

It was in 1964 and I was approached by Andrew Allen, who was the artistic director, to audition. I think I auditioned for him. He had a very gloomy apartment I remember on Avenue Road. I can't remember how he got hold of my name, but I suspect that it was through Mavor Moore and I think I must have read something for him in his gloomy apartment. He was a bit intimidating because, of course, Andrew Allen had been head of Radio Drama at the CBC for a long time. So I knew his name. He never directed me, but I talked to him and he offered me Hector Hushabye in *Heart Break House* and *The Man in Village Wooing* which were terrific parts, except of course Hector Hushabye was meant to be much older than me who was 26 or 27 at the time. I must have been a bit older 28, but I said yes, of course. One took any kind of jobs one wanted.

So, I came down in whatever it was. I think we had three weeks rehearsal and the rehearsals were terrible because Andrew at that time wasn't really very interested in directing and he sort of worked for a couple of hours in the afternoon and around about 4:30 he would pop over to the Prince of Wales for a drink. So any of us who were interested in doing anything, actually stayed behind and worked on our lines or scenes or anything else like that. I don't really remember very much about the production, because of the lack of focus in the thing, I think. We didn't quite know what we were doing. We just did what we were told, in the text that was, and it was relatively successful in the Courthouse as far as I remember and I enjoyed myself. That's about all I can really remember at this moment.

The other piece *Village Wooing* was even weirder because it had Sean Mulcahy who was Andrew's assistant directing it and Sean is, or was, a busy director i.e. he'd tell you things and he didn't ask you to do anything. He just told you what to do and treated young actors rather badly, I thought. And there is a funny story about this, which I might just as well put on tape.

My mother had never quite approved of the fact that I had become an actor. She approved much more highly of the fact that for one year I had taught at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. So she always insisted on writing "Professor Christopher Newton" and I got a letter from my mother when the offices of the Shaw Festival were somewhere where Scotts Loft or something is now, you know just for Christmas. And the letters used to be put out on a table and Sean had gone in to look at them as was his wont. He had gone through everybody else's letters and he saw this letter to Professor Christopher Newton and it was from Stratford on Avon, because my mother had happened to go there. So he happened to turn to Linda Livingston, who was playing the Woman in *Village Wooing*, and he said, "What is this? Is Christopher really a professor?" and Linda said, "Yes I think he was for a short time." So there was an immense difference because Linda had immediately run up and told me what had just happened and that afternoon became quite different because Sean would come up to me and say "We intellectuals, Chris, think that this, this and this." So it was a quite different rehearsal process.

It was not a good production, because we didn't really know what we were doing in it and these Shaw plays need lots and lots of help from the director to help the actors work out what is really meant in these things and how they can act. We didn't have that; so we played the obvious. It was an enjoyable time for me at the Shaw Festival, though I didn't take it seriously. I didn't think the Shaw Festival would last. What I remember is living at the Anchorage for \$35 a week and walking up and the dust in the town, the sort of sense that the town had not come to life, that it

was sort of drifting around in some other world was very strongly there at the time. We used to go over to Buffalo on days off for excitement or even to Niagara Falls. There didn't seem to be anything happening here. But that was my summer of six weeks or so in 1964 and that was my first contact with the Shaw Festival, which I didn't think would last.

The happiest memories are really the people at that particular time. It was an interesting little group of actors to work with and that was fine as it always is with actors.

I have a lot of other memories, which really happened much later in the seventies. I was actually approached to take over the Festival I think in '78. I'll just touch on that. Calvin Rand and Jack MacKenzie came out to Vancouver, where I'd been running the Playhouse, and I was playing in *Twelfth Night* at the time doing a rather exotic Malvolio in lederhosen. This particular production was set in Venice, a very interesting set by Cameron-Plexiglas. Venice is a place where all these mad people came together. It was actually a very good production. Anyway I was surprised, getting out of my lederhosen. Calvin Rand and Jack MacKenzie had come to me to see whether I would take over the Festival. I said I wasn't terribly interested because the Festival had this very odd reputation at the time. I knew what had happened. All of the energies of the Festival had gone into making the new theatre and they had sort of lost their way into what they were actually putting on in theatre. And I was very happy in Vancouver because I had the Playhouse, we had the Playhouse Acting School which at that time was training people like Martha Burns and Jim Mezon and Sherry Bie, who runs the National Theatre School there. So it was a grand thing that we were into in Vancouver. So I certainly didn't want to come to Shaw and have all that work and when I had said no they asked me again which is very unusual and I said no again and then they asked me a third time.

It was quite unbelievable and so I came east and talked to people in Vancouver and in Toronto and came down as I had done every year to look at the shows and I walked around. And I became disgusted with the gardens and it was actually looking at the gardens and realizing that something could be done to them that caused me to say "yes" on a superficial kind of level. And so that's why I ended up as artistic director in ultimately '79, though I asked Leslie Yeo - who doesn't indicate this in his book or anything else or never did - I asked Leslie Yeo whether he'd fill in '79 for me, because I wasn't prepared to leave the Playhouse immediately. I felt I had to complete something there and so I needed one more year and so Leslie came in and did '79 and I then took over in the August of '79.

Well, there's a few bits and pieces for the archives.