mean I...

Great interchange.

I doubt it exists now, I don't know.

No I don't, I don't think so.

It ought to.

Yes, I don't know. I wouldn't know, I wouldn't know because I'm not there, I couldn't tell you the answer to that. But, anyway I mean I, I was very, I mean I, I have to say I mean I get my old, you know, soap box out and go on like I do, but it's only because I care.

Mm.

And, but the Corporation has been, I mean wonderfully good to me, and I, I mean when I got my little gong in '86 I mean, my little gong, my very big gong I mean, and why, why I should get one I mean I, I still haven't got over the shock of it now, I still get amazed when I see a letter that says 'MBE' on it. [Laughter] But I was really very thrilled, I mean that they should nominate me for a decoration like that. It was, I mean I, I, that's, I, I just, I was so amazed, and I was doing The Royal Variety the following week, after I'd been to my investiture, but that was… I, it's still almost unreal, you know, I just sort of have to go, like that and, and realise it, but, I mean that was the ultimate...

You're too modest.

Accolade that anybody could get, and there was very, I mean but there are, Norman, you know, there are very few of them around nowadays. I don't think there were ever very many, but it seems to me to be, I suppose it's because the industry is so big and there's so many other deserving people, but I would never, I mean I, I am very loyal and. much as I sit here, like just now, saying, you know, 'They should be doing, they should be doing', it's only because I care about the Corporation. And I am quite concerned today to be sitting...

Yes, but you want them to do it because...

Oh well exactly, because I want...

Because you like, you like them, you admire them...

Exactly.

And you want them to keep on doing it.

And I, and I know they do it, can do it better than anybody else. And how proud we all felt, at least I did, and I mean when old Terry Waite was saying how much The World Service, I mean it all, you, you feel part of it don't you when anything like that happens you think 'God, yes I work for that organisation' and, and you feel so thrilled. And they can, they do all these, I mean what a service that is, I mean I thought that was marvellous to, to see that sort of tremendous public recognition of the man Tom Sutherland saying the same thing, I mean he was so complimentary wasn't he about it which was, which was wonderful. I mean it is an amazing place, and, I mean, as you say, you've seen both sides. I can't speak for other, other areas because I haven't, except for the odd, you know, little fling I've had abroad. But I, I mean there's, as I say, it brings you back to how lucky you are or how lucky I was to be working where I was. And I mean it's just an amazing organisation. And I know by, you know, I think that it's going to be difficult for anybody else to, I don't think the eras to follow are going to offer up anything like the same opportunities to people as we all had. We had it, I mean it, it sounds awfully cliché to say, you know, we had the best years, but we did and didn't we, really, there. They were the golden years, and it was, really, I mean it is expanding, television is, almost at a rate too fast now. But the, those formative years were, were sort of, I think they were, perhaps today to the people who are there it's just as exciting to them now as it was to us.

Yes.

But, anyway...

Sure. Maybe.

I'm sure I've said too much.

Maybe, maybe.

I'm sure I've said too much.

No, you haven't, no, never.

I found in, in, if you'd got, you said that you could edit it a bit.

No we don't, no we don't.

No, you can't put anything in?

No. Can't put anything in.

No.

What do you want to put in?

Well it was just, you know, because the other day I was scratching through about Michael and Norman actually said to me, did he actually use film? And we'd gone right back to, to the '50s.

Mm, yes..

And I just, because we, you know, we were sort of scratching so much, and I found the thing which referred to the, to the, one of the reviews, it, it was *The Evening Standard* in fact, and there were lots, and it was George Campie [ph 4A 09:42] but it was talking about one of the years, and I don't know which, but it said 'Producer Michael Mills made this swift and colourful occasion, his camera snapped rapidly from scene to scene. He brought in authentic film to heighten the drama of the 1914/18 War years, and he never wasted a moment or an opportunity'. I mean though, that was what you said to me at the time, and I knew I'd seen it there, something.

[20:05]

Yes.

And then things like, 'Handling very well, the jigsaw of rapidly changing sets'. I mean it's mind boggling to think of that in '50, which is forty-one years ago really. 'A documentary, set to tune for music'. 'A splendid piece of reconstruction, fluent, exciting and moving'. These are all very interesting little quotes from, from that *The Passing Show* series.

Mm.

But there was one interesting one here, it said 'Almost as soon as the first instalment of *The Passing Show* began one of the four cameras broke down. Mills in his cubicle high above the floor covered up the missing camera and few viewers realised anything was wrong. More camera trouble developed. Mills made a fifteen minute interval for repairs and re-planned the rest of the show'. I don't remember that, but those were the, those are the sort of little, little bits and pieces.

Mm.

But I don't know where you go, you know, there's so much isn't there to, to recall and relate and put down and...

Well it's, it's all there.

Yes.

Your memory is there.

Yes.

Well, that's to a bit of gobbledegook here and there, yes.

It's there, many thanks.

I did have to fly through it a bit, but I hope I've said a few things that have been useful, I don't feel I've talked too much, you know, too much profound sense.

No, no.

It's been a bit of a sort of a ramble through.

It's valuable this.

What I've done.

A valuable history.

As opposed to...

That's what our project is all about.

It's not a very profound statement about how my work...

But it's all about that, I mean, you know...

On television's been.

Year after year from now on, people studying television, history and all that...

Mm.

Will find this absolutely invaluable.

Well it's of course it's all, it is all very early, it's, the more I do it the more I wish that I had the energy to try and put something, you know, into something like the history of Light Entertainment really it, it would, in television would be really useful.

Yes.

Because there's, there's no...

Well there's a, there's a project for you.

There's not even a chronological list of everything they've done you see.

Mm.

Which is criminal really. No, no actual list of everything, if you want to try and put the pieces together you have to search around, you know. The, the best way to start it

is to do, is to go through *The Radio Times* and to just list out everything because that's the only real Bible.

Yes.

But it, I did it, as I think I said, for the year Bill started, when I was doing his Variety Club thing to get some...

Are the [Inaudible 4A 22:48] available, only from Caversham I suppose.

Most of them are.

Mm.

Mm, most of them are, I have one of everything I've done.

Really?

I kept a copy.

I say.

But, even when I sent my files to register I kept a copy. But I didn't keep always the frontispieces which had everybody who worked on it, I have in latter years but not in the very first, sort of fifteen years. But, because that throws up some very interesting things.

Yes.

Forgotten people who worked on things you'd forgotten, you know, they were associated. But the, I don't know they, they do lose things. They, they come up with surprising things in Caversham that go back for yonks and then something not so far away, you know, they can't sort of find it. I think it's because probably with the huge amount of volume of paper that there is it's easier for things to get lost.

Mm.

But I certainly, you know, as I say, that all these crazy things, I mean there are so, so much stuff in them that I think that's what I would, that was Keith's drawing of Alistair. I kept all *The Radio Times* things, and there's no question about that I've forgotten a, a huge amount of it, but it, it, but the thing it serves as, that was Oscar's thing, it does serve as a, as a, you know, a little reminder of things that have happened. And you, when you, you, it's like keeping a diary isn't it, if you've kept a, I wish I'd kept a diary. People, people used to do, sign cards at the end of series and, dear oh dear. It sounds a bit of an ego trip, but I am very pleased to have them now because… That was when Jimmy left, the group, you know, was as it was then.

Anyway, many thanks.

No, my pleasure. I just hope it's, it's useful and…

I'm sure it is.

Do you just put those cassettes as they are into the...

They go into The National Film Library.

Mm. Just as they are you don't, don't transfer them on to any other tapes.

Oh yes, we, we, we, we make a, a copy master.

Mm.

And a copy, a listening copy.

[25:00]

Yes. But please, if there's any, sort of anything there that you think is, would be better just leave it out please.

No, no, It will have everything in it.

Nothing occurs to me I must say.

Oh well.

Yes.

It's sometimes when you play it back, you know, it's one, it's one thing talking and conversing, and it's another thing when you actually listen to it all.

Thanks anyway.

But it might be that, that that would be useful, it's, it's a, a credits sheet.

Yes, very much so, I'd like that.

I'm, I'm not going to leave you this one but I'll, you know, I'll update it as much as I can, and, and then Roneo you a copy.

Well you can let me have a copy...

I just had to do it, and thank goodness I did it. I had to do it when I went to work in America, I had to do a CV for myself then. And I did it then and I, after that kept it up to date, because it was almost impossible to remember which year anything was, you get very confused and so I decided to do it and thank goodness I've tried every year to just add to it whatever I've done in the previous year, you know.

Well, that's right.

Because even the Beeb's suddenly, it, I'm sure you've had this, they come out with extraordinary people, you know, if they want to, some bit of rubbish news or something and they say 'Responsible for doing', and you've, I mean, you've done the ninetieth birthday or something and they get Hoagy Carmichael or something, you know...

[End of Tape 4 Side A 00:26:30]

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