

UNIDENTIFIED DISCUSSION GROUP

“...crossing the lake right now. I see him swimming.” And Mary said, “That’s not the boy, that’s a buoy.”

Betty Taylor: We had a boy who worked in wardrobe by the name of Werner Kulovits. When the first set up a wardrobe, Werner came from Europe and I picked him up at the train in St Catharines; I think he had been to Stratford first. He was just a young boy and he had the most immaculate outfit. I can still remember what he looked like: grey, pin-striped suit with a maroon stripe in it, beautiful raspberry-coloured shirt, and the lining of his suit was all raspberry-coloured. And he had made it, of course. The latest thing I know he has done was all the costumes for Elizabeth Taylor in *The Little Foxes*. He went to measure Elizabeth Taylor at her home at that time and he said, “I’m very nervous,” and she said, “So am I.”

Hilary Corbett and Maurice Strike had done other theatrical work in England before they came here. Do you remember Pat Gage being here in the early days—Pat Whitehead, Paxton’s wife.

Unidentified: She was really good.

Betty Taylor: Before Hilary came here she did CBC work, Manitoba Theatre Centre, St Lawrence Centre.

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Betty Taylor: I miss old Brian, I don’t care what they say about him. It makes me mad to hear them talk about him.

A: Me too, Betty. They forget how hard it started. I hear people run him down.

Betty Taylor: He had a lot of very fine points.

A: You have to be smart enough to overlook what is unimportant to us and look at the things that were really important—the fact that he started the theatre. If it hadn’t been for him selling his pictures or whatever he did, there wouldn’t have been a Shaw Festival. Who cares about all the other things?

Betty Taylor: I think that’s more the attitude I hear.

C: I didn’t see it but they put on something here that some people said sort of made an ass of Brian.

D: It was at the Court House and it was the opening and he came in and they had him drunk. I didn’t think that was in good taste. It was at the opening Court House dinner and it was very upsetting. Most people I know, when they talk about his drinking, do so in an affectionate, funny way. They were very fond of him.

Betty Taylor: Ray Wickens and I once went to Toronto to a press conference at the university. Brian took us for dinner and we couldn’t have had better treatment. I felt like royalty with Brian. Everybody in the club looked up to him and treated him like he was someone very important and very knowledgeable.

E: He was so intelligent and so worldly wise.

F: He was well known long before he came here. I remember when he came to Niagara Falls to be with Bill Martin. I read it in the paper and said, “Is that *the* Brian Doherty?” and everybody said, “Who’s Brian Doherty?” I said, “He did Father Malachy’s Miracle.” But I remember Bill, his boss in the legal firm, was dead keen on Shakespeare. We had a group that discussed Shakespeare and then we went up to Stratford and he took us for lunch at the Walper House. I said to Bill, “Brian must be very pleased with the way things are going,” and Bill replied, “Yes, but if he spent as much time with his clients as he spent with the Shaw Festival it would be a lot better.”

Betty Taylor: Paxton came here the year they did the first *Arms and the Man*. We had to make all the soldiers’ uniforms. I think they rented some and we had to make all the ones that were to be broken down. Hilary Corbett would kill me if she knew I was telling this. She had never ever made a pair of men’s pants before. She had no trouble cutting them out but when she started putting them together I said, “Hilary, this is too long a zipper to put into these pants.” She said, “What size should the zipper be? I’ve never made men’s pants before.” I said, “I don’t make men’s pants either but I know the fly shouldn’t be that long.” So as we were discussing it, Paxton walked in. Everybody started to laugh and Paxton asked what was happening. Of course we told him and he just said, “Okay, who wants to do the honours?” That’s how I always remember that Paxton was in *Arms and the Man*.

H: Do you remember the play they did at the Court House with things that were like moon rocks?

I: John Gabriel Borkman; that was weird. We came over on our boat to go to that and Martha was just a little girl at the time. She said, “Mom, what are they doing?” and we said, “We don’t really know.”

J: The day I went there were an awful lot of people there who had never even heard of Ibsen let alone read the play before they went, and they were laughing in the wrong places. It was really very sad but I mentioned this to someone afterwards and they said if it had been well acted they wouldn’t have laughed in the wrong places.

I: Everybody laughed in the wrong places. I remember that because we were trying to interpret to Martha and we didn’t really know what they were doing either.

K: Margherita Howe said she didn’t have a dining-room table all one summer. Dorothy Middleditch lent them a quilt and they painted it yellow. Dorothy was so wrapped up in the thing she didn’t say a word.

Betty Taylor: The first year we went into the Court House on a professional basis they were putting the seats in at the last minute. The people from sets came into wardrobe to see whether any of us could be spared. The odd thing was we were ready for a change and we all went to the town hall and painted the steps as they were putting them down. The audience was all lined up outside waiting to come in, the women in their long gowns. The set people were using a very quick drying paint and they kept holding the audience back until they were sure the steps were dry enough for the women to walk on. When you went in the door there was a sort of foyer, like an alley, at the back when you went upstairs into the main hall. They backed the seats so no one could see underneath them. I used to help Tom Legge with those huge staple guns that you could hardly hold because they were made for men, and we would staple burlap all the way over so you couldn’t see under the seats. This had to be done each year.

N: With Androcles and the Lion they had to use the room at the back for dressing and they all came in from the back. It was a matter of guidance of the Holy Spirit because it made it wonderful having the people coming in from behind.

L: But it was very crowded and very hot.

O: Wasn’t it unreal? I remember that, and no running water.

P: We’d all go outside during intermission and then come back in. Then when they first had the air conditioning it was so noisy that only put it on in the intermission. When we all went out they put the air conditioning on and it was cool to come back into. And the old kitchen was the dressing rooms, so we just used to put a curtain across, men in one half and women in the other.

Q: Then there was a dressing room where they went upstairs behind the stage. They had an old commode chair because they couldn’t use the washrooms. They couldn’t come through the audience when they were in costume.

The group sorts through old programs for the archives.