



Charlotte Headrick Oral History Interview, April 7, 2015

Title

“The Grande Dame of OSU Theater”

Date

April 7, 2015

Location

Withycombe Hall, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Headrick provides a detailed overview of her family's deep Tennessee roots, her undergraduate experience at the University of Tennessee, her doctoral studies in theater and drama at the University of Georgia, and her early academic appointments at Appalachian State University and Young Harris College. From there, Headrick describes the circumstances that led her to relocate to Oregon State University and the period of adjustment that was required upon moving to a new and unfamiliar region of the country.

The primary focus of the session is Headrick's institutional memories of the theater arts at OSU, as compiled over a career spanning more than three decades. In this, she discusses the standing of theater and drama as a program within the Speech Communications department, her experiences as OSU's first woman faculty member in theater, some early productions that she led, and a few memorable student actors whom she directed. She likewise recalls the technical details of mounting productions in the Mitchell Playhouse, the transition to the Withycombe Theater, reactions that she has received from both peers and community members to various plays that she has staged, and specific productions that have made an impact on her student performers.

Headrick next turns her attention to her research on Irish female playwrights, discussing her doctoral dissertation, her involvement in professional organizations, and the anthology that she co-edited and published in 2014. She then reflects on certain of the awards that she has received, notes her involvement with the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and shares her memories of her stay as a Moore Visiting Fellow at the National University of Ireland.

As the interview nears its end, Headrick recalls a few memorable moments of her career as a stage performer. The session concludes with Headrick's thoughts on the current state of the theater arts at OSU, her appreciation of President Ed Ray's support for the drama program, and campus productions that are upcoming in the year ahead.

Interviewee

Charlotte Headrick

Interviewer

Mike Dicianna

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/headrick/>

Transcript

Mike Dicianna: Okay, well today is Tuesday, April 7th, 2015, and we're at the OSU Theater Department in Withycombe Hall on the OSU campus—

Charlotte Headrick: We're not a department. Never have been.

MD: Really?

CH: No.

MD: To interview the *grande dame* of OSU theater, Charlotte Headrick. One of the things that we always try to begin with is a little bit of a brief biographical sketch of your early years, like where were you born and early childhood's in the south.

CH: Right. So, that's my cue?

MD: There's your cue.

CH: There's my cue. I was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, my ancestors come from that area. I am a First Family of Tennessee, which means that my family was in Tennessee prior to statehood. Several lines were in the—and Tennessee's the sixteenth state, so we're talking, I don't know, 1789, something like that. I'm not even sure when the statehood is, but it's early on. And I went to, I was—well the first memories of my childhood are from Jacksonville, Florida, because my father was called back up after World War II for Korea, so he was at the naval airbase in Jacksonville. So, my first memories were of Jacksonville. And then we moved back to Tennessee when I was five years old and I was there until I finished graduate school and went to teach at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.

And I went to the University of Tennessee, I am a Volunteer first, last, always, and my master's degree is also from the University of Tennessee. I was an undergraduate history and English major, as you know. We talked about the history majors floating around this campus. But I did a lot of theater, a lot of theater. And that's probably where I belonged all along. And then I ended up getting a graduate stipend to go to graduate school and speech and theater. So, I did my master's degree there. It was two years, two-year masters. So, non-thesis but I had a sixty hour masters. Then I went to teach at Appalachian State University, taught there for two years, went back to graduate school and started my work on PhD at the University of Georgia.

And—oh gosh, you want a life history. Then I got married in 1975 and we ended up, he took a position at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, we were there for two years and then we became a husband and wife teaching team at Young Harris College in Young Harris, Georgia, and then my life became a soap opera: there's a divorce and then I did something you're never supposed to do; I resigned from a tenured teaching position without a position to go to. And I ended up here in Corvallis because my parents, I guess I caught their attention in my letter of application to them because my parents had been stationed here during World War II, and not at Adair; in the defense of the Pacific.

They had little naval airbases all up and down from the Mexican border to the Canadian line, and they pulled those sailors up and down, Navy airmen, into those airbases. My father went—I told him once I was in Walla Walla with the OSU debate team, actually, my first year here. And he said "oh yeah, we pulled a plane out of the dunes up there somewhere near Walla Walla." And in fact my dad told me later that V-J day was celebrated here and people were drunk in the streets, even though it was dry, dancing in the front of the courthouse. And my mother was with him then, so they spent seven months here. My mother told a story of how they kept saying "the rains are going to come, the rains are going to come," but it was one of those periods that we have every once in a while where the whole time that they were here it was sunny, the seven months they were here.

So yeah, and my mother told stories about how she would go over to Albany to buy—Albany was not dry, and she would buy beer for the sailors, or beer I suppose is what she was buying, I have no idea, because my mother was a teetotaler, so this is, you know. So, I ended up at Oregon State University, that's the job that came through, and I moved across country. And I never thought I would stay, and I didn't buy a house for a long time, because I kept thinking "I'll leave, I'm going

to leave," because the Pacific Northwest can be a cold place. If you're not bonded and in a relationship with somebody it can be a very difficult place to be. I was used to southerners and warm and welcoming and it was the first time in my life that I'd ever lived someplace that it was hard to make friends, and it was, this was an odd place to me. So, even after thirty years here it still doesn't feel like home.

[0:05:39]

MD: Home is the south.

CH: Yeah. Home is home.

MD: That's where your roots are.

CH: Home is where my roots are, yeah, back in Tennessee. Although I came here in 1982, and I'll tell you some funny stories about this place.

MD: Oh, we'll get to those.

CH: Oh, okay. I was just going to keep rambling on, Michael.

MD: No, I'll try to lead you.

CH: So, you have my bio?

MD: Yeah, I'll try to lead you, although it's going to be difficult.

CH: Oh, no.

MD: How about a couple of quick memories about when you were in high school, because that was during a turbulent time in the United States. Were you an activist during the Vietnam War, that type of thing?

CH: No, well Vietnam is more on my radar when I'm at college. I was an exchange student; I was an American field service exchange student, so I spent a summer in Denmark, changed my life when I was sixteen years old. I've never been the same. The Danes are the most civilized people in the world. And I think the seeds for me being in theater were planted in high school, certainly. I was on—I played volleyball. We had Y teams which is—and we played a city tournament and we were the runners up in the city tournament. The late Benno Warkentin of Physics asked me once, I was talking about having problems with my knees or something and he looked straight at me and he said "you play volleyball?" and I went "as a matter of fact," and he said it was—that sport was harder on your body than some of the many others. I didn't know that.

MD: Huh. You could have been a wrestler, I mean it would—

CH: I could have been, I don't know. So, I was academically really good in high school, very active on yearbook staff, all those kinds of things, and I did a little theater in high school. So, I think that got me interested. I started like that in the Christmas pageant playing a clock. So, that—but my activism really, and being against Vietnam and all, it starts really when I'm a senior in college and protesting, carrying signs and protesting and all of that. I was part of, in college, I was on a committee called "Man and his Environment," which was a speaker program. There were two speaker programs and we—and in fact the other speaker program took the university—they sued them because of they wouldn't let a speaker, I can't even remember who it was who wouldn't let him speak on campus, and they sued him.

So, on our program we didn't know what, we thought "well, we'll get around this," so we brought Frank Zappa to campus. I've actually had dinner with Frank Zappa. There are photographs. So, but I was a sorority girl in college, did that, and I commuted. So, I wanted that experience, because I was a computer, to have that whole—computer, a commuter—to have that whole experience of the college experience. And so, I was in a sorority and I'm glad I did that.

MD: What sorority?

CH: I was a Gamma Phi Beta. And I am actually a member of the alumni group here. They don't have a chapter here on campus anymore. They did when I first came to Oregon State. But, so I did a lot of different things. I remember my undergraduate advisor told me, I mean he taught me and he was my advisor and he wouldn't forget me for that reason, but he said he would never forget me because I was the person that came into his office to tell him that Martin Luther King had been assassinated, because we had a speaker coming in that night and it's everything was cancelled, and yeah. So, and Richard, when I directed *The Coming of Rain* here a few years back, that was his play, which he had told me it was adapted from his own novel. It had had its premiere at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. And he told me, before he died, he would be happy for me to direct it, anytime, anyplace. And he had left Tennessee to go run the Expository Writing Program at Harvard. So, as an undergraduate history major, I would just like to put a shout-out for the University of Tennessee's History Program. Every single professor I had in my major either had a PhD from Yale or a PhD from Harvard.

[0:10:35]

MD: Impressive program, yeah.

CH: It's a very impressive program.

MD: As a history major to another, what was your specialty in history?

CH: Well I did, I followed the good teachers, so I have no specialty. I have two—I had a Civil War history class with John Muldowney, I had an African American history course with, I believe the professor was called Redkey. I had two—I had a Russian history class with Dr. Silverman, who went on to become the provost of the University of Colorado, and Dr. Milevski I had Soviet foreign policy, and then I followed Richard Marius. And so, I have a course in Reformation history and a course in Renaissance history.

MD: In essence, what brought historical theater.

CH: And then of course they made all the history majors at the University of Tennessee, you had to take both the Western Civ series and then you had to take the American History Series. So, I had both of those.

MD: Now, I always ask people, there's this idea of the seminal moment that they always remember; Pearl Harbor, you know. How about Kennedy's assassination?

CH: Kennedy, yeah, high school. I remember distinctly being—I was a student assistant in a science class and they came over the loudspeaker and I remember walking out the door of the building and watching the flag being lowered. Yeah. And then of course that spring, that summer I was in Denmark as an exchange student, so that whole, I mean all of us...

MD: That whole period.

CH: That whole period is...yeah. And I remember we were rehearsing a play and we kept on rehearsing the play, but school had been called off, but I remember we went on with the rehearsal, because they figured it was good and we were—I don't even know what play it was, I don't know what we were doing.

MD: But yeah, there's moments that stick in people's psyche. Now, what exactly was your doctoral work on at the University of Georgia?

CH: As the chair of my committee once said to me, "you're an expert on several minor playwrights." Thank you Dr. Staub. I wrote on—you ready for this? Elizabeth Tudor, the historic character, and four centuries of English dramatic literature. You got it? And so, of course—and what I was doing was doing social history, because what I did was take Elizabeth Tudor's life, take one incident from her life, which was her relationship with the Earl of Essex, and doing history. And then I took all these plays that had been written about her relationship with the Earl of Essex and tracked that all the way through to the twentieth century, to the *Elizabeth R* series, and I ended the dissertation with a teleplay from the *Elizabeth R* series.

So, you want academic nightmare stories? Let me tell you this. So, the University of Georgia Theater Department at that time was oh, they were [audio cuts out], which you're not supposed to do, but that's what they were doing, and it wasn't until I took a class in the English Department and one of [audio cuts out] said "do you think our English majors could pass any of those writtens they're making you do over in Theater?" He said "forget it." And it was only the first time I went "oh, it's not me, they really are crazy." And so, I mean up until my divorce I used to say those are the two most miserable years of my life, was the doctoral program at the University of Georgia.

And so, years later when I'm writing the dissertation and I'm teaching at the same time, I'm teaching at Young Harris College, I'm finishing up the dissertation, or trying to, and I went and Dr. Staub took over the program, because they stopped the PhD program for a while because they weren't producing PhDs. You know, makes sense, doesn't it? But they said they will honor you, those of you who are in the program, that you're matriculating. Is that the word? So, Dr. Staub, I met Dr. Staub, he was the new chair of the department taking over and I'm one of those vestigial doctoral students floating out there, and I told him what I was writing on and he looked at me and he said "Charlotte, you know what would have been really interesting? Is if you had written about actresses' portrayals of Elizabeth Tudor." And I looked at him and I said "Dr. Staub, that's what I wanted to do and they wouldn't let me do it. They said I had to do the literature," and he went "okay, you're already started on this, I guess we just go on, yeah" [sighs].

[0:15:34]

Academic nightmare stories, they're out there. Because they were such traditionalists. And Dr. Staub was more cutting edge and saying "oh, this is suitable for a dissertation." It wasn't suitable, because you see Mike, they were into primary sources, so this is classical. They—primary sources is the text itself, the play itself, you can do that. Then I can take the social history, and so you know, this is the world that this came out of. It's mushy, because when you get to do historical interpretations you're depending on all those critics. So, it's not [audio cuts out] even though the critic was there and watched it firsthand, that's changed now. That's changed.

Yeah, and I almost wrote a dissertation on an Irish subject matter in my doctoral work. I was always drawn to the Irish plays. Wrote a huge paper on Dion Boucicault and he was a nineteenth century melodrama writer. His works are still done. In fact, there's one that's a parody of it that's on Broadway right now. Well, off Broadway, called *An Octoroon*. He wrote *The Octoroon*; they're doing something else with it, and they have black actors in whiteface and all kinds of wild stuff they're doing with it. So, I almost wrote a musical, I remember writing a huge paper on John Millington Synge, but I was a budding feminist then and I was interested in Elizabeth Tudor, I had always—and that was the time of that *Elizabeth R* series in the seventies, early seventies. So, that's what I wrote on.

MD: So, you end up coming from—now you were, at these small colleges, you were teaching theater?

CH: Well, you wouldn't call Appalachian State—yeah, I was a speech teacher, but doing theater also at Appalachian State.

MD: Right.

CH: But yeah, I was—

MD: They weren't small colleges? They were—

CH: Appalachian State University's a pretty good size college now and it's really famous for its Folklore Program.

MD: Yeah.

CH: Yeah, so that used to tickle me because ASU would say it was "the highest university east of the Mississippi," which is true, they're up there in the mountains. And then I—yeah, Young Harris is a small school, very small school. But I'd gone to large universities, so coming here is no, you know—yeah, but I was, my ex-husband and I were the teaching team. He was the technical work and I was teaching theater.

MD: Oh, okay. So, you came across the United States. How did you basically get your job here at OSU, and was it kind of an epic thing that you were, in the early eighties?

CH: Well I was, like I said, I resigned from a tenured teaching position without a job to go to, and people now look at me going "that was insane, you're never supposed to do that kind of thing," but I was young and stupid. And it was painful being isolated in the mountains. And it's interesting, I gave up one kind of isolation for a different kind of isolation, that I thought "I'll never heal unless I get out of there," and that was my thinking. So, I'm not sure I ever healed from my divorce. Just sharing that with the camera. But so, I went cross-country and left. It was, I remember getting a phone call from one of my friends who lives in New York City, Michael, said "I knew you wanted to put some distance between you and that man, but this is ridiculous." He said "I've played Portland"—he toured in *The Elephant Man* and he had been to Portland.

MD: So, when you first came here you were—now this was the early eighties.

CH: Yeah, '82.

MD: You were part—the Theater was part of the Speech and Communications Department.

CH: Yeah, that's when I said earlier, we've never been a department.

MD: Yeah, Theater has always been...

CH: Part of Speech Comm.

MD: Part of Speech, yeah.

CH: And now the university's done away with departments, you know that, Mike. So, we don't have departments, we have schools and we're one of the groups in the school. And in fact, that was the first time, I mean I'm sure somebody else will claim this, but I distinctly remember standing up in the committee meeting when they were doing this and saying "can we give Theater its own identity?" I'm sure somebody else will claim that, but I did it. [Whispers] we won't mention names. So, yeah, and I stood up in the meeting and said "can we finally have our own identity?" So, now there are five units in the School of Arts and Communication. So, Theater has its own identity but we're not a department.

[0:20:41]

MD: Not a department.

CH: Never have been a department.

MD: And it's never been a degree-granting...

CH: Well, this is, we're still subsumed in Speech Comm and we have our own degree which is an option under Communication. So, when I said you make up your own résumé, you've got a theater degree.

MD: Yeah. So, you were one of the first women to be part of the department—or the theater here when you first got here, and there's some stories around that.

CH: Oh, there are stories around that. When they first hired me I had students come up to me, women students, come up to me "oh, they hired a woman, they've hired a woman!" and I'm going "yeah..." You know, it was just sort of a little odd, but it's not odd, in another way. And Alice Wallace, Rick Wallace's mother, had been on the faculty here at OSU, and there are great stories told about Alice, and she and her husband Stan were huge supporters, and I've got a funny story to tell you about the chairs. And Rick of course went on, did a theater degree and went on to run the high school theater program for years and years and years, and Rick has come back and acted for us.

So, Alice came up to me one night after a performance and said "you are the first woman on the faculty to direct and teach theater since Miss Elizabeth Barnes was here in the thirties, the twenties and the thirties." And some of our historic photographs that we have are from Miss Barnes's productions of outdoor Shakespeare. So, when Scott Palmer was doing in 2006, yeah, was doing *Romeo and Juliet*, he said "for the first time in OSU history we're going to do"—and I went "no, Scott, no. Miss Barnes was doing it." And I know this history because I was a history major, I love it, I still teach theater

history, so and I feel—you know, when I got here they had all these wonderful photographs that they had taken, huge format. Was there anything on the back of them of what the photograph was? So, I went around to Alex Wallace, C.V. Bennett and Richard George and said "what is this?"

Now, some things I could identify just from being a theater history person, but they could say "oh, this was such and such done in such a year," so I just wrote this stuff on the back of all these photographs. My handwriting's still on those photographs. Because nobody had done it. But I was the—so Miss Barnes was there and so I'm here. They had a box office manager who was a woman, Alice Crossick, and they said—and we had this system whereby we assigned a faculty member every night to the run of the show. There was—the director got to be there as director but then we'd assigned somebody else to be there every night. Well, you were in charge of putting the money in; sometimes you had to know where the safe was. I'm telling you now, the safe was located—they took me down to show me the safe, and this is in the Mitchell Playhouse, the safe was located off the downstairs men's restroom in the janitor's closet. When they showed this to me I looked at them and I said "it was never— Cortright, D. Palmer Young—it was just never on the radar that they would ever hire a woman." You know, it was a different time. And so that was, when they made the Mitchell Playhouse in 1950, '51, right around in there, that just wasn't on the radar.

MD: Yeah.

CH: Yeah, so that's the men's restroom. And yes, I will tell this story: I once went down there to put the money in, somebody was being leaked [?]. I heard the voices, I recognized who it was. John Owen went to his grave not knowing that I'd listened to the conversation, because I recognized his British accent, as I'm sitting there frozen in the janitor's closet on the floor waiting to put the money in and waiting for the telltale sounds of water to stop running. I've told that to Harriet, I told that to his daughter. I don't know that Rosemary knows that story. But yeah, so...

[0:25:13]

MD: So, your early duties here were theater classes and then—

CH: I was a director.

MD: Then you started directing, right off, or?

CH: Right off.

MD: Oh, that's something itself.

CH: They offered me two different productions that fall. They were doing a studio production in the Lab Theatre, they were doing *The Real Inspector Hound*. Well I had just—that was the last show that I had done at Young Harris College and I said, you know, so then they gave me the mainstage show. Sight unseen, they let me do it. And I'll never forget, there was somebody in the community who occasionally directed, who came in, wandered into my rehearsal one night and was watching the rehearsal and he went "well, it's good," and I looked at him and I said "yes, I am good." But those students, they were so funny because they didn't quite trust me, and it wasn't until—and it was this really wonderful production of *Arsenic and Old Lace* that we did, and it wasn't until they heard the uproarious laughter that it was like "oh, she really does know what she's doing, and she told us to do it this way."

MD: All part of being the director, having the vision.

CH: Yeah. But you know, I was the new kid on the block, and so—

MD: So, were there any memorable students? Now I know that I recently interviewed Lynne Clendenin, who is the administrator at Oregon Public Broadcasting, and she was in *The Crucible* and *Our Town*, I believe.

CH: I don't know about *Our Town*. She was in *Hair*. She was in *Hair* for me. Lynne was in my acting classes, and I don't know what her memory is but I remember them trying—we got the word that they were looking for, they were looking for a woman of color to be a broadcaster. I mean it's that—and I think I may have told Lynne, or somebody, "go apply for

this." So, she got it and she started it here—it makes me angry at OPB, I want them when they do all the stations to say "and our founding station, KOAC." We should tell them to do that, you know. Give credit.

MD: We discussed that, yeah. And how about Gray Eubanks?

CH: And Gray went on, and of course I—is Lynne still married to David Christensen?

MD: Yes.

CH: So, Lynne and—that David was our student and David's with Oregon Public Broadcasting, Laura Faye Smith was our—these were all students that actually worked in the Mitchell Playhouse, and David was one of my first actors. And I think the first year I was here, really early on. And I'm trying—I'm just—Laura Faye Smith is doing really well. That production of *Hair* that Lynne was in, Sheila Daniels was one of the preeminent directors in Seattle Washington. We got Sheila back to direct in 2011 the Bard on the Quad. Probably Michael Lowry, this is Sheila's time dating from, I think we did *Hair* in 1998, spring of '98. But Sheila, and she was in school with Mike Lowry; Mike Lowry went on to have a great career in the soaps, and Mike is now, he went to back to school at UCLA, got a law degree, and he passed the bar in New York state and he's passed the bar in Oregon. So, he's here right now. Mike's here right now practicing law in Albany, but he's only here for a few months and he's still acting and doing work. So, if you wanted to get in contact, he's here through May I think, if you wanted to do that.

But probably the most visible person, well it depends on if you want television or not, is Julyana Soelistyo. Julyana was our student here, she just...where is she, she's acting in a production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at one of the—and she said "can you come see it? This is a great production." I can send you the email. She was nominated in 1998 for her work in David Henry Hwang's *The Golden Child*. She was nominated for the Best Supporting Actress Tony Award.

MD: Oh, yeah.

[0:30:00]

CH: And she also, that year, she won the Clarence Derwent award for the Most Outstanding Broadway Debut.

MD: So, we have theater alumni here that have made it [inaudible].

CH: Yeah, and then of course there's Roosevelt.

MD: And Roo Credit.

CH: And Roo, I worked with Roo in the opera workshops, so that's how I worked with Roo, because I volunteered my services to work with the opera workshop with Katherine Olsen. So, did that as a service. And so, Roosevelt has done, and Julyana's done, work in London at the Young Vic, so she was over there doing a production. And probably one of the most prestigious things she did was—well for us, and there's an article in *Terra* on her. Not *Terra* but the alum—the *Oregon Stater*. Julyana was handpicked by Christopher Plummer and Des McAnuff to play Ariel to his, to Plummer's Prospero at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival at Stratford Canada, but it's that point that Julyana first played Ariel here at OSU with me, and that was 1989, I think, when she did that, because we...'88, '89, yeah, '89 was *The Tempest* in the Mitchell Playhouse, because the building has closed in the Fall of 1991. No, the fall of 1990. You're going to ask me to—

MD: Well, let's—we're going to worry about—

CH: I'm in the ballpark.

MD: I can find the dates. But yeah, let's talk about those final days at the Mitchell Playhouse.

CH: I wasn't here. I had gone, my first sabbatical was in the fall of 1990 and I left and I decided to call Gray back ; Gray was still—I was on the faculty and I just called Gray to see how things were going, just called him out of the clear blue, couple months after I'd left, and he says "nobody's told you what happened?" and I said "what do you mean what happened?" and he said "they closed the Mitchell Playhouse because it's a fire hazard." It was safe for a bunch of

gymnasts to be there, it's safe for people because—but not for—the Mitchell Playhouse seated like 550 or something, 600, I'm not sure about that, because it had a balcony, it had all of this. And they told me, I remember when I first came here, Alex Wallace saying something like—and Alex, you should interview Alex, Alex is in Portland. None of those people are getting—none of us are getting any younger, Mike. Alex saying to me "if we ever have a fire, the fire engines will arrive and they'll watch her burn." And it's now one of the oldest buildings on campus.

MD: Yeah I know, it was built in 1898, it was originally the women's gym and the armory and—

CH: It was the armory, women's gym, and this is, do you hear this? We'll see if I'm rolling over in my grave and this doesn't happen: I don't want a big party for retirement or anything like that, I want a damn plaque giving the history of that building. George Edmonston and I had it ready to go and then we started going through official guidelines. John Byrne, president emeritus of the university, he said to me "Charlotte, you should have just done it."

But we didn't and it's not happened. We have the text, we have everything, because someday, from the dates that the Mitchell Playhouse existed, from that building existed until it was converted into the Valley Gymnastic Facility, for over forty years it was a theater, and nobody knows that. They walk by the building; we're not good on this campus of documenting our history, and that history should be documented. It was the Horner Museum, it was the armory, it was the first women's basketball game took place there, I think in the Pacific Northwest, took place in that facility, and then for over forty years it was a theater.

MD: Yeah, and it's one of the most iconic buildings on campus, and it's my passion to do just that, to carry on your dream there.

CH: We have—I'll send you the blurb, Mike. Just remind me, so you can have it, because George and I hammered that out.

MD: How we doing on time?

CH: We're doing fine.

MD: Good. How about any other techie-type stories about your time directing shows in the Mitchell Playhouse.

CH: Well, I've heard stories about the Mitchell, these are the stories that I inherited that, I cannot remember his name, but there's stories told about somebody being up in the grid walking and went through boards and was sort of stuck there. They tell the story and George—I mean I think it's Bennett, C.V. Bennett or Alex could tell you stories about pre my time. We're going to be doing *Midsummer Night's Dream* this summer for the Bard in the Quad, and it's like fifth or sixth time that play's been done at OSU, and with one production in the late sixties or early seventies, they tell this story they had to—we had a trap in that theater, and it was proscenium arch theater, with a flywheel, and we could fly scenery and all of that. We can't do it. We have a thrusty - can't do that. They talk about one of the fairies in *Midsummer Night's Dream* sort of losing his balance and sort of falling into the trap. I mean, there's stories. The building was haunted.

[0:35:38]

MD: Yep.

CH: We had a janitor who once left—I wish I had saved that note—we had a janitor who left a note—I should say "custodian"—left a note on the janitor's closet downstairs saying "I don't believe in ghosts, but this place really scares me." Came in and there it was on the door. And our Lab Theatre at that time was in Education Hall. It was downstairs. It was called the Cortright Studio Theater, named after Cortright, and we didn't give it up until they built us a new lab theater. We held onto the space, and they wanted it for a computer space.

MD: So, did they end up moving over here to Withycombe while you were gone, or did you have something to do with the actual—

CH: Oh no, no. No, I was gone. And so, as Richard George used to say, any other sensible program would have shut down for a year while we figured out what to do, but oh no, the University Theatre went on the road. I wasn't here. They

did—I came back because I was staging *Amahl and the Night Visitors* for the opera workshop. We did that at the Majestic. I came back and they'd used the small, the Engineering auditorium at LaSells for—they did a production of *Private Lives*. So, they'd used that space for *Private Lives* and I was gone for the rest but they went on the road for...they did a production of—they did two productions, I think, at the Majestic, used the Majestic, and then the third production, I think they did a production of *The Misanthrope* in the lab theater, which would have been normally mainstage productions. That was the solution that they did. They took it on the road.

And then while that was happening they looked around and said "what building, what can we do, where can we put the University Theatre?" This was the University Theatre's—the dairy, not the university's, but the dairy for the university. It had been derelict and closed-down for I don't know how many years, and they said "let's put it in the dairy." So, the architects came in and put a theater into this space. And we hauled these chairs over from Mitchell Playhouse and installed them here. And I guess two, three years ago, I'd have to look back at this, Ed Ray had sent out this notice saying that they were doing new renovations, and they made this a real smart classroom, this classroom down the hall up there, and they were getting new seats and everything and I wrote back and I said "well if you're doing new seats, why don't you think of the University Theatre?"

MD: Yeah.

CH: Just push it. He came up to me that spring, we're at an event at LaSells, he came up and he said "you're going to get your chairs." So, we've got our beautiful chairs, our beautiful new chairs. And Rick Wallace said "I can't believe it. I've been sitting in those old Mitchell Playhouse chairs since I was a kid being dragged, and they're uncomfortable." And it's like yeah, so finally we got new chairs. I said "don't you think we've used these chairs for over fifty years, that can't we have new chairs?"

MD: So, the theater facility here at Withycombe is adequate.

CH: Adequate. It's limited to be—

MD: You have to, just like every other theater, you have to work around what you have.

CH: Yeah, it's a thrust stage, the Music Department—they're not a department now either, but Music does not like this space, they don't like the acoustics and they don't like it that we don't have a pit, so we have to be creative, and so we're doing—we're going to do *Kiss Me Kate* next year, it may be my swan song, and that's...yeah. So, we have to come up with creative ways, and we've done Gilbert and Sullivan in the summers and kept creative ways to do it, but it about killed us to do that opera for them when we went down to the Majestic. And it was hard. It wasn't our space. But they had a pit.

MD: Yeah, the pit is a big thing now. Technically though, the lighting and the—our techie equipment is fairly up to date?

[0:40:06]

CH: Oh, George has done a miraculous job. He's just a brilliant designer, I think, in what he's done, and yeah. I don't know, you'd have to talk to George to see if it's up to date, what we have, because it's expensive, lighting a theater program. But we don't fly scenery, so we don't have a fly—we don't have a pit, we don't have fly scenery, so we have to come up with creative ways to do things.

MD: Well, that's just part of theater.

CH: That's part of theater, yeah.

MD: Now, one of the things that I always like to kind of ask people is what's your one reminiscence, memory that stuck with you about this place for the thirty years that you've been here? Is there one thing that is just it?

CH: ...This got back to me once, that Richard George had said this about me, something to the effect of "she doesn't do bad theater. She's never had a bad show." I don't know—he didn't say it directly. It wouldn't have been Richard's way to say it directly to me, although my first year of teaching here we were walking across and he had seen the production, the scene that I'd done, *Lone Star* and *Laundry and Bourbon*, and he said to me, he was walking across, he looked at me and

he said "John Rosche's portrayal of that role is probably one of the finest undergraduate acting performances I've ever seen." And I sort of stopped dead in my tracks. So, he was walking and he just started [mumbles].

And gosh, there's so many moments from so many of the productions that—when we did *Equus* Richard designed the set where Harry McCormack said we were pulling the universe down into the set, because it looked like Stonehenge and there's all—and then we had the sort of wrestling, the fighting arena in the middle. And Richard designed that and designed the heads and the feet for the horses. And we really tried to protect our young—well, Matthew Owen, John Owen's son, is back in London teaching, and Beth Peterson, who played the role in the play, Beth teaches theater at Everett Community College—so, we know where many of these people are—that was an incred—you know, I wasn't even tenured when we did that, and so risky with the nudity in it, but you know. I also was at a cocktail party here in Corvallis and I had a woman come up to me; "other professors don't have this happen to them." I had a woman come up to me and say "I just think what you did with the nudity in *Equus* was awful." And you have to take a breath and say "well, I disagree with you," and walk off. History professors don't have that happen to them.

MD: [Laughs] yeah.

CH: English professors don't have that happen to them. And because you do theater and art and it's going to enrage some people, even though we had disclaimers on all the publicity.

MD: That never works. It's a badge of courage, I mean...

CH: And that, and I had somebody stand in my office door and yell at me once, because we had done Studs Terkel's *Working*, the musical that's based on working, and there is a song called "Mother Truckers."

MD: Yeah.

CH: Yeah, it uses the word "fucking," and I'm going to say it, and this man stood in the door and yelled at me for using that language, and we had it, you know, but so yeah just...which is so, is making—the other people, I'm sure, don't have stories to tell like that.

MD: Well, we kind of push the edge a little bit here at the University Theatre, though.

CH: That's what a University Theatre should do.

MD: Yeah.

CH: That's what we should do. And we're not going—I know how active you are in Albany Civic Theater, but it just irritates me sometimes. I don't know how many costumes we've given to *Les Mis* at the Corvallis Community Theatre, and we lend to everybody. We support, we do all of this, and I just want to scream, you know; we're the maiden ship in the fleet, the lead ship in the fleet and it irritates me sometimes when people don't give us our due, of how much we help and we support, and it's like I pointed out on more than one occasion: light board went out on the Majestic, I've been here thirty years, I remember these things. We hauled the light board down so that their show could go on, did it for Albany Civic Theater, too.

[0:45:28]

MD: Mhmm, I think so.

CH: Oh, don't think; we did.

MD: I remember something about that, yeah.

CH: So, we have helped and helped and helped and people just don't, you know. Come on folks, we're the professionals over here.

MD: Yeah, well it's, you know, theater has to be a community, especially when you talk about your civic theaters.

CH: I mean the Shakespeare that I've done, those have been wonderful experiences. I just, you know, when you live with a play for six, seven, eight weeks or however long you're living with it, you live with it longer than that because you're doing research on it at—I mean directing *The Laramie Project* was an incredible experience. I—there's just I can go through and say "oh, that was a wonderful moment, that was a wonderful moment," and the University Theatre has been very good to me in letting me do Irish theater. Although; I gave an academic paper a couple years ago at the American Conference for Irish Studies, West. We were meeting in Utah, and I did my paper on the history of Irish theater here at OSU. I don't know if you were around when I was digging through the archives.

MD: That's—I've found you some stuff.

CH: Yeah, and I said that at that time in the paper; I talked about how, oh, I said "oh, I'm doing Irish theater, I'm bringing the Irish theater to OSU." Well, wrong; someone was doing Irish theater on this campus from the earliest days. They were doing Anglo-Irish theater; they were doing Sheridan and they were doing Goldsmith, and then they started—they did a *Riders to the Sea* in the 1920s, seeing he'd only written it like at the turn of the century. So, somebody was doing sort of cutting-edge and really interesting stuff. So, I tracked that, the whole history here of Irish drama here at OSU. I mean, I've been proud of my work that I've done here, and the students that I've trained. I think I stopped teaching acting, and things change and I took over teaching the theater history classes, but I think I still teach as much about acting when I'm directing.

MD: Well yeah, that's...

CH: Because I'm a teacher, and I, it's like having a class, an acting class.

MD: Well, a good director does.

CH: Yeah, well I hope so.

MD: Yeah, that's the thing. So, do you actually have a count of how many productions that you've been involved with since 1982 here? Or is that something that you didn't keep track of?

CH: I...we would have to go through my résumé. Is counting opera workshops, counting Readers' Theater productions, counting...thirty two years, Mike, and I of course, I guest-directed and there were some years I was doing three or four plays a year because I was a guest director and I was on sabbatical. It wasn't happening here at OSU. I would say I'm going to do, just off the top of my head, I'd say it's anywhere from seventy to a hundred theater pieces, readings and things like that. I'm just doing that off the top of my head.

MD: Yeah, people think of authors having a body of work, but I mean it's a person that's within the theater community, there's a whole different meaning to a body of work.

CH: And theater is the most ephemeral of the arts. We do have DVDs of some of the public domain things that we could, like I was noticing we have a public domain—well, we have a DVD of the production of *Playboy of the Western World* that I did in 2007 that belongs to the people of Shakespeare, belongs to the people. So, we have DVDs of some of those that have been made. I've done a lot of work. And because, I think I believe in the power of theater to be a—to reach out, to touch people and change lives, but theater is about everything. As you know, it's about everything. So, as I tell my students, you come into this Multicultural American Theater class, it's a DPD class for the bacc core; we will find a play. We will find a play about your major that you're interested in. You're an engineer; there are plays about engineers. As I point out to everybody about the film *The Imitation Game*, there's a play long before that.

[0:50:21]

MD: Yeah.

CH: It's called *Breaking the Code*. That play is twenty-five years old probably, so there was a play. We do it in the theater first, that's been the truism, and then the film people come along; "oh, well maybe we'll make a film with that." So, a few years back I had a Sports Science student who had ended up in my writing-intensive theater history class, which is what I'm teaching this term at spring term, because he had not taken his writing intensive in Sports Science, so they just put him

in to any writing intensive class. He had no theater background, he didn't know what he was doing and I looked at him and I said "okay, you love sports, I'll find you a play about sports." So, he did *That Championship Season*, which happened to have a Broadway production going on at the same time. So, he could do that as his major project for the theater history class, and about Jason Miller and, yeah.

MD: And he'll be forever changed.

CH: Yeah.

MD: I think so.

CH: You know I could have, I think particularly he could have done *Take Me Out*, which is about the baseball player coming out, professional baseball. There's several plays about sports. They just had, I don't think it was very well received on Broadway, but they had that legendary football coach, what was his name? From Minnesota I think or something. They had a play about him on Broadway.

MD: Who, Rockne?

CH: No.

MD: No, it was after him, yeah.

CH: It was a coach.

MD: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CH: And the name's just not as—I tell you, it's escaping me. Very famous coach.

MD: Well one of the things also, I know we're looking at your entire career; you're kind of emeritus-lite, is your research in publications that you've been involved with over the years, and one thing that keeps coming up is your interest in Irish theater, as well as women Irish playwrights.

CH: Yeah.

MD: Now, where does that come from?

CH: Well, I wrote my dissertation on Elizabeth Tudor, remember? So, that's the interest in women. I've had that for a long, long time, and reclaiming history that has been submerged, and it was there, and it wasn't recognized and celebrated. So, I sort of took the torch of reading these plays by Irish women—well southern women even before then—reading these plays about Irish women and going "these are terrific plays and people aren't celebrating them." So, I've probably—Mike, I'm going to say this: there's probably not another director on the university level who has done more Irish theater than I have in the country. I have no way to back that up, it's just a feeling that I have that nobody's done it, because—so I'm not from an English department who's writing about things academically. We're in theater; we do it. So, we've done several American premieres here at Oregon State, university-level American premieres, collegiate premieres of new Irish plays, particularly by women. And I direct them across the country.

MD: Now, the history of Irish female playwrights, does that go back prior to the turn of the century, or is this kind of a twentieth century thing?

CH: Mhmm, we got to reclaim it. Well, we'd like to talk about Frances Sheridan from the eighteenth century. Her son is Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and we talk about Frances Sheridan is maybe the first woman playwright, Irish woman playwright, and that's 1700s. So, but there are—you find them in the—not in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, not so much, although there are a few, but really starting in the twentieth century there's a lot.

MD: Yeah.

CH: Celebrating—would you like to see the list of 150?

MD: Yeah, I'd love that.

CH: I just did a paper week before last at the American Conference for Irish Studies National Meeting and I talked about reclaiming some of these women, these women playwrights, and of course that led to the book. And you see, we direct, my coeditor and I, we direct plays. Doing a book is sort of unusual. But we did it.

[0:55:15]

MD: Yeah, let's talk more about the book, that's just now available.

CH: Yep. Came out in November. They tell me I have a royalty check somewhere.

MD: Oh.

CH: I'm like "a royalty check?" Not much, but—

MD: You might be able to buy a cup of coffee, yeah.

CH: Yeah, buy a cup of coffee. Well, Eileen has received hers, I don't know where mine is, so I've got to go through the mail that came while I was at this conference.

MD: But tell us more about the book.

CH: Well, it's an anthology of Irish women dramatists, and I inherited the project. The two writers, editors of the project were Dr. Kathleen Quinn, who now lives in Belfast, and Dr. Eileen Kearney, who has just been here on campus being our dialect coach for *Dolly West's Kitchen*. And Eileen and Kathleen started this book and researching this book sometime in the late eighties. And Kathleen was on the faculty at Southern Oregon. She went on sabbatical to Belfast, fell in love with Belfast. She could get her Irish citizenship through her grandfather, sold everything in Ashland and moved to Belfast. So, when she did that she said "I'm through with this book, you can have it." So, that was sometime in the nineties, late nineties. And that's when they brought me on board, and Kathleen moved off and then I—and of course I knew Eileen, I've known Eileen forever, because she—her PhD's from the University of Oregon.

So, Eileen and I slowly but steadily chipped away and chipped away, got the book contract with Syracuse University Press. It was a huge learning curve. And Eileen tells a story when Syracuse sent her her books, her free books. They were very generous; they sent us each ten copies. They sent her her free books, they landed on her doorstep in Denver and she burst into tears, because it'd been so long. We're still drinking champagne to celebrate.

MD: So, with all this research and this time spent with this, what's made your—I mean I think I know, but what's your main theory and conclusion that you've come up with based on this body of research about Irish women playwrights?

CH: Well, I don't know that—it's not only for Irish, but it's the situation's also true in New York and the United States, is that so often men are running the companies, and it's just a truism; they were running the Abbey, they were running—and we'd talk about the lost woman of the Abbey, Teresa Deevy, who we did her American premiere of *The King of Spain's Daughter* last year. I couldn't believe that this wonderful play from the 1930s had never been done in this country. But her executrix tells me, which is her great niece, said "no, never been done." We did the first production last year. And it's a jewel. It's a jewel. There had been a reading in New York City, but not a full production.

So, Teresa Deevy, this is an example; her plays, she had six plays produced at the Abbey, then all the sudden they just stopped producing her plays. The personnel had changed in management and they just weren't going to produce, because she writes women who are really feisty and not being homebodies and she writes complicated characters. So, yeah.

MD: And during that period, yeah that was...

CH: The thirties. Well, as I quote Maeve Binchy, wrote that in the twenties and thirties Ireland was a living hell for women—I'm paraphrasing her—and that a woman who raised her head above the parapet was a woman who would

not win. You know, if you got married you had to give up your profession in the civil services, you couldn't teach, you couldn't, yeah. So, there's a whole legacy there.

MD: So, I know that you would be too humble to talk about these things, but throughout your career you've received numerous awards, and—

CH: I love this, [looks into camera] do you notice how he prefaces this? "Oh, you're going to be too humble," and then he asks me that.

MD: Yeah. The—you know, like I said, the university here has recognized you on multiple occasions. In '94 you were the Elizabeth P. Ritchie Award for Outstanding Professor for Undergraduate Teaching.

CH: I think they say—

MD: Which that's a neat one, because that's the teacher's award.

CH: That's a teacher's award. I'm in the library, I'm on a plaque that's, I think they say, she's a Distinguished Professor of Undergraduate Teaching. So, I am one of—I was for that year, yeah, and sometimes I sign my letters "A Distinguished Professor." So yeah, that was always one, yeah.

[1:00:21]

MD: And in 2003 you were part of the College of Liberal Arts, recognized as one of the Teaching Excellence Award, something—

CH: The Teaching Ex—it was called just the Excellence Award, and the college gave it, and Bill Wilkins had created that award and he was determined that it would be the highest monetary gift an award given in the university, and it was. They don't do it anymore, but I was a recipient of that. And I'm proud that, since Warren Hovland just died, I was the recipient of the Warren Hovland Service Award. So, I've got a Master Teacher, yeah.

MD: People love you, and so I mean that's the—

CH: I don't know, not at—

MD: I mean it's not unusual that—

CH: Michael, you're very kind. Not everybody loves me.

MD: Well.

CH: So, no.

MD: But now also you've also been recognized on a national basis within the community as well. The Kennedy Center Medallion for outstanding service to the Kennedy Center/American College of Theatre Festival?

CH: That's right, yeah.

MD: Now, what is that about?

CH: They give, the American College Theater Festival, I was the first woman to head the American College Theater Festival for this region, the Northwest, Northern California and Alaska, first woman who led the—to chair that organization, and I was awarded the Kennedy Center Medallion in, I want to say '92, I'm not sure. George called, well my colleague has been awarded it, and this, I'll tell you with how the times change. So, I was awarded that in '92, nobody made a big deal about it, there was nothing in the newspaper. So, when George got it, I made sure there was an article written. He was on the front page of the *Barometer*. Never happened for me, but that's, again, I think that's a sad thing in academia, is that people don't celebrate. And it was a different time in the nineties, and you know, who knows, but there was nobody there to celebrate me. So I said, not everybody loves me.

MD: Well, that and this, the University Theatre being this little corner of, you know, probably was a huge agricultural award that makes the-

CH: Yeah, so.

MD: But also you have been involved with national theater organizations. Actually a past president of the American Conference for Irish Studies?

CH: Yeah, I'm a past president for the western region of the American Conference for Irish Studies. So, there are four or five regions that are part of the national organization. I was the—on the national level I was the arts representative for that organization, and just that's where I was just week before last, giving a paper.

MD: Yeah, so that is Irish Studies overall and then you were part of that, or?

CH: I used to do—well yeah, because it's Irish Studies, so it's that—it's an organization. There's literature, there's history, there's anthropologists, there's folklorists, we get music people in, we've had art people in, and then there's about a handful of us that are, as I point out, the real theater people that—or directors. So, but it's mostly—so that's that organization. I've also been active in the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures, and I stopped doing—well I ran the American College Theater Festival. For years I was there and involved in that and committed my life to it, and then I realized my heart was with Irish studies, so I started doing it. And frankly I'll say—and I don't do the national theater conferences anymore, because I just find that the Irish studies conferences feed me in a different way. Frankly, I don't want to be in the same room with a thousand theater people.

MD: [Laughs] I can imagine that, yeah.

CH: You know, so it's just different to be with the Irish Studies Conference.

MD: Well, one of the things I found interesting was that you were also, back in 2013, a Visiting Fellow; a Moore Visiting Fellow at the National University of Ireland.

CH: Galway.

MD: Yes.

CH: Yes, it was.

MD: And so, what's your memories of that experience?

CH: Oh, that was great. I had seven weeks in Galway and I—the Moore fellowships are written for people to apply, and I applied and got one. I was on sabbatical and I was working with—well it all connects. On my sabbatical in 1999, I directed *Eclipsed* by Patricia Burke Brogan at Western Kentucky University, and then we went on to Indiana University to do a performance, but it connects. So, Rick Wallace decides he wants to challenge his students, so they did a production of *Eclipsed*, and one of our former OSU students in Salem did a production of *Eclipsed*. He was a high school teacher. And so, that's the play about the Magdalene laundries.

[1:05:49]

And so, I got—Patricia Burke Brogan says that I have a special place in her heart because I was the first academic to show an interest in the work, and that was in 1999. I went to Galway, I interviewed her, because I was going to direct this play in Kentucky on sabbatical. And so, in the book, for the first time ever, that play is anthologized. *Eclipsed* is in the book. It's one of—so, of the seven plays in the book I've directed four of them. Yeah, three or four of them. At least three. So, I've done *Heritage*, *Eclipsed* and *Twinkletoes*. So, those are plays that—*Twinkletoes*, we did the American premiere of that play here at Oregon State University, then we took it to—I did another production of it the last year and took it to Tacoma, to the western conference that was meeting in Tacoma. And so, we did the play there. It's a one-person play. *Heritage* I directed at the University of Central Oklahoma, on sabbatical in 2006.

But so my work, and then you—no, I bring this all back into the classroom. I just, Eileen went into our classroom to theater history yesterday because, for whatever reason, the theater history text that I'm using doesn't even mention the Abbey Theatre. Not a huge oversight. One of the important historical theaters. And doesn't mention Lady Gregory. So, they're going to get it in a different way, so we talked about the Abbey and the importance of that theater, but they have an abysmal record of producing plays by women [whispers] I might add. So, I don't know, I've lost the loop, is that answering the question?

MD: Yes.

CH: And so, I was a Moore Visiting Fellow at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

MD: You have an affinity for that part of Ireland, or?

CH: Well no, I mean—

MD: Or just Ireland in general, yeah.

CH: Because—well Patricia's there. Patricia Burke Brogan's there. And so, that was my project, was working with her. We're trying to write a production history of how many—this play's been done and translated in five, six, seven languages, it's been done all over the world, and she is just an amazing woman, and I feel privileged to know her. And she really blew the lid off of the Magdalene laundries. See, there was a play long before Peter Mullan did the film *The Magdalene Sisters*. Long before he did that.

MD: So, as you're—we've got thirty-two years, do you think you'll ever let it go, or is theater in your blood so much that you're going to be in some form ever involved?

CH: Well, I'm going to retire, but I think I'll still freelance direct, and I can't imagine- I've got a lot to share, I've still got a lot to do. But I'm not as driven as I once was. And do you know what I'm doing this spring, Mike?

MD: I've seen it and I've got it written. You're—

CH: I'm acting.

MD: You're onstage.

CH: I'm onstage.

MD: You've been onstage many times, but you're onstage in a big way for this particular theater production, because they brought a director to direct it so you can be onstage.

CH: I wrote the grant, yeah, to get her in to direct so I could do it, because, well this goes back to the dramatist. Last June I was in Dublin at—every four years the American Conference for Irish Studies meets internationally, and we meet with Canadian Association for Irish Studies, so we meet. So, we met in Dublin. We meet internationally, we meet, we go to Ireland, that's what we do. So, we're in Dublin. And I had corresponded with Frank McGuinness, I had directed his *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*. I don't always do women playwrights. So, I had guest-directed that—that's a play about World War I, it's a great play--at Berry College on my 2006 sabbatical, and directed this play at Berry, so I corresponded with Frank McGuinness and his, *the* scholar of his work is Helen Lojeck, who is retired from Boise State.

[1:10:28]

So, this summer in Dublin, Helen's there in Dublin and she's with—Frank is one of the keynote speakers for this conference. So, she introduces me to Frank, so I finally get to meet him. So, I said "well, I'm slated to direct your play next spring at Oregon State, Frank. Do you have any advice for me as the playwright?" and he goes "get a good Rima." Helen's sitting there and Helen looks at me and goes "get another director, you play Rima." So, it didn't come from me, sort of, but she planted the seed. And we were trying to get one of—you asked about students, Justin Martin is in New

York City right now working with three Broadway productions that have come over from London; David Hare's *Skylight*, *The Audience* with Helen Mirren, and I think he just finished up with *Let the Right One In*, directed by John Tiffany. Both of those are Tony Award winning directors.

Justin managed the *Billy Elliot* productions that were running in New York and the two touring companies, including the one that came to Portland. Justin's going to be famous. And he was our student here at Oregon State; he was an exchange student from—international student, as they call them now—from Australia. And we were trying to get Justin in to direct and to do this. We'll, he's going with Helen Mirren to shoot—you heard it first from me—to shoot the television series of *The Audience* that they're going to make for—yeah. So, he can't come. And so, we knew he couldn't come, so then I started seeing if we could change, because I had a grant to be bring him over, I—you know, lucky that I can hold out my hand and get some feedback that way. So, I asked Susie Brubaker-Cole if we could use the money for a different director and she said yes. So, we've got Jade McCutcheon, who's an Australian director who lives here now in Corvallis. Yep, so I'm playing Rima.

MD: You'll be onstage.

CH: She's a...as Rima said, she's "a bad bitch." She's quite a character. She's outrageous, and I'm having a good time. But you know, it's working the brain cells, trying to memorize lines.

MD: Yeah, following a rehearsal schedule, yeah.

CH: Yeah. In 1994 I joined Actors' Equity, so that's why I don't go off and do things for the community theater anymore.

MD: Right, right. Well, we have kind of covered thirty-two years of theater devotion and your service to Oregon State, and one of the things that I always ask people at this one spot every time: what's the one thing that you would say to the Beaver Nation, those who are going to be watching these oral histories for the sesquicentennial—

CH: So, does this mean that you're cutting out my nasty word I said earlier? [Laughs].

MD: No, no. I love those, yeah.

CH: Okay, say to them, well the arts are alive and well at Oregon State University, but they need to remember, we all need to remember, that unless you have a thriving arts program, particularly theater, at a university, you will never have a great university. And I would like to remind you that Ed Ray has a theater minor. Some of you may not know that. So, you asked me to speak to Beaver Nation, so.

MD: That is exactly what we wanted to hear. It's been an honor.

CH: Oh. And Ed has been really supportive of us, and he's very, been supportive of me personally.

MD: Well, we're interviewing him at the end of the school year. So, he's going to be part of our project—

CH: Oh, did you—I'll tell you the story about, this was about two years ago; the Mask and Dagger club, which is one of the oldest organizations on campus, the Mask and Dagger did what they called sonnet-o-grams. So, they would send the students out, you buy the sonnet and they would go do the sonnet. So, I bought one for President Ray. So, Davy Koshuba goes up, does his sonnet, Ed Ray says "sit down." So, Ed does a sonnet back to him. That's my man, yeah. So, isn't that a great story?

[1:15:13]

MD: Well, it's good to have a university president that's supportive of you know, a little corner of this university. It means so much to so many people.

CH: Well, it should mean more to more people, and I'm just appalled at the number of English majors who come through this university and never set foot in the University Theatre. I don't understand what's wrong with them. It's part of your education, this is dramatic literature that we're making it from the page to the stage; it's drama turned into theater, that

we do this. And we've had a great year. We've been doing, we did this year's theme, was "War and Remembrance," so we've done all great war—we did *Mother Courage*, then we did a wonderful production of *Diary of Anne Frank*, a vet play called *Strange Snow*, and now this is a play about World War II and Irish neutrality, but it's got all kinds of threads in it. There are two American G.I.s in the play, there's a British soldier, and always the specter of World War II is behind this family drama.

MD: Oh, I'm really looking forward to this one.

CH: I hope so, yeah. It's a good play. And next year we're doing an all Shakespeare season. So, hence *Kiss Me Kate* in the winter, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* in the spring, and in the fall *Romeo and Juliet*. And there will be probably another—there'll be a student-directed lab production that is based on Shakespeare. In fact, I'm trying to get—I don't know if Paul Kopperman is going to be able to do it if Paul's in charge of the Holocaust Memorial Week. I told him about a documentary that we had that we should do part of Holocaust Memorial Week next year. It's a documentary on Shylock and how Hitler hired theater companies to do productions of *Merchant of Venice*—ah, history major—as part of the Nazi propagand machine. Stick with me; you'll learn something new every day.

MD: I know, I eat this stuff up.

CH: Yeah. So, we'll see if we can do that, but I said it'd be great to screen that documentary—we own it—and then have a discussion about the use of—because theater can be used for good purposes and it can be used for evil. In this case it's perverted.

MD: Yeah. That's incredible. Well Charlotte, you're one of a kind.

CH: Some people would say "thank heaven."

MD: And we, on behalf of the university libraries and the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project—

CH: I didn't tell you that, that's what I did when I was a sophomore in college, I worked at a circulation desk at the university library at the University of Tennessee, because I wanted to live in the dorms, so I became a dorm counselor so I could live free in the dorm and have that dorm experience, and I had to pay for it myself, so I worked in the library.

MD: There you go.

CH: Learned a lot.

MD: What goes around comes around.

CH: I can use a card catalog [laughs].

MD: We don't do that, we don't have them anymore.

CH: I know, I know you don't do it anymore. I know you don't do it anymore, yeah.

MD: Well Charlotte, thank you very much—

CH: Thank you, Mike.

MD: For participating.

CH: Thank you, Mike.

[1:18:29]