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Rosalind Knight – interview transcript

Interviewer: Alec Patton

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Actress. '59 Theatre Company; '69 Theatre Company; Brand; Michael Elliott; George Devine; Frank Dunlop; Look Back in Anger; Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre; masks; naturalistic plays; the Old Vic Theatre School; Peer Gynt; Litz Pisk; Platonov; Vanessa Redgrave; Royal Court Theatre; Michel Saint Denis; the Young Vic.

AP: Great, we're recording now. So, if you want to just say your name one more time for the record.

RK: Rosalind Knight.

AP: Fantastic, we're picking... you can see the blue lines, mean we're going.

RK: Yes, very good.

AP: So, you come from quite a theatrical family as I said, and in fact it's continued to be a theatrical family with your children. So start... I suppose we can start very early on with your involvement in the theatre. I suppose, what are your earliest theatrical memories – either as an audience member or...?

RK: Funnily enough my earliest theatrical memory of all is going with my mother to Drury Lane Theatre, because she was in a great... The Dancing Years by Ivor Novello. And I was taken backstage to be with my mother. I don't know how old I was – about five or six. And then I went on my own to sit and watch the show. You know, five or six years old, this Dancing Years. And I realised then how very attractive, and what sex appeal Ivor Novello had for the audience. That's my earliest remembrance.

AP: Right, well. And so that was the first time that you'd been taken along to sit in the audience?

RK: Mmm. My mother was backstage, and I don't know, she just sort of shifted me to the audience – get me out of the way from the dressing room.

AP: Gotcha. And when did you start taking an interest yourself as a future performer?

RK: I went to the theatre quite a lot. I was at boarding school, so I didn't live in London, but in the holidays I went to the theatre quite a lot. And at that time, in the forties, they were all naturalistic plays, or drawing room comedies. And if they weren't comedies they were things like *The Holly and the Ivy*, *Home at Seven*, *Waters of the Moon* – serious, straight, ordinary, naturalistic plays. The other plays that were around that time were poetic plays by people like Christopher Fry and T.S. Eliot. And I wasn't particularly taken with the idea of the theatre as a lifestyle. But in 1949 I think, I was taken by my father to the ruined Old Vic Theatre, to see a performance by a company called the Young Vic, which employed young people straight out of drama schools. And the first week they did *As You Like It*, and then the second week they did *The Snow Queen*.

And in this ruined theatre – we'll get on to the show in a minute – the auditorium was staffed by pupils of the Old Vic Theatre School. The girls wore long skirts and long hair, and the boys had long hair – not long like we know it now, but bushy hair, in fact not short back and sides. Because this was the time of National Service, so all the young men I knew had to have short back and sides with their hair, but the drama students didn't.

And then I saw on the stage *The Snow Queen*. And there were two thespians, actors – actor and actress – playing ravens. And they were – they were ravens. They weren't in great huge costumes or anything, but they just became. And the other people in that performance became too. And that's when I thought 'that is the most exciting thing I've ever seen in the theatre'. The look of these drama students are the most exciting bunch of people I've ever clapped eyes on, and I must be part of it. So I... luckily for me, with a bit of trouble from Glen Byam Shaw, who was the Principal of the Old Vic Theatre School, and a bit of help I think, and encouragement, from George Devine and the other people who saw my second audition, I got it in to this Old Vic Theatre School on 1950 to '52. And my peers there were a most remarkable bunch of young people. And we all went on together through our careers for years. And indeed we created the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, in 1976 – but that's beyond our remit now.

AP: So that on... can you talk a bit about the... on coming to that school. I mean, obviously a very significant bunch of people to be working with. What was it like arriving at the Old Vic Theatre School, with Glen Byam Shaw and...

RK: Michel Saint-Denis and George Devine, and Litz Pisk, and Suria Magito – it was most awesome, because I was a little pip-squeak. I think I was the youngest student there from public school – a great big enormous public school where we did no drama. And so I didn't know about how to act or anything. And I was just overwhelmed by the personalities of the students, and the year above me. There were also design students and a production course as well going along. There were 20 boys, 20 girls in each acting course. And luckily for me there was quite a lot of movement and dance, and not ballet but movement and limbering. So I liked that, so I was fairly good at all of that. And period dance, which was just divine, with this woman Litz Pisk, who was the most inspirational movement teacher of all time, and choreographer person from Vienna. And that was wonderful. My voice was terrible, all students voices are thin, puny, weak and high pitched – mine more so than most. So I had a bad time working on my voice. I didn't understand about getting to the truth of the character – it's awful to say. I mean well really trying to find it. But that's what it taught me, this course. And what else would be a basic requirement?

AP: Well what sort...? I mean what sort of... when you talk about getting to the truth of the character, what were you doing in classes? What was... what got you towards that?

RK: Well, the sheer going-on of it by Michel Saint-Denis. [French accent] 'You have to find the truth of this Rosalind. You don't... I don't believe you. I don't believe you when you come in the door.' I thought 'no, well I bet you don't, because I don't believe it'. You know, go out and find what you're doing out there. Go out and find what the weather is. Go out and find what you're wearing, who your parents were. And so it was all of that kind of build up that I had to be taught you see. My parents didn't carry on like that. [Laughs] Except my father was, after he was blinded in the Second World War, he became a wonderful character actor. But my mother didn't sort of go about things like that. So it was all... that was all a revelation to me. And we had criticisms a lot, you know every month or... with all the directors. And you were criticised mercilessly. And you had to sit there and take it. And you were so self conscious that somebody else had to take down your notes for you, you see, because you couldn't hear them because you were so embarrassed by yourself.

AP: Yes, so it was... so just for the record, for people listening to this without the background, your parents both actors, and they'd met I presume before the 1945 early limit of this. But just to give a little bit of background to the Knight family acting saga I suppose, that... and your father was Esmond White, who'd been...

RK: Knight, Knight, K.N...

AP: Knight, sorry. Yes, Knight. Esmond Knight. And your mother's name?

RK: Was Frances Clare – C.L.A.R.E. And she was a light comedy actress, who worked a lot with Ivor Novello, not singing but playing the straight parts. And so she'd met my father in Autumn Crocus or Wild Violets or something. I mean, I don't know what the piece was – Wild Violets I think, whatever that was – and they you know, got married. And so I was born in the thirties, and they'd been married for four or five years before I came along.

AP: Right, and then... so was it... was there a certain... I don't know if I'm reaching too far here, was there a certain rebellion in you going to the Old Vic. That to be an actor but in a very... it seems a very different way?

RK: Actually not at all, because my father had been at proper school with Glen Byam Shaw, which is why we had been invited to go to see As You Like It and The Snow Queen in the first place. And my father... now where are we, we are after the Second World War of course, and my father had become a very good character actor. And so of course he himself trained at the Old Vic with Lillian Bayliss in 1925.

AP: Oh right.

RK: Yes, of course he did. He was a, you know an absolute paid student – his mother paid Lillian Bayliss to have him there you know, about £1.50 a week, 30/- a week or something. Yes, so I mean it was all wonderfully natural. Yes.

AP: Right. Gotcha. So that was... so you were at the Old Vic School for how long then?

RK: Two years.

AP: Two years.

RK: Yes.

AP: And do you do any... did you begin to do anything else during that time or was it just theatre school?

RK: No, just theatre school. And it was set out in West Dulwich, so it was quite a long way out you see. And the hours were 9.30 in the morning 'til 9.30 at night. Two years, Monday to Friday, and so there was no possible time of doing anything else.

AP: No. That's very intense then.

RK: Yes.

AP: And so then... so you finished there, that would have been...

RK: 1952.

AP: 1952. And what happened then?

RK: Well then I went into rep for quite a long time, and was a stage manager for about two years – that was very shocking. But I was sort of very bossy. And then I moved up to stage management and did some... the same old plays that were going on in the West End you know. There was *The Deep Blue Sea*, and there was something called *The Seventh Veil*, and there was something called *Johnny Belinda* – they were films. But all those sorts of plays I stage-managed, or had a small part in.

In one company I was with a lot of people I'd been trained with, in the West of England Theatre Company. But then amazingly – and we must be in about 1954/5 now – one of the people who had been at the Old Vic Theatre School, called Frank Dunlop, wanted to open up a theatre in a place called Chorlton-cum-Hardy in Manchester. And he invited

various people who'd been at the Old Vic Theatre School, to come up and be part of it, like George Hall who later went on to be Principal of the Central School of Speech and Drama. Like me, like Avril Elgar, like James Maxwell and Liam Montague, to start this little theatre above the Conservative club in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. Doing different plays – things like *The Women Have Their Way*, and Chekhov's little farces, my God they're difficult to do! God! Crumbs! And *Therese Raquin* and things. So there we were, you know still together doing this amazing work for £5 a week in Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

AP: And you were at that point acting in these?

RK: And stage managing.

AP: And stage managing.

RK: Yes, that was the last time I did stage management though. I thought after that 'I'm never going to do it again!'. So I'd done it for two years, or more.

AP: And where else... what other companies did you stage manage for in that... that little... those two years? Any stand out particularly?

RK: Well the West of England Theatre Company, and the Midland Theatre Company. And then this *Piccolo* – it was called the *Piccolo Theatre Company* – this amazing... And the other person who was part of the management of it was a man called Richard Negri, who was an inspirational designer, who funnily enough had been trained at the Old Vic Theatre School as well. [Laughs]

AP: And what was it... was it difficult getting audiences doing Chekhov, doing different...?

RK: Yes, a very good question. I can hardly remember whether it was. I'm sure it was difficult. It lasted for two very colourful, extraordinary seasons, this here club, above the Conservative club in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. But it made a great impression, because people who came to see it kept the programmes and remembered... well later - years and years and years later - we moved back and opened the Royal Exchange. But we did something else in Manchester in the middle, before those great days.

AP: And shall we skip ahead to that, or would you go to...?

RK: Well... and I just want to say something about... now we're sort of mid-fifties now. One of the top teachers and directors at the Old Vic Theatre School was George Devine. And I remember him coming in one day in our last term – and I had a wonderful part for the final show, directed by George Devine in *The Provoked Wife* by Wycherley, George directing. And he came in one day before our rehearsal, and sat on the edge of the

stage, and drummed his feet like he did. And he said, 'I was in a tube train today, and a man said to me 'what do you do?'. And I said, 'well I'm an actor and a teacher in the theatre'. And this man said to me, 'Well, what do you want to do with your life?' And George Devine drummed his shoes against the bottom of the stage. And he said, 'Well, I said to him "I want to change the face of British theatre".' And I thought 'oh charming! I mean, that's a very modest desire George', I thought sarcastically. So some years later he started, he opened up the Royal Court Theatre. And in the first season there was a play called... there was a play called *The Crucible* first, by Arthur Miller. That wasn't the first play, but it was in the first season. An eye opener – marvellous, thrilling, wonderful, fabulously staged, very exciting.

Then along came *Look Back in Anger*. And we went; there was a whole bunch of us who'd been together for a long time. And we adored the first act, because that was like how we all lived. And that we all got furious with the posh Sunday paper supplements which had just been introduced then, showing us how we should live design-wise. You know, there were cups and saucers and the thermos flasks, and the bendy chairs that we should all be having and things. And we did get furious with these Sunday supplements, which of course they are furious with in the play of *Look Back in Anger*. We thought yes, yes, yes, this is it, this is how we live now, and what we're about. But we all went off it in the second half. This was a preview – no a dress rehearsal as they were called in those days – that we saw. The crits hadn't come out yet. And so we half liked it. But we didn't of course quite realise that it was going to change the face of the British theatre quite as much as it did.

AP: And this was the... who went to see it, this was the same group that had been in Manchester?

RK: Some of them.

AP: Some of them.

RK: Some of them. A man called Casper Wrede and Dilys Hamlett, and a young ex-undergraduate from Oxford University called Michael Elliott. He wasn't with us, but I remember spotting him in the audience and on the steps of the Royal Court afterwards. And I thought, as I had thought for quite some time before that, who is that, who is that person? I've seen him around Chelsea. He happened to be there at this... And so I think we all conjoined to a pub. I didn't yet know this Michael Elliott. And Avril Elgar and James Maxwell, and we sort of tore it to bits in our typical, young, ghastly way that we had. And we also tore *Salad Days* to bits as well when we saw that. We were shocked at the boring, bourgeois, middle-classness of that when we saw it.

AP: And so this was... so just to go back just slightly, you had the theatre just outside... on the club... just above the Conservative club. And then that finished, and what did you go on to do at that point?

RK: I tried to lose a lot of weight. I remember that very clearly. And I rolled on the floor for hours and hours, trying to take off weight. And I decided that I must not do any

more stage managing. Now what in the world happened then? I wonder if I went into a revue – and I can't remember what it was called – at the Arts Club, and played a debutante. And a man called Frank Launder came to that review, because his wife was in it. And then he thought I would be good in a St Trinian's film.

AP: That was the Blue Murder...

RK: Yes, yes. And I think that's what all started to happen after trying to lose weight.
[Laughs]

AP: Right. And I think that should bring us more or less up to the same time that we're talking about, with the Royal Court and Look Back in Anger were around.

RK: No, it was a bit... I'm sure Royal Court and Look Back in Anger was just a bit before or...

AP: Just a bit before all of that?

RK: Yes, I think so.

AP: Right. So in any case we're in the mid to late fifties at this point. And with that, so you'd had... I mean that must have had been for you, particularly... for all of you, particularly significant, coming from the Old Vic Theatre School, and knowing George Devine...

RK: Absolutely, because a lot of us got employed there in various things. I mean, I was in a play called Platonov by Chekhov, with Rex Harrison and Rachael Roberts, and Ronnie Barker. I mean, what a cast! Wonderful. Except Rex Harrison was damn lazy, and he'd never turn in a performance properly, which was just so frustrating. And I worked there in a farce called Cuckoo in the Nest, and I worked there in an extraordinary play by John Arden, in Masks with Peter Bowles. You know we all did allsorts of different... Thank God! At last we're moving out into something different.

AP: Yes. Do you remember which was the John Arden play? Which one of his?

RK: Oh it's something to do with a hospital. Do you know any John Arden plays?

AP: I do. I'm not sure about the one with the hospital in.

RK: And we... except for Peter Bowles, who was the doctor... Edward Fox was in it as well, and we wore masks.

AP: It sounds extraordinary.

RK: It was, very difficult. We wore white masks. What in the world could that be called? I think it was quite a short play. [The Happy Heaven] I wonder if there were two plays in that.

AP: Yes. It would be easy to figure out, there'll be...

RK: Would it?

AP: Yes.

RK: Yes, it's just that I don't often think about that play.

AP: Sure. Now when you say masks, were they full-face masks?

RK: No, half - like that.

AP: Right.

RK: White, with no character at all. And we... of course that's what we had been taught at the Old Vic School, that's what had made us confident and everything. Huge, huge classes in maskwork – Greek masks, comedy masks, everything. Great, very, very helpful, very good.

AP: And do you remember who taught those? Do you remember?

RK: Michel Saint-Denis – the humourless French man. He scared us all the death. And some people loathed... and he ruined a lot of people's lives and careers.

AP: Just because he was frightening or...?

RK: Because he was so damn destructive you know. I'm sure he didn't like the English really. And he thought we were so inhibited and restricted. And he was always trying to open the girls up, in every sense. [Laughs]

AP: [Laughs] Gotcha! And so that was... so moving back forwards to the Royal Court, and that was... was the work you were doing mostly at the Royal Court at that point or sort of...?

RK: No, no. You know, films, and I was in some jolly British films called the Carry On's – Carry on Nurse and Carry on Teacher. So I got into this strange comedy stream you see. What with the review that had started it all. And then St Trinian's. And at that time of Carry on Nurse – we're into 1958 now – I was starting to go out with Michael Elliott. And he was an intellectual and an inspiring person, although ramshackle. And they didn't realise, the Carry On team, that I wasn't under any sort of contract. And I got very little money, so little I can't remember. Perhaps it was £50 a week, I expect. And I thought 'I don't think Michael Elliott would approve if I went on making this trash. So... also I'm getting so little money I'll ask for more money'. So the minute I asked for more money, they said, 'well, how much more money do you want?'. And I said, 'Well, another £50 week - £100'. They said, 'Good God, no!'. So that was all right - that got me out of all of that you see, doing these funny films. And I expect I'd done bits of crapulous telly as well. So then I could concentrate on being with Michael Elliott. So then we get to a little thing called the '59 Theatre Company. Heard of that?

AP: Yes I have. Just a bit, so...

RK: We're 1959 now, you see.

AP: Yes.

RK: Which was at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. And this fellow ex-student, Casper Wrede from Finland, who had been on the production course at the Old Vic School, and had married Dilys Hamlett, who was on the Old Vic Theatre School course as well. He started this '59 Theatre Company at the Lyric, Hammersmith. He had met Michael at Oxford University, as an undergraduate. Casper had gone there to do two productions with Dilys Hamlett and James Maxwell, and Avril Elgar, all of whom had been at the Old Vic Theatre School. And they met this man Michael Elliott, who was a... this ramshackle undergraduate.

Casper did a production of Danton's Death, which opened the season at the Lyric. Fantastic. Wonderful, fantastic. Designed by Malcolm Pride, who'd been a student at the Old Vic Theatre School – design student. Then he did Creditors. They did a new play, and then he invited Michael to do Brand by Ibsen, with Patrick McGoohan as the leading man. This was very, very difficult to rehearse. Designed by Richard Negri. Sound and fury and lights by Theatre Project's one Richard Pilbrow, all part of this creative team.

AP: Wow!

RK: Yes, it was 'wow!'. And Brand... the first night of Brand was something to be seen to be believed. Michael had said to Patrick McGoohan, 'Don't push it. Don't force it. Just let it come on the press night.' And at that time we just had one dress rehearsal and then

we opened. So it started the press night. And quite a lot of the great and the good were there.

And it, you know, started slowly and everything. And finally an actor called Fulton McKay – who was the leader of the townsmen, chasing Brand up the mountain, because they were so disgusted with his behaviour – he had to pick up a mind stone and throw it at Brand. Now the force and the weight and the viciousness of that mind stone had to be seen to be believed. And Patrick McGoohan received it, and became furious as the character of Brand. And then he piled on the pace, the intensity, the agony, the passion, the fury... we're getting to the top of the mountain now. He meets Gerd, the bird/woman/girl. And then there is the hugest avalanche we've ever seen or heard in the British theatre. And darkness. And then out of the darkness comes the voice of God, which was the voice of Michael Elliott saying he is the God of Love.

Well, I mean it was just a huge success. And people poured into the theatre – Lyric Hammersmith – to see it. The notices were ecstatic, and the beginning of Michael Elliott's career was made.

AP: Well that's fantastic. And so that was in... what happened after that with the...?

RK: [Laughs] With the company?

AP: Yes.

RK: Well they... I think they went on to do some new plays – I wish I could remember the name of one of them. What was it called? Alun Owen I think the writer was. Ronnie Harwood was around in a very lowly capacity. Not as one of us yet. You know the name Ronald Harwood?

AP: Yes.

RK: He's a screen writer for Hollywood and stuff now, and playwright. But I don't think... I can't remember if he wrote one of the plays. He might have done. Alun Owen, I'm sure, was one of them. So it went on again like everything for another season I'm sure.

So we're now into... that was 1959 Theatre Company. We get into 1960/61, and Michael Elliott is asked to take over the Old Vic Theatre – marvellous! There's a nice sort of synchronicity there. Takes it over, and he says 'I want to change the shape of the proscenium'. So Richard Negri redesigned the proscenium arch. And they did a season of Peer Gynt, Merchant of Venice and Othello and The Alchemist, directed by Tyrone Guthrie, and Measure for Measure. I was in half the season myself. I was pregnant. But this is where all the training of the Old Vic Theatre School came into play, in the trolls, because funnily enough you'll be amazed to hear that there were quite a lot of students from the Old Vic Theatre School in the company. And George Hall, who had been at the Old Vic Theatre School too, he was sort of part helping with the movement with Litz Pisk, who'd been our teacher, and the music. And we worked for, oh days and days and days, on the trolls. And then finally George Hall said that they were wonderful, the trolls, in rehearsal, in our ordinary, everyday clothes. And we were sort of jellified and

horrifying and sinister and slimy - you know, that sort of nastiness, which is quite difficult to get really. And George said when we got into the costumes designed by Richard Negri, all of that went, because the costumes were sort of beaky and spiky, and strange birds. So everything that had been worked on went away. He only said that years and years and years and years later. I thought it was ever so interesting though. A great pity, because the production itself and the design itself – apart from the dear old trolls – was marvellous. My father played the troll king. My father was now part of this whole entourage of us all, and was used a lot by Michael Elliott – and I think Casper Wrede. So that was very fine, the season at the Old Vic. Wonderful, and we all loved it. And then lo and behold along comes the management of something called the National Theatre, with Laurence Olivier. And they say to Michael, 'I'm sorry, we're going to requisition this Old Vic Theatre building for us - for the National Theatre now - and you must go'. So he finished up with a marvellous production of Measure for Measure, with a wonderful set by Malcolm Pride. And that was the end of us in the Old Vic Theatre.

AP: Oh right. Oh what a shame!

RK: Oh I should say so! So there were years in the wilderness then. Then we... shall I go on?

AP: Yes, keep going.

RK: Michael... it was years in the wilderness. And Michael Meyer, who translated a lot of Ibsen with Michael Elliott, he met somebody called Graham Murray, who was running a company called the Century Theatre in Manchester, which sometimes did some work in the university theatre there, which was you know, a theatre that belonged to the university for the undergraduates and people to use. But the joy of that was that it was adaptable. So that you could have an apron stage, you could have a stage right in the middle. I mean, it's so absolutely NOW, but at that time it wasn't. So we're talking aren't we... we're talking of 1963... no, wait, the years in the wilderness were 1962 to 1965.

So Michael went up and looked at this university theatre. And thought 'yes, that would be very interesting'. But of course it belonged to the university, for the use thereof. So he spoke to Hugh Hunt, who ran the university drama department, and suggested... wondered whether it would possible to have a professional company in the university theatre, let's say three times a year, to do two plays at a time, which was you know paid and everything. Now I can't remember where the money came from of course. And Hugh Hunt finally agreed.

So then Michael Elliott moves up to Manchester – which he hates as a city unfortunately – and starts doing some wonderful work at the university theatre. And that's called... that was started in 1968. But it was called the 69 Theatre Company, in order to match with the 59 Theatre Company ten years before. And they felt that it would make its mark in 1969, which is in fact exactly what happened, because they did a very jolly production of She Stoops To Conquer in 1968, which suddenly London managements and people wanted to bring into town, because Tom Courtney was in it, Nigel Terry, Trevor Peacock, myself, Juliette Mills. It is... quite, quite sparky people.

And so we brought it... it was brought into London, to the Garrick Theatre in 1969 and indeed made a big success – and ran for about six months. There were other wonderful things in the university theatre too. There was Hamlet, fantastic production of The Tempest, Mary Rose, Daniel Deronda – a story by George Eliot.

AP: Yes.

RK: Yes. Vanessa Redgrave as Gwendolyn Harleth, I mean you can't... oh, she was magnificent. She and I had worked, with Michael, in As You Like It, at Stratford-on-Avon you see, together in... then she'd made her success as Rosalind, directed by Michael Elliott. So we were all old hands with one another.

AP: Now was that the... the As You Like It production, was that Royal Shakespeare Company or was it pre-Royal...?

RK: Yes. No, it was the very year that it became the Royal Shakespeare Company. It was that year that the Royal Charter was given to it.

AP: Oh right, so that was Peter Hall... when Peter Hall was the...

RK: Yes, yes.

AP: Right, gotcha! Excellent.

RK: In 1961 I think.

AP: Yes.

RK: Yes.

AP: So that's... we're up to the '69 Theatre Company, now in Manchester. We can keep going. Don't worry about the 1968 rule, we'll keep going, because I'm curious. We've got about... for a standard hour interview we've still got about 12/13 minutes so...

RK: Oh, well that's absolutely splendid. During this time, in the '69 Company... I can't remember how long that lasted. Let's say something like three years. And these wonderful productions – professional productions – were done in the theatre. The burghers of Manchester were always pleading with Michael and Casper to take over one of their big theatres, like the Opera House, or the Palace Theatre. And Michael said, 'No, no! I do not want to work in a proscenium shape, I'm not interested. No, no, no.' That's one thing.

Another thing was that we met, a great group of us, often, like every two months at our flat – actors, theatre projects, designers, directors, stage managers, and later on architects – to talk about what sort of theatre we'd think we'd like. You know, it's terribly difficult just to talk in space, in absentia of anything else concrete there. And then one day a stockbroker in his bath thought 'My God! There's that great space above Boots in the centre of Manchester, where the Royal Exchange used to be. I wonder if Michael would be interested in that?'. So he rang him up, and he said, 'I know this immense space, right in the middle of Manchester on the first floor. Would you come up and look at it?' And he and Michael and Bob Scott went up by train, and saw this enormous space where the cotton exchange had been. Dirty, grey parquet floor. Lots of men's urinals down one side. Some old leather sofas in the middle of this vast space, and he said, 'Yes, that's it. We'll create this. We'll do something here.' 'Ha, ha.' said the burghers of Manchester. 'How marvellous, marvellous, thrilling.'

So then Richard Negri has to design a space... I mean a theatre. You know went through many manifestations, and finally came up with a round glass thing. Then we had... they had to find an architect. They interviewed lots of architects, and a firm called Levitt Bernstein were chosen, because they answered to it immediately. And they said, 'Oh yes, it's like a rose. It's like a rose sailing in the middle of the sea.' Richard Negri thought that was quite wonderful. So then they were on board, to come into all the various meetings, which were now to discuss what the dressing rooms would be like, what the stage door space would be like, what the Green Room would be like, what the people would be like who ran these spaces. What the workshop would be like, and things you see, all thrashed out between us all.

And then we started to build it, and turn over every single parquet brick on the floor, and varnish it. And the building had to be a hung building, because it was too heavy. It would have fallen right through the floor into Boots the Chemist. So he had to use poles from the oil rigs of the North Sea, and hang the buildings in the false marble pillars, so it sat there, hanging. All the glass... And we had to raise money of course in all sorts of ways. We opened it in 1976 - we hadn't paid for it by that time. There was thousands outstanding, but Robert Scott, our administrator, thought of the lottery. And he thought 'Let us have a lottery in the Town'. And you can buy a £10 ticket or... no you can buy the certain tickets for £2 let's say, and you could win £5 or £10 or £1. And within a year that had paid for the building.

AP: Oh wow!

RK: Yes.

AP: Oh right, that's amazing.

RK: Yes, that's it.

AP: Well thank you so much.

RK: Have you got any questions?

AP: Well I think actually it's so sort of nicely wrapped up. I think we can probably finish up there.

RK: Right.

AP: Wonderful. Yes. Great, so we were just talking about the... with Vanessa Redgrave in *As You Like It*, and Tony Richardson, and that heading on to... so that was... and of course that goes back with Tony Richardson to the Royal Court, and all of that scene, going back then, the Old Vic.

RK: Yes, yes.

AP: And then that went on to you being involved in *Tom Jones*.

RK: Yes, because I didn't know Tony Richardson at the Royal Court. But he was in love with Vanessa Redgrave in 1961, giving this amazing performance of Rosalind in *As You Like It*. And I played this small, dark Celia, who pierced the bubble of Rosalind's effusiveness all the time. I must say the chemistry between us is very good. We've worked together since, and it always works. She and I, it's just some sort of extraordinary chemistry that happens. It was quite difficult in rehearsal, but that's another story. But it does work marvellously. And so Tony Richardson thought I would be... he came to see it often, to see her. And he thought I would be good as Mrs Fitzpatrick in his *Tom Jones*. So that was quite wonderful for me. Vanessa wasn't in it, no, but various people we knew were.

AP: Yes. And of course quite a significant film for British cinema, and for how films were put together.

RK: Absolutely. And did you know the story of the fact that it had... that it had a score on it, and they showed it, and it was not at all a good film. And people didn't like it at all.

AP: Oh right.

RK: And they... they sort of were in despair. And somehow they thought supposing we put different music on, might that do it. And that's exactly what happened. They pulled it all together. The completely new different score, after it had been edited and put together and everything.

AP: How amazing.

RK: Yes, amazing.

AP: That's incredible. Great, well I'm going...[to turn the recorder off]