

# THEATRE ARCHIVE PROJECT

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## Ian Richardson – interview transcript

Interviewer: Aga Sikora

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Actor. 1964 RSC tour; accent; acting techniques; attitudes to television and cinema; audiences; Broadway; Peter Brook; Dame Judi Dench; Sir Alec Guinness; Sir Peter Hall; Marat/Sade; refreshments; repertory; rehearsals; Diana Rigg; RSC; Paul Scofield; Shakespeare; smoking; Stratford community; theatre tastes; Wilson Barrett Company.

AS: Ian Richardson, thank you very much for coming in to the British Library this morning. I am very happy to have the opportunity to interview you. Before we start can I just ask your permission to place this recording in the British Library archives?

IR: You of course have my permission to do precisely that.

AS: Thank you very much. Ian Richardson, what was your very first experience with the theatre, and was there anything in particular that made you become an actor?

IR: My very first experience was actually nothing to do with the theatre but it was certainly theatrical. I must have been about ten or eleven, and in this country - and I am sure in other countries as well - you have church services to acknowledge the armistice of both world wars. And it was the custom for the school to go on Armistice Day and for one pupil to be chosen to... read a lesson or read a bit of poetry and that kind of thing in front of the assembled congregation. And it was my turn, and the piece was Binyon's 'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them', that was all. And as I say it was my turn. And I thought it would be rather good if instead of going to the lectern, that great brass eagle with an enormous Bible on it, it would be rather more dramatic - and I was only about, as I say, eleven...ten or eleven - if I stood with my back to the altar, bang in the centre and recited it from memory. Now, this precociousness was a totally new thing - I had no dramatic ideas about anything - and I did it. And [pause] there was an audible silence -measurable, according to my history master, in the congregation afterwards - he maintained that nobody breathed for three seconds, and he got in touch with my mother and said, 'Your son is a born actor, and you mustn't let this opportunity go by...'. Fortunately, my father - who was a typical Scottish Presbyterian, lovely man but very firm in his beliefs - who would have objected if he'd known that I wanted to go into the theatre, he was away with the Eighth Army, still not demobilised, and it was just my mother to control me and she had no control at all! [Laughter] She was like everybody's mother, she was just lovely, and she arranged for me first of all to have elocution lessons, and then she introduced me to

an amateur dramatic society which was quite prominent in Edinburgh called the Edinburgh People's Theatre. I was much too young to play parts, but I was very, very happy doing stage management jobs and things like that, and then eventually I did get an opportunity to be on the professional stage and I'll tell you how it happened. We had a repertory company called the Wilson Barrett Company which was divided into - I believe - two, or possibly even three, companies, and what they did, was they... Each of the three companies rehearsed a repertoire of plays to play in Edinburgh, Glasgow and - I think - Aberdeen, and what happened, they would play one play in Edinburgh for a week and then they - the Edinburgh company - would go to Glasgow and the Glasgow company would go to Edinburgh, and then from Glasgow the first company would go on to Aberdeen and that company would come back to Edinburgh, by which time the Edinburgh lot had moved on... You see, it was a kind of cycle... it was a very good way of doing it. Which meant it was a large repertory company, and they were doing a dramatisation of Charles Dickens' Tale of Two Cities called The Only Way. And I had a tiny part in it as a boy aristocrat with his duchess mother waiting at the Conciergerie before being trundled off - literally! - to the guillotine.

AS: And how old were you at that time?

IR: I suppose I must have been... by that time about thirteen. I think my voice had broken, but only just, it was a bit squeaky... Boys grew up slower in those days than they do now, it was not unusual for a boy's voice not have been... to have broken until he's fourteen, and certainly not unusual for a boy of eighteen to have had no sexual experience at all. All change now! [Laughter] Anyway, that was the first time, in a church, with an amateur company, and with a professional company at the Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh, so that's how it began.

AS: So how did your acting career develop from Edinburgh?

IR: My accent? Well...

AS: Your acting career...

IR: Oh, my acting career from there! Well, in those days I... My mother was most anxious that I shouldn't interrupt my schooling, and so when I finished school, I was by that time aged eighteen and in those years one was obliged to do military service - it was compulsory. I'm talking about the early fifties, in fact the year before the Queen was crowned I think, which was... '52 and yes! Because I was born in 1934 so 1952... yes I was just coming up to my eightieth birthday - thirtieth birthday, what am I saying! [ed. corrected to eighteenth birthday] [Laughter] Anyway, I went off to do my military service. Now, I was a hopeless soldier, and my commanding officer thought it would be an awfully good idea if he allowed me to go - 'seconded' we called it in the army in those days - to the Forces' Broadcasting Service. I was in the Middle East, in what was then the capital of Libya, called Benghazi - I mean Colonel Gaddafi was still a school-boy I should think - anyway, I was transferred to the broadcasting service as an announcer, but I also presented programmes as well, which was good in a way because there was still a trace of my Scottish accent hanging around. Now, what will interest your research

is that I was told, very early on in my preparation to become an actor - because by this time I knew that was what I wanted to do - I was told that there was not a possibility of any actor having a worthwhile career if he was suffering from a regional accent. All accent, all sound of region had to be... vanquished and discarded and you had to speak what we called 'Queen's English' or 'Received Pronunciation'. And so, by being in the radio station and working with tape recorders... I mean, not like today's tape recorders which you can slip in your pocket - these were enormous things with a reel to reel tape on and it took two people to carry them about the place! Anyway, we worked with these a lot and I was constantly hearing my own voice... And my chief announcer, who was an awfully nice man and we keep in touch with each other, although now he lives in Los Angeles and his lovely English accent has become somewhat tainted with American, but be that as it may... He corrected my vowel sounds, which went astray from time to time: I couldn't say 'bosom', I always said 'boosum', and if ever the word 'cushion' came along, it always came out 'cooshun', you know, or I had to say 'on my terms' it would be 'on my tairrms', you know - the Scots was still there. But by listening to it, it meant that when I came home - after my military service and my experience with radio - after I came back to Scotland I had no accent at all, and apart from the fact that over the years my voice has deepened somewhat, simply through being an actor on the stage every night doing particularly Shakespeare... Although I had a more tenor tone to my voice, my accent was more or less the same as you're listening to now.

AS: OK, thank you... Was the 1960 role of Hamlet at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre your first appearance in England?

IR: No, I... May I correct you at once, Aga? It was 1959 at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre when I played Hamlet. And that was my first professional Shakespearian performance. I had done other performances of Shakespeare as a student at the Glasgow College of Dramatic Art - of which I am a fellow and a doctor of drama, you've probably got that down there. But let me digress a moment, because here is an opportunity for me to talk about theatre as it was in those days. And this may surprise some of your young people who are listening to this or reading about it. Every provincial city in Scotland, and in England, and I think largely too in Wales - I'm not sure about Ireland - had its own theatre with a repertory company.

Now, by repertory company, I mean that they were engaged... the people in the company were engaged en masse and you stayed for a season, or maybe two seasons, or maybe three or four seasons and you played, as they used to call it, 'as cast'. In whatever play it was... and usually these provincial theatres only performed any given play for a week. Normally the plays they produced would be taken from the West End of London's commercial shows, and when they'd gone into print - usually with Samuel French, the publishers of playscripts - they then became available to companies throughout the land to perform, and the Samuel French books came to you not only with the text there but with all the original moves - where you sat, where you stood, where you went to the window, you know, there, in italics and in inverted commas, it was - it was very easy, and very quick, to put the play together again as it had been in London. Also, it might be of interest for you to know that in the auditoria of cinemas and theatres at this time - the early fifties - on the back of the seat in front of you... On the back was a cigarette ashtray, because everybody in the cinema and the theatre smoked! Can you believe that? The air was thick with cigarette and tobacco, and cigars and pipes too. I think the pipes... I would suggest the pipes were not a good idea. And the curtain would go up - and in those days you always had a curtain, none of this

business of the set being there when you come and sit down and you get bored looking at before the play begins [Laughter] no, we had curtains. And the curtain... and I can remember if you will, we always used to hate being, what they called in those days 'beginners', which means you go on at right at the start of the play, because when the curtain went up all that happened was a great cloud of cigarette smoke hit you in the face! [Laughter]

I can remember when I was a student at Glasgow, staying away from my lectures for one afternoon, to see no less a person than the late Sir John Gielgud playing King Lear in the Noguchi designed production and I - I couldn't afford the programme, being a student, but somebody had dropped one, I was very grateful and I stole it - and I noticed that a little leaflet fell out of the programme and it said : 'Sir John Gielgud has requested that for this performance of King Lear that patrons in the theatre do not smoke, as it is injurious to the voice'. Now, that was almost unheard of in those days! Now we have mobile phones, [Laughter] in those days nothing like that, just cigarettes! But anyway, I was saying that every... It was wonderful for a young actor. I studied drama at Glasgow College of Dramatic Art, and it was wonderful in those days because there were so many opportunities. I said that every provincial town had a repertory theatre, and you were almost certain to get a job. Now, the kind of job you were likely to get was a special contract for beginners just out of drama colleges called A.S.M. - Assistant Stage Manager - and Small Parts, which meant that you were actually the dogsbody, but if a butler came along, or a footman - or if you were a lady it was nearly always a maid or... you know, or a governess or something who didn't have very much to say - as well as sort of doing the props and hauling the curtain up and down, you also went on in your costume and played this tiny part, and that was how you began. Usually, for a very small amount of money. My first salary was three pounds ten shillings - which is £3.50 nowadays - and that was quite enough to pay for my accommodation - my 'digs' as we called it - and to feed myself, but you see in those days, well, one didn't... I think I did smoke actually... now I come to think I bought them in fives at the time. [Laughter]

AS: Did they exist in fives?

IR: Oh yes, little packets of five cigarettes... I think it was Will's Woodbine was the favourite one among us penniless actors, and the other thing I remember was, you only played for a week, which meant that when you finished the performance, went back to your digs and had a sandwich and a cup of tea and then went to bed and of course you had to stay awake with the light on learning the dialogue for the next play. By this time I'd moved on from 'A.S.M. and Small Parts' to being an actor in this weekly repertory company which was only existing during the summer months, which was great for me, because when I got my long summer holiday from drama school I immediately picked up my Union ticket - which was terribly easy, I think it was only seven and six, which is, you know, under one pound - and I got this job, beginning to... of doing A.S.M. and Small Parts, but then they suddenly realised that I was a hopeless A.S.M. but I was quite reasonable as an actor, so they re-organized my contract and I started acting. Anyway, getting back to where I was, it was an absolutely night occurrence throughout the week that you were playing the one play, that you went home, had a light supper, went to bed with your script, your Samuel French script and - yes, I did smoke in those days, because I used a cigarette packet to run down the page of the script to show the cues coming up, and then holding that cigarette packet over what I was supposed to say, and then checking if I got it right: yes. But if I hadn't got it right I went back and did it again

and again and again until I got it right. But you know, in those days of weekly rep, the memory absorbed the dialogue only in a very shallow sense - literally shallow - because I recall on one occasion we had Good Friday when no theatres played. I don't know if they've changed that now but it was a religious observation for obvious reasons. And because we had the night off, when we came back on the Saturday everybody had forgotten their lines! Because it had only had gone in so shallowly and it only stayed there as long as you were performing it at night and twice a week at matinees. And because it was only just under the surface of one's memory, it disappeared entirely - it was a very frightening experience. Anyway, that's some recollections of those early days, and I think that's probably enough of that, you carry on with your questions now.

AS: OK, thank you, Ian Richardson. So... soon after, you joined the Royal Shakespeare Company...

IR: What happened was in 1959 I played Hamlet. And in 1959... Sir Peter Hall - then just ordinary 'Peter Hall' - was director - Artistic Director Designate - of the... what was then called the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. And he wanted to start afresh with a young company. So what he did was he sent spies, - there's no other word for them, 'spies', I suppose you call them nowadays 'talent scouts' - all over the provinces to see plays done by these many, many repertory companies up and down the country, to see if there were any promising youngish actors - because Peter Hall was not even thirty when he took over, you know. And one of those so-called 'spies' was John Barton, and he saw me playing Hamlet at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and he immediately reported back to Peter Hall, 'I think you'll want to get this one!', and the long and short of the story is that I was offered a contract and I joined the - still the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre - as one of Peter Hall's 'babies' as we were all called, and my contemporaries were Diana Rigg, Ian Holm, Peggy Ashcroft to name but three. And what happened at the end of 1960 was Peter Hall decided that he was going to create an ensemble which would be the pride and joy of the British - well, we weren't an Empire any more, but of Great Britain you know, 'Grande Bretagne' - and he invited actors that he felt that he could work with and promote whenever he - he equally felt it was due to them - to sign a three-year contract. This was unheard of! Unheard of for an actor to have three years of guaranteed security with a weekly...

AS: So it was the first time that it actually happened...?

IR: Yes, it was the first time that it happened. I believe it... it was in Moscow - at the Moscow Arts Theatre - it happened there, but this was England, you know! And so a lot of us instantly got married and had children [Laughter] because we had three years' security ahead of us. And indeed, Peter promoted you up the range of roles according to whether he thought you were ready for them or not. And that's precisely what happened to me. And we were... we did become the Royal Shakespeare Company at the end of 1960, and we did become, by the end of 1964, quite the most impressive Shakespearian ensemble in Europe.

AS: Right... How would you describe the RSC under the directorship of Peter Hall?

IR: Well... He had only recently married Leslie Caron... that unfortunately was a marriage that did not survive – a few years until children - but that's another story. And because he was a young man with a young wife and a child on the way, he wanted to encourage his actors to treat the theatre not just a place of employment and work in the evenings and rehearsals during the day but as a kind of second home. And it was always rather charming, on a Friday morning, which is the... when... what we called then - and I don't know whether they call it now - the 'ghost walk'. That was a saying meaning that we were going to be paid: 'the ghost walks on Friday', and on Fridays all the mothers would turn up in the Green Room, by the banks of the Avon with their pushchairs and their carry-cots and... and sort of have a cup of coffee and wait for their husband to go up to the accounts office for his little brown envelope which had the pay in it, which would then be handed to the wives and they would all disappear and do the shopping! [Laughter] It was really rather enchanting, and this was the sort of thing that Peter encouraged, because he felt that the family atmosphere and the relaxed feeling that one got from that would... travel with the actors on to the stage, and that they would thereupon perform with each other not as total strangers encountering each other as characters in a play on a stage, but actually people you've just had a cup of tea with in the Green Room, you know. And it was a wonderful idea, and it worked. And the birth rate among the actors in Stratford-upon-Avon rose by about a hundred percent I would say! [Laughter]

AS: I've read also - and, Ian Richardson, you will tell me if it's true - that the journalists often described the atmosphere at the RSC at that time as very puritanical, because I heard - if it's true obviously - that thirteen-hour days for months in succession were not unusual, and you often had to rehearse during the day and play during the evening...?

IR: Yes, that's absolutely true. I wouldn't... I wouldn't say it was puritanical, because in those days there wasn't the same stigma against... a Green Room which only served tea or coffee. You could actually buy a glass of wine or a bottle of beer, and they sold cigarettes and things like that. In those days practically everyone smoked, and I remember walking along the back of the stage in Stratford-upon-Avon and the smell of Guinness - which is a very strong stout ale - and cigarette smoke... Well, the unfinished drinks, not in a bottle like the children [Laughter] - young people I mean - not drunk from the bottle like young people do now - you can't drink Guinness from a bottle, it's too frothy - but they would be poured out into a glass and just left there with a stubbed-out cigarette in a saucer, so that all along the way along the backdrop you smelt smoke, cigarette smoke and Guinness. And indeed, as I said right at the beginning of the interview, when you went onstage there were people in the auditorium who were smoking as well. [Laughter]

AS: Oh, did they?

IR: [Laughter] Yes... What was I talking about, can't you remind me?

AS: If it was puritanical...

IR: Ah, you see... so I don't think it was puritanical, because it was very relaxed in that way, there wasn't the same... Nowadays my son - my younger son - who's also an actor, he's with the Royal Shakespeare Company and he's just opened with them in Richard III the other day, which I saw, and he says that you have to sign an agreement with the company not to drink before the performance - at all - which must be very curious for people like Dame Judi Dench who... I always remember when I started working with Judi, way back in 1962, that she always had champagne in her dressing room! [Laughter] So, I don't know quite how she manages to get her way - work her way round that thing, but... So it's much more puritanical now than it was then: it was much more relaxed, I always had a bottle of Guinness in the interval - we all did! And I remember Patrick Stewart and I were playing brothers in The Revenger's Tragedy and he... he said to me, 'Look, we've got this nice break in the second half, shall we make that 'the Guinness break'?', and by that he meant he would either bring a couple of bottles of Guinness to my dressing room, or I would lay them in in advance, but he would come in and we would both drink a glass of Guinness before going back on the stage to end the play! And nobody thought any the worse for it. And... there were one or two people who did have a problem in that respect, but... but nobody... nobody overdid it, you know... it... so there was no puritanical aspect in those days, it was much more free and easy. And then of course after the performance finished and it was quite late and all the local public houses in Stratford-upon-Avon would have been closed for at least half an hour - if not longer - we used to go to a pub called The Black Swan - but we always called it 'The Dirty Duck' - and they had a special dispensation to stay open late for the actors, and I can remember Peter O'Toole and Patrick Wymark and Dinsdale Landen and Patrick Allen and - not so much Patrick Allen - but Jacky MacGowran, an Irish actor in that first season, we all tumbled into The Dirty Duck after the performance, and rolled out about an hour and a half later! [Laughter]

AS: So it was not that monastic...!

IR: It was not monastic. It was just that you were dedicated to what work that you did and Peter understood - Peter Hall understood - the necessity for a little bit of playtime: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' might have been his very motto, you know, so that used to happen quite a lot. What else did we...? Peter was a brilliant man and he... he was a staggeringly good administrator. I... I hate to say this, but I have to. He could be very hit or miss when it came to directing. He made an awful mess in Macbeth with Paul Scofield in the sixties, but you see he was brilliant with David Warner - whom I met the other night at Stratford-upon-Avon - as Hamlet in... '66 or something like that. So I mean, you know, he could get it all wrong, but he could get it terribly right. And I think... I think he expected his actors to be that way too, and indeed I was: I was absolutely hopeless as Andrew Aguecheek in Twelfth Night - totally miscast - but I was awfully good as Oberon in Midsummer Night's Dream, you know. [Laughter] It just... it just depended on the chemistry really.

AS: Right... Did you have that feeling to be a bit cut off from... because you were all in Stratford?

IR: Yes, we were cut off completely. And what Peter did - when I say 'Peter' by the way, I'm talking about Peter Hall all the time - was he signed an agreement with the owners of the Aldwych Theatre in the West End of London, just across the road from Bush

House, the BBC's Overseas Service Broadcasting Unit, and he signed a lease with them, and what he did was whatever plays out of the five-play repertoire, there were - in Peter's regime there were five plays done throughout the season, OK? - and whichever of them was successful, he transferred to the Aldwych for a London season. So although... to begin with, we all felt completely cut off, and the producers in the West End, you know, would forget we even existed. And... and you must remember, too, that television was in its infancy. There was no such thing as a soap opera or an ongoing series... It was... The television only came on, usually in the evenings with a news broadcast, and sometimes during the day there would be... 'Listen With Mother', but it only lasted about two hours and then they shut down. And so anchored was television to theatre in those days, when eventually they started doing plays - and they did theatre plays for television, and live, no recording or anything like that - when the interval came along, the screen would go black and up would come a card saying 'INTERVAL', and about fifteen minutes later a bell would ring - just like it does in the theatre - and you would have made your tea or made fresh drinks or whatever and come back and been seated down, and when the bell rang it was time for the next half. And so the screen lit up again and you went on with the play. So television was actually sort of... moving, in a way close - parallel - with what was happening in the theatre. [pause] There was something else that I thought to tell you, I think it was about the television thing. But there was no such... there was very, very little work opportunity in television in those days - and there was no commercial television. It was BBC, and then it was BBC and ITV. And then they... finally it became BBC, ITV, Channel 4 etc, etc, etc, where there are so many opportunities nowadays, there were not at that time. And you know, we had an attitude to the... to television - and indeed to film-making as well - which was, 'you only really did it if you wanted to make enough money to pay off the mortgage on your house. It wasn't really about acting. Acting was standing on a public platform with a curtain that went up and down - [Laughter] - doing live theatre. That was acting!' This cheapskate thing of going and making a movie was... was something we looked down upon. In fact, I remember John Gielgud saying that, 'He was going off to make a film, don't tell anybody about it, don't tell, I don't want any of my friends to know!' [Laughter]

AS: But that was what happened to the majority of the actors from Stratford. They all moved to the cinema and movies later on...

IR: Eventually, but not until the seventies did it happen. It happened for me in... 1979 that I moved from live theatre to doing television and movies. And I think... I mean, when I left, David Suchet, who's now terribly well-known as Hercule Poirot - among other things, but that in particular - and Patrick Stewart for that matter who was - what is it called? Star Trek, is it? You know... Captain Picard, or something like that. When I left Stratford-upon-Avon to go to New York to do *My Fair Lady*, playing Higgins in the musical, Patrick and David, well, I left them behind, and they were just a few steps behind me on the promotional ladder and they were just coming up into the roles that I had played and gone on from. And so I left them filling the space of... of... of, you know, the leading parts, yes...

AS: Yes, could you tell us something more about the Aldwych, because the Aldwych was a London-based counterpart of Stratford, but with different plays obviously...



IR: Yes. Yes, well to a certain extent the Aldwych Theatre was a counterpart of Stratford, but while you were doing the season there of Shakespearian works brought - or Jacobean works, because he didn't stick entirely to Shakespeare, you know. He did usually one Jacobean play, or a contemporary of Shakespeare's, too, like a Ben Jonson or something like that as well as the Shakespeare repertoire. And whilst they were being performed, we would rehearse a play by Ibsen, Chekhov, Gorky, Bernard Shaw, you know, sort of good contemporary or recent dramatists - you can't say that Ibsen was contemporary, but what I mean is modern-ish compared with Shakespeare - and so we used to do quite a lot of modern plays and new plays. I remember in the year that President Kennedy was assassinated - which was '63 - we were doing a play called *The Representative* about the Holocaust, written by Rolf Hochhuth, which was not a very good play but as a... the subject matter was so astonishing that it was, it was a most talked-about success in '63. I played Mengele, would you believe it? The first one of many baddies that I seem to be cast in. So that, as I was saying, as well as the classical repertoire - which was played again in... You know, you would, actually in those days you would do one play for a matinée - let's say it was *King Lear* - and then in the evening you would do *The Comedy of Errors*! [Laughter] You know, it must have cost a fortune paying the stage staff who had to take down the scenery! But by this time the curtain had disappeared, and sets were much more simplified, and the platform - the stage platform - was built out over what had been the orchestra pit, and the orchestra now played in an area off stage with microphones and with... Their contribution was as strong as ever, but they played in a little orchestral room on their own with the microphones and some sound controller brought up the speakers to bring the music in when we wanted it. So we weren't using the orchestra pit, and what they did was they put steps - they left a gap at the edge of the forestage, and there were steps coming up from what used to be the orchestra pit. So there were two entrances from down there, and then at the side there were what we called 'the assemblies' just beyond what had been the proscenium arch. I think nowadays the young actors call them 'vomitories' after the... yes it's after the... the gladiators. 'Vomitories' [Laughter] - for obvious reasons! [Laughter] And then the whole of the rest of the stage, of course, was open to the interpretation of the designer. And so the audience would come in and they would see, there's the set, but it wouldn't really amount to very much except what was necessary for the action of the play - steps usually.

AS: Do you think it was the same audience from Stratford and from Aldwych?

IR: No, entirely different. The London audience was... very, very different from Stratford's. Stratford... You know, during the season, Stratford was constantly the meeting place - the venue - for American and Australian tourists. And in those early days, students - who obviously had theatre in mind as a profession - used to sleep, in sleeping bags, out on the ground, all the way from the box office, down the side of the building to where the stage door was. And they would sleep overnight to be first in the queue to get cheap seats for that day's performance. And I can remember coming into rehearsal - rehearsals always began at ten in the morning - and having to step over these poor children, still asleep in their sleeping bags! [Laughter] These were really great days. Now, the Aldwych, the audiences at the Aldwych... well of course, we did get quite a number of tourists, but... No, they were much more sophisticated, the audiences at the Aldwych, and you... that's why you only took the very best of your repertoire there, because anything that hadn't quite worked would not be tolerated.

AS: Was it because... I think, at that time, the Royal Shakespeare Company was the most internationally celebrated European company?

IR: Well, what happened to establish its reputation in that respect happened in 1964, when the Arts Council and the British Council and the RSC - as we then were - signed a deal, and we were the first Shakespearian company to go behind the still existent 'Iron Curtain'. And we started off in Berlin - West Berlin, we did not play East Berlin - then we went to Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, then back to Belgrade, then Warsaw, then Helsinki, then Leningrad - or St Petersburg as it is now - then Moscow. And then from Moscow we flew - in deep snow - to America, and we landed in Washington D.C. and it was the day of the Cherry Blossom parade and we were all wrapped up in scarves and sheepskin coats and fur hats, and the temperature was already so hot that the flags were beginning to crack! And we played Washington, Philadelphia, Boston and New York. Now, that tour took... oh, I can't remember how many months, because if it was an important date like Moscow we would play two weeks, whereas in other places we would only play one week. But nevertheless it took an awfully long time! But by the time we came back, so great had been the established... the reputation as an international phenomenon that had been established, that the Queen invited the Company to perform in the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor Castle. She didn't want King Lear because that went on too long, but the companion piece was The Comedy of Errors. And the companion piece was there because Paul Scofield - who was playing King Lear - didn't want to do King Lear eight times a week; it's not on, it's not easy to do that. And so he wanted a companion piece that would play to give him the nights off, I think... He only did four performances a week, which was very clever of him. At all other times we did The Comedy of Errors which was equally, equally successful. And Kosygin, I remember, came and Mikoyan - and these are names totally unknown to you, but they were in the Politburo...Kruschev was away in fact - when he came back it was to face the fact that he was being ousted from power [Laughter] - but he left messages. I mean, it was just extraordinary! And then we performed for the Queen and the entire Royal Family doing The Comedy of Errors, and that really said 'the RSC's international reputation was being acknowledged by the Sovereign, here, in the oldest castle...' you know... one of the oldest castles in...

So that was it - we were in. Well, I left... I stayed for fifteen years off and on. I took some sabbaticals out, because by this time, well, we were all testing the waters - to use the metaphor - of film and television just to see what it would be like. Because my children were growing up, and I was faced with school fees that had to be paid, and the RSC didn't pay that much money, you know... And so I left, I left on a couple of occasions and went off and did something else, but I always came back. Until, in 1975, I left for good. And I have not returned at all, except to do a recital programme with some friends of mine called The Hollow Crown, which is about the kings and queens of England, which we did in the large theatre. And I'm glad I did that, because when I went up to Stratford the other day there, the whole of the auditorium in the old theatre - which I remember so well - is being ripped apart and modernized. So I'm glad I did The Hollow Crown, because there I was on the platform which had seen me arrive as a young twenty-five year old, and it waved good-bye to me some, you know, fifteen years later as a quite a senior stager in the English theatre. I'm glad I did that...

But we have to move on, and now there is a situation whereby... I remember - and this might interest some of your young students and people who are interested - I remember when I played Hamlet - and Richard II too, and all those parts where you have soliloquys to address out front. What I used to do was I'd focus on a suitably placed 'Exit' light - you know, they... always above doors 'Exit', and it's always lit so that you can see it -

and I used to focus on the 'Exit' light because it meant that I had no distraction with someone shifting in their seat or opening their programme or whatever. And I used to just direct it all out there... Well now what they are encouraged to do - and certainly in the Richard III I saw the other day - is the... not only do they talk to the audience, direct face to face, but they actually get the audience to participate by giving them a placard to hold or a piece of tape - you know, like they put round a traffic accident, the police tape, that yellow tape. And this kind of physical contact, not only eyeball to eyeball, but touching as well, was completely not done in my day! [Laughter] I'm sure it's the way things are going, but I'm just very old-fashioned. I belong to the old school and I just have to get used to it, you know...

AS: I just had one question, you played one of the most interesting roles for the Aldwych, Jean Marat in Peter Weiss' Marat/Sade. Was it tempting to come from Stratford to Aldwych and play completely different plays?

IR: Yes, it was. It was, because apart from anything else, the Aldwych was a showcase for the company, but it was also a showcase for the actors in that company. Now, if West End producers, film and television producers - and they have now become very much a part of our lives by the time I'm talking about, the late sixties, early seventies, you know. It was a showcase for the actors to be seen by these people, because - and not to be seen just doing Shakespeare - because, well it's happened with me, they would say 'Richardson, yes he's quite a good actor, but he just does Shakespeare, we don't want him!' which is devastating, you know... So we enjoyed doing modern works, although Marat, of course, is the French Revolution! [Laughter] But I mean, to actually wear trousers and be able to put hands in your pockets was something so unheard of to us Shakespearians that it was rather nice, you know. In fact, I still haven't got used to the idea of putting my hands in my pockets - even when I make films and televisions and things like that, I find that I'm... I just don't put my hands in my pockets, [Laughter] because of wearing Elizabethan costume, or period costume anyway...

The Marat/Sade... Well, what happened was I... Originally when that was done, we'd just come back from the world tour I was just talking about, and Peter Hall who directed the King Lear with Scofield - Peter Brook, I beg your pardon, who directed the King Lear - was terribly anxious to keep this company together. It's quite a large company, not as many as a hundred knights, which is what it says in the text - there weren't quite as many as that but there must have been about fifty of us, you know! And so he kept this company together - with the exception of Paul Scofield, who didn't want to have anything to do with the Marquis de Sade, thank you very much! - and so that part was played by Patrick Magee, a brilliant Irish actor - alas, no longer with us. And I originally played the Herald, who was a kind of glorified Master of Ceremonies, done very much in the Commedia dell'Arte, and I banged the stage with my stick crescendo-ing it you know, and then the play began and all this, you know: before every announcement, changing the scene - verbally - I used to bang my staff again and say, 'Charlotte Corday visits...', 'Charlotte Corday's first visit to Jean Paul Marat'. And down would come Glenda Jackson as Charlotte Corday. Well, what happened was we played it very successfully, and then it came off and the Americans wanted it on Broadway. And the actor playing Marat absolutely categorically refused to go to New York with it - I don't know why - and so Peter Brook, nothing daunted, took me away from playing the Herald - which was a part I loved - and put me into the bath as Marat, and I was totally miscast. And I was very unhappy. And we then, we took it to New York, where we were a wild success and we played for six months, which was unheard of on Broadway! And

we were all going absolutely mad doing this extraordinary play night after night - to packed houses, you couldn't get seats for it. And we were all beginning to go a little mad after a while.

The rehearsals were quite extraordinary because we had sixteen weeks in all - which in those days... not so unheard of now, but in those days was completely unheard of. And for the first eight weeks we didn't touch the text. We were all invited to go and explore insanity in the towns, the suburbs or whichever... wherever we were living. And I remember that I made contact - and became very friendly - with the director of the Tooting Beck Mental Institute. And he actually took me on a tour with my wife - because she was in the play, she was acting in those days, she was playing one of the inmates - took me on a tour of... Not the seriously mentally ill people, because they were dangerous, but just on a little trip round. And the extraordinary thing about going to a mental institute is, apart from the seriously ill people, the people who are allowed to walk about - although not go outside - they appear to be completely and utterly normal. Until you listen to what they are saying. And there was this one girl - very pretty - who saw me coming along the corridor with the director of the institute and said: 'Oh Doctor, you must please get my boyfriend away from that butcher's shop where he's working!'. 'Well', he said 'why should I do that?'. She said, 'Well, he has already cut off three of his fingers, and he keeps cutting them all the time!'. And of course it was totally untrue! But she, in her imagination, thought of her boyfriend cutting his fingers off. And you suddenly do a mental and physical double-take on this pretty thing, and you suddenly realise she's completely nuts! So what we would do after, we would all come back to rehearsal, sit in a circle on the floor with Peter Hall - Peter Brook, rather - in the middle, and he would point and they - whoever he pointed to - would give their homework, which meant recounting a tale of insanity that they had come across. And of course I was able to tell this story that I have just told you, and as I say, I became very friendly - and I still am, although he's retired now - with this doctor, this psychologist and he's a great fan of mine, and he and his wife come and see me and other things. But I created quite a sensation by telling them about how natural some of the people were until you heard them talk. So what we had to do - is this interesting for you by the way? - what we had to do was, Peter would say, 'Now, next week...' - this is after six weeks - 'Next week I'm going to ask... I'm going to cast the play. Now, you all know that Patrick - Patrick Magee - is playing Marquis de Sade, and Glenda Jackson is Charlotte Corday, Ian Richardson is the Herald...' - as I was at that time - 'but the rest of you have not been cast yet. And when I do cast you, I want you to tell me if you think that the character-study of insanity you've been working on is capable of doing the demands that will be asked of you in this performance'. For instance, we performed it, as it were, in a bathhouse. And he said, 'Do you think that your person has the mental and psychical capacity to lift one of the duck-boards...' - the coverings over the bars - 'and make it into a guillotine knife?' you know, for one scene. And that person said, 'Oh well, no, you see, because I've worked on this man who's got a fixation about transferring a piece of string from his left-hand pocket, across his fingers and into his right-hand pocket, and then back again and out and you know...'. And then Robert Lloyd - who was playing Jacques Roux - saying 'Well, I can't do anything, because I'm in a straightjacket'. And so we were all given parts - I didn't get, but the others got parts given to them according to the capabilities of the form of insanity they had been working on. And that's how it was done.

AS: Right. So you had this...

IR: I didn't have to do anything, I just... I decided that the Herald... As long as everything was going smoothly and well under his control as Master of Ceremonies, everything was fine. But if anything went out of control, he lost – completely - his self-control and just went completely berserk! Which I did, at the very end of the play!  
[Laughter]

AS: Was Marat/Sade a club performance?

IR: A what?

AS: A club performance?

IR: No, no, it was done... it was done before the paying public.

AS: No, it was Public Bath, I think, with Glenda Jackson?

IR: No, there was no... No, no. It was you paid your money, you came in, I mean, there was no restriction. People just came to see it. And we... as I say, in America too. By that time, as I say, I was playing Marat and I remember the American producer coming to my dressing room on the first night and saying [uses an American accent] 'Now listen, Richardson, you appear nude, well anyway, from the back you're nude in this production. If you get arrested, don't worry, we'll bail you out in the morning!'. And I laughed because I thought he was joking. He wasn't. And I was actually the first actor to appear to all intents and purposes naked on any stage. But only my back view.

AS: How did it compare for you between the British and the American audiences at that time?

IR: American audiences are not really as reserved as the British audiences were then. I believe, such is the influence of America and Australia, now more particularly, on the audiences here that we are much more outspoken and forthright in our attitude and behaviour towards what's happening on the stage. But the Americans, if they don't like something, even though you are in the middle of the performance, they'll say so, you know. I remember hearing one person saying - not about me, thank God! -

AS: Out loud during the performance?

IR: Oh yes! But about one of the prominent performances, I'm not going to name any names, [uses an American accent] 'That guy's drunk!' And this awful pause... Nowadays, the only thing we have to contend with is mobile phones going off, which they always do. But in America people - and there was another man playing a part in Marat/Sade, who had a cotton-wool erection in his tight white Empire breeches, and as he was playing a lunatic who was sexually quite mad... he was to stroke himself - his

cotton wool thing - from time to time, and there was one night and this man turned to his wife [uses an American accent] 'There's a guy up there getting away with murder!'. [Laughter] I very nearly said - because I was right on the forestage in my bath and I was writing as Marat, you know - and I very nearly said to him - because he was quite close to the stage - 'It's only cotton wool', but I didn't... I lacked the courage to say it! [Laughter]

AS: Do you think they have a different attitude towards the theatre and actors?

IR: Well, not so much now. It was then. They had never seen anything like the Marat/Sade before, you know. They were used to Annie Get Your Gun!, or My Fair Lady, or, you know... or Oklahoma!. You see, once the Marat/Sade had been and gone, we then had Oh, Calcutta! and Hair, and they all jumped on this band-wagon of either being totally nude or... or being extremely rude and doing things which... one didn't do on the stage, you know. The flood gates opened after the Marat/Sade. For instance, when Hair first came into the West End, the posters outside the Shaftesbury Theatre where it was to open said, 'Hair makes the Marat/Sade look like Peter Pan!' It was so over the top, you know! [Laughter] I never saw it, I may say. I think that people should keep their private bits neatly tucked away. But then, I'm old fashioned, as I said earlier.

AS: Right, do you think... do you consider yourself to be more a theatre actor or a film actor?

IR: I'm very much a theatre actor. Unfortunately, since I reached my seventies, which I've only just done, but nevertheless I'm there, my hip - my right hip - and my knees are beginning to give me trouble. I'm having treatment - physiotherapy treatment and deep scan things with steroid injection into my hip to help me to walk. But unfortunately, the theatre is something I... The last thing I did in the theatre was at The National Theatre: The Alchemist by Ben Jonson, and I had played Epicure Mammon which was my... Actually, I think it's probably my swansong in the theatre, until my knees and my hip are put to right. So although I am and always will be a theatre actor - theatre has always been my first love - I'm just physically not strong enough any longer to do it. But I am strong enough to do a television here and there, and certainly a film, because what happens there is you meet up with the director, and the crew are dismissed from the area and you work with the director on the scene. You decide where you're going to sit, move, maybe go to the window and all that, you agree all that with the director. You run through the scene to be filmed with the director, maybe run through twice, and then he'll say, 'Right, let's bring in the team', and in come all the technicians of camera, of the sound, the make-up, the wardrobe, everybody. The prop boys as well. And they come in and they form an audience. And you perform the scene for them. And then the camera director says, 'Right, let's do it again slowly, and when I say 'Stop!', stop and we will put marks on the floor to say where you are going to be.' And it's different coloured tapes - I always seem to get red, which I don't know why - red tape stuck onto the floor. And those were your marks. So when that was all done and he'd plotted it all out, the camera director would then say, 'OK. Well, we will be about an hour and a half lighting this scene, so go and have a cup of tea'. And so the real actors - the proper actors - go away and sit down on these well-known directors' seats with your name on the back or sometimes not on the back. Well, they light it with the stand-ins and the stand-ins go and stand - literally - on the marks whilst the camera director lights them. And then the

cameras decide how it's going to move and take that and they work out the shots they are going to do. And when all that's been done, an hour and a half later you're called back onto the set. And you do the scene.

But we are here to talk about the theatre, which, as you can see, is something quite different. What I love about the theatre is, all right, you're under the control of the director throughout the rehearsal period and during the technical dress rehearsals, and you're still in under his control for the previews. Incidentally, at Stratford when I first went there, there were no such things as previews, you just opened cold, and if the play wasn't ready for the critics, tough! You know, because there was no preview or anything like that; now it involves quite a number of previews. So consequently you would go in the next morning, and he's been sitting out front watching it with your preview audience but with his notebook taking down notes about the performance, and then he will give them to you and, if necessary, rehearse new things on the stage. But once you get to opening night, when the play begins he's no longer around... well, he's there but he is no longer in control. You are. You begin at the beginning, you stop in the middle for a break, and then you go on to the end. And that's what I like about the theatre. Whereas when you are doing a movie, it's 'Stop, Start, Stop, Start, Stop, Start...' and... Also you shoot the thing out of order. I remember years ago, in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, a dramatisation of John Le Carré's famous spy novel, I played the Mole, Bill Hayden. And the first scene I shot was the scene where I was murdered! Because I was this... the Mole, you know. That was the first scene I shot. Because it's always completely out of order, according to whichever location you go to, you know. So it's an entirely different discipline, in fact it's a stronger discipline working for the camera, because you have to... All right, you have these long gaps when you can take a cup of tea and chat and gossip, but you have to keep at the back of your mind a level of concentration, judged on what you've just been rehearsing. You've got to keep that at the back of your mind, because in a moment you're going to have to go back on the set and commit it to posterity on celluloid or tape or whatever.

AS: You don't really have this power over your role as in the theatre?

IR: Yes. You... Well, I always did because... I was very fortunate. I mentioned *Tinker, Tailor*, that was one of the first television things I did. And nearly all my scenes were with Sir Alec Guinness who was the master of working for the camera. And since all my scenes were with him, I was given absolute freedom to watch him at work. And he... obviously, you know, he realized that I was observing him, and I said, 'Please forgive me watching your every move, this is really my first experience of working for the camera', and he used to give me little tips, you know. I remember on one occasion he used to... it was in his sitting room and he used to kick off his rather rain-soaked shoes and lift his socked foot towards the electric bars of the electric fire to warm his wet feet, which I thought was wonderful. And then when we came to shoot the sequence, he didn't do that. So in the break, before the camera moved to another position to shoot some more from another angle of the same scene, I said 'Alec, why don't you do that business of lifting your foot up to the fire?'. 'Well, you see, my stand-in said it was one of the funniest things he's ever seen, and so I thought that if that was the case, it was sticking out, making too strong a statement for the scene. The scene is not about me sticking my foot in front of an electric fire, it's about me questioning you because I suspect you might... you know? So he just cut the business entirely. And I thought, 'There is camera discipline, you know, gone mad!'. Whereas, if he had done it in the theatre, the

audience would probably have laughed, and he would have enjoyed that, and if anyone had said to him, like a director in the theatre had said, 'Oh, Sir Alec, I think maybe you ought to cut that', he would have said, 'How dare you! I'm not cutting at all!' [Laughter]

AS: Ian Richardson, one of your strongest points is obviously your voice. Is it easier to play without being seen, without seeing the audience when you are giving your voice?

IR: I... I've done that, you know, in radio plays, and also narration, and things like that. And also, quite recently there was a film called Hogfather - Terry Pratchett's fantasy - which was done over Christmas, and there was Death in the shape of a very tall skeleton with a cloak and hood and... but that wasn't me, I just did the voice. [uses a much deeper tone] I lowered my voice quite considerably, but it was me, you know. I remember when I was a student leaving drama college in Glasgow, I went for my final interview with the Principal. And he said to me 'Richardson, you are not particularly tall, but that can be dealt with, because we can give you special boots with cork inside, and a bit of a heel on the outside and suddenly you will be six foot tall' - which is true, and that's what I did and which is why, I think, my knees are giving me problems now as an elderly man. And he said, 'Well, you are not very tall but you can... you know, you can have these cork things to make you taller, but you're not exactly the matinee idol type, are you? I mean, no-one would describe you as remotely handsome or anything like that, so you haven't got that going for you. But,' he said 'you have the makings of a fascinating, interesting, rather beautiful voice. And if you work on that, if you really make a go of that voice of yours, people will imagine when watching - and listening to you, more particularly - that you are six foot tall and that you are really an extremely handsome young man'. And so I worked on the voice. But you see, as my young actor son tells me now, I'm really the old brigade, I'm rather old fashioned, because nowadays the actors are... actually prefer to speak with regional accents because... Well a lot... a lot of the business has been - as we say in the vernacular - dumbed down. Now, if you address the audience with my kind of voice, they find it intimidating, whereas if you talk like that [uses a Cockney accent] they say 'Oh. he's one of us, in't that nice!'. And many actors... I can think of one in particular, talking of Hogfather - I won't mention his name, think you can guess - has made a brilliant career out of [uses Cockney accent] just talking like that and being like the next boy. I couldn't do that, because I wouldn't be able to make emotional contact with my creative centre. If I made noises like that it would just be a noise, because it's just not part of me, you know. Anyway, that's the voice. I've got it and I'm stuck with it. I just have to confess that I'm only useful to producers if they want a good old-fashioned articulated noise.

AS: And one of the final questions maybe. I know it's maybe a bit annoying to ask you that but do you have any role that you like best in the theatre?

IR: Well my favourite role in Shakespeare was Berowne in Love's Labour's Lost. I wasn't originally going to be doing that, it was going to be John Hurt, but he got the first of his many film contracts and backed out, and you know, in a panic they offered it to me. And I was forty. And Berowne is only supposed to be twenty, maximum! But I had a very pretty wig and a nice little beard which covered up my double chin [Laughter] and a very nice make-up and I got away with it! In those days I was quite slim too, which helped the youthful thing. And so because I was too old for it really, and because it came to me purely by accident, and because it was exceptionally well-received by the



press, it's remained my favourite. I can remember on the first - by this time we had previews - I can remember on the day of the first preview, after we had been given our notes from the director, we all broke for lunch and I had no appetite - I never have on a performance day - and I thought, 'Oh God! I've been rehearsing all this while, but I don't really know...'. I was so conscious of the fact that I had to get a move on and learn the lines and take over John Hurt's mantle, that I'd left a lot of digging undug, and I walked up the side of the river to Holy Trinity Church - where, as you probably know, Shakespeare's tomb is - and very fortunately when I went into the church there was absolutely nobody in sight. I went up to the tomb and I said, 'Will,' - meaning Shakespeare - 'I understand, if the stories are true, that you were persuaded to write the part of Berowne for yourself because your company got fed up with you playing Hamlet's... ghost of Hamlet's father and William the Rustic in As You Like It, and they had persuaded you to write yourself a really good part, and you wrote Berowne. Well, I'm playing it tonight, and I don't know where I'm at. Socan you help me?'. Just as I - and I said this out loud, but quietly - Just as I finished speaking, the church bell started to ring, so I thought, 'Well, there's a sign!'. And that night I went out on the platform, with David Suchet as the King of France, and he was making his speech about how we were all to sort of to stop being these gallants and go into study, you know. And I came out with my first line and got the first laugh of the evening. Very loud laugh. And I remember saying under my breath - not to anybody but to the person I was hoping was listening - 'Thank you, Will! Stay with me, stay with me!'. Being a Scot, I'm very superstitious, you see. And it was a personal triumph. So I'm very, very fond of it for that reason. The only other parts - and I played oh! so many of them! - the only other parts that were great fun to do was Richard II, Bertram in All's Well That Ends Well, certainly I played both Antipholi - the two twins - I started off playing Ephesus in Comedy of Errors and then graduated to Syracuse, so I played those, and they were fun to do, with Diana Rigg as my wife in one of them, and as my sister-in-law in the other. [Laughter] And I only have one regret, and that is that I never actually got around to playing King Lear which I would like to have done, just to sort of finish everything off... It's too late now, I can't do it, because you need a lot of energy to do - play - King Lear. I see that Ian McKellen is going to do it very soon, and he is only about six years younger than I am, and that's... even now it's too old for... Depends on who the Cordelia is, because you see, you have to carry her at the end. So it was... when it was Paul Scofield, it was Diana Rigg, and when we were on that tour that I talked about at length, he used to come over to the breakfast table where she was sitting, and look to see what she was having to eat! And if she... and if it was a main meal, like lunch or something, with potatoes, he would just pick up a knife and push the potatoes to one side of the plate and waggle his finger at her, and say, 'No, no, Diana, no, no!'. [Laughter] So that's the problem there, although I did say... I did say to... to one of the directors at Stratford when I was doing that Hollow Crown there that there was a possibility of Lear pulling a cart on with a dead Cordelia on it, because after all, when you hang someone on a battlefield or on the edge of the battlefield, there is no gallows, so you put them onto a cart and you string them up over the branch of a tree and then you pull the cart away - so - from under them and then they hang, and when they've hung there until dead you push the cart back again and somebody cuts them down. And then the body just thumps onto the... So that you can come on with the cart with the body lying on it and Lear can actually clamber up onto it for the bit about, you know, 'Look she lives, see there, look there' and all that... And so he dies with her on the top of the cart, and then at the end they just trundle it off. So, unfortunately, like an idiot I told Greg Doran - one of the directors at Stratford - I told him this piece - this idea - and his eyes lit up, so I shall be very interested to see how he makes Ian Holm [ed. corrected to McKellan] cope with that. If he pinches my idea I shall be furious! [Laughter]

AS: OK, finally, would you agree that British Theatre between 1945-68 was the golden age of British theatre? Compared to today's scene...

IR: Oh yes, very much so! But you see, those were the days of the Tennent empire. I mean he was the Cameron Mackintosh of his day. There were not as many musicals as there are now: straight theatre, drawing-room comedies, classic straight theatre was at its height during that time. And you know, people were writing those sort of plays at that era... and one thinks instantly of Terence Rattigan. Now, you see, what happened... let's stay with Rattigan. As we came into the area of... where we talked about accents and everything like that, Kitchen Sink – so, it was particularly at the Royal Court Theatre where... where you know, Look Back in Anger suddenly became the thing in theatre, and suddenly the sort of... the drawing-room comedies were terribly old hat. Also, television was picking those up, and television was doing that sort of output. So therefore, the straight play for the straight audience began its decline, until now we've reached the point where it's mostly musicals, and the straight plays just don't pull in the audiences at all. It's tragic but when you've got televisions now that offer you so many choices and channels and everything like that, you can't compete. Especially with these enormous great screens so the people have little cinemas in their own homes, you know. You can't compete! So [pause] unless you are part of a classical group like the National, as I was quite recently, or the Royal Shakespeare Company [pause] and you have your own built-in audience who have made a point of coming to see the repertoire of both of those companies over the years... Or, you do what the National Theatre does, and that is the side seats in the vast Olivier Auditorium, they sell for ten pounds for a... per performance. Which means that a lot of young people who are fascinated by the theatre know that they can get in and see some really good stuff for ten pounds! Whereas other people are paying hundreds, you know! So that is a good thing too. Stratford doesn't need to do that, because as I said to you earlier, it has its built-in audience, the Americans despite the bombs and the suicide things... the Americans still come. And the Australians. Excuse me... I'm talking for too long!

AS: Do we have a chance for another 'golden era' in the theatre in Great Britain?

IR: I don't know. [pause] It'll be entirely different from what it was when I was a young man. It can't ever, ever return, because that area of entertainment is so radically different from what it was... so completely different. And I mentioned Binkie Beaumont, the Tennent organisation and making comparison between him - then - and Cameron Mackintosh now. But you see, Binkie rarely did a musical. Macintosh rarely does anything else. If anything else.

IR: Thank you very much, Ian Richardson, for these fantastic memories. Thank you.

IR: You are welcome.