

THEATRE ARCHIVE PROJECT

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Michael Grade – interview transcript

Interviewer: Sue Barbour

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Chief Executive of ITV. ATV; Billy Cotton and his Band; Blackpool variety; Bernie Delfont, Baron Delfont; Delfont and Toko; dressing rooms; Foster's Agency; GAC (Buddy Howe); Lew and Leslie Grade Ltd; Leslie Grade; Lew Grade, Baron Grade; The Grade Organisation; Laurel and Hardy; London Palladium; Billy Marsh; Moss Empires; Val Parnel; running orders; Richard Tauber; Bob Williams; Cissie Williams.

SB: This is Sue Barbour from the University of Sheffield interviewing Michael Grade, son of Leslie Grade and nephew of Lew Grade and Bernard Delfont. First of all, Michael, I would like to ask you if you are in agreement for this interview to be used for the British Library Theatre Project and for future generations to learn about Variety Theatre.

MG: Absolutely. Very happy.

SB: Well, first of all, I would like to ask you...Where were you born and brought up?

MG: I was born in London in 1943. I was brought up in London. We lived for a short time in Bournemouth at the end of the war, but mostly in London.

SB: Oh right. And what I wanted to ask you was... what were your earliest recollections of you coming from a show business family?

MG: From a very, very early age I can remember events that I couldn't place the date of but clearly when I was four, five or six I can remember Richard Tauber, the great tenor, coming to tea with Uncle Bernie and Auntie Carol, as I called them and falling through the deck chair in the garden of the house. We had a house in Buckinghamshire and he came to tea and I can remember him vividly. I can remember Richard Tauber because it was a big event... you know, "Richard Tauber's coming to tea!".

SB: Yes.

MG: Bernie was trying to persuade him to go round the Music Halls, rather than just playing the Opera Houses and I think he was a bit short of the money, Richard Tauber,

and it didn't take a lot of persuading [SB: laughs]. He'd been in a show with Carol, my Aunt, Bernie's wife and Bernie put him round the Music Halls.

SB: Oh yes.

MG: I can remember – earliest memories – going to Finsbury Park Empire, sitting on a bucket in the wings seeing my Auntie Cathy, Lew's wife, in Babes in the Wood.

SB: Really?

MG: Playing Principal Boy. I can remember seeing Carol Delfont in pantomime at the Casino, which is now the Prince Edward.

SB: Yes.

MG: The Prince Edward. My step-mother Audrey was also in pantomime. She used to play the Romantic Lead. So, that was kind of... It was in the family.

SB: Yes.

MG: And of course, we used to go - when I wasn't at boarding school - we used to go to a lot of First Nights at the Palladium. We used to sit in C12 and 13 at the Palladium opening nights. I remember seeing Johnny Ray, Guy Mitchell, Frankie Laine, The Inkspots. All those Headline Acts and being fascinated... I just loved... I loved the Comedians. That was my favourite. I used to love watching the Comedians... and the Spesh Acts. The Comedy Spesh Acts. I loved the Nitwits or any of those kinds of acts I loved.

SB: Yes. Mmm.

MG: Jo, Jac and Joni.

SB: Oh, Jo, Jac and Joni, yes. Fabulous.

MG: With the kettle drum.

SB: Yes.

MG: And the soup!

SB: Yes. So agency-wise, your Dad was a Theatrical Agent?

MG: Well, the way the family grew up... There were three brothers and a sister. But, the three brothers in age: The oldest was Lew, next was Bernie and then there was my father, Leslie. And the family were absolutely impoverished - no welfare state - living in the sort of Jewish Ghetto of the East End. Lew got a scholarship; he was a very good mathematician. Very good at Maths and got a scholarship so had a pretty good education but there was a need to get food on the table and their father had died - my grandfather had died very young from Hodgkin's Disease - died very, very young so my grandmother was left bringing up four children with no money. Absolutely nothing. Penniless. And Lew had developed a bit of a talent for dancing - Charleston dancing - and had entered some competitions just to win some bottles of Brandy or whatever, that they could flog and then took it up professionally because he realised that there was money to be made on the stage but Lew being Lew, it was a very energetic act. It was about eight minutes, fast and furious, on the top of a table! Small, little table with high legs - like a stool almost - and the finish of the act was... he would jump onto the stool and do the Charleston, double-time, on the top of the stool and the big finish was... he'd jump off and land on his knees and take the applause. Of course, it bugged his knees pretty quickly and he realised.... He started ringing.... He got a lot of bookings around the Continent; Paris, Belgium and places and he spotted acts and he'd ring his agent in London and say, 'I've just seen a very good act. You should book them'. And he realised he had a talent for it and thought, 'What am I giving them the money for? I can do it myself'.

SB: Yes.

MG: And he went into business with Joe Collins. It was Collins and Grade, the agency. Joe Collins was Joan Collins' father. He was an agent. Bernie also went on the stage, that's why his name's Delfont because they didn't want two Variety Dancing Acts [called Grade]. Bernie was much more... he had an elegant act. Bernie didn't break sweat. Lew was all sweat and double-time, you know.

SB: Yes.

MG: Bernie was all... very well dressed, smooth. Had a partner... very attractive women... Toko... Delfont and Toko.

SB: That's right.

MG: That's why he changed names and then he was partners with Hal Monty - Albert Sutan was his name. They had... Delfont Boys... Anyhow, my father had no talent to go on the stage but got a job as an office boy for Miss Ledington, who ran the Number 2 circuit. Can't remember the name of the circuit but owned the Met, Edgware Road.

SB: Oh, yes.

MG: Not Moss Empires but the next one. Syndicate Theatres or something. I can't remember the name of it. Anyway, he got a job as her office boy. And his job was to bank the 'bungs' that she used to get from the bookers. He used to take the cash in the envelope and take it to the Post Office for her. Anyway, he quickly set up on his own as an agent. Lew had an argument with Joe Collins and my father said, 'Why don't we work together?' and they became Lew and Leslie Grade.

SB: Mmm.

MG: They were Variety Agents. Absolutely, Variety Agents. Just booking Variety Acts. And Bernie meanwhile had fallen in love with what one might call the 'once nightly' theatre – the West End – rather than the Variety Theatre.

SB: Right.

MG: And he put on shows and began to become an Impresario and producer of the sort of Cochran vein.

SB: Yes.

MG: Cameron Mackintosh sort of vein, today. And, my father and Lew built up the agency and it was mostly Speciality Acts and... although the Stars that they had – Billy Cotton and his Band. My father was Billy Cotton and his Band's agent and the early stars that they had... I'm trying to remember... my father wasn't the agent but he was very friendly with George Formby. George Formby was very good and helped my father a lot.

SB: Mmm.

MG: Who else was there in those early days... I can't remember... it'll come to me. Anyhow, little by little... Then the big break came. Val Parnell used to book the Palladium and the Moss Empires circuit and he was very, very thick with a man - because he used to play golf with him - called Harry Foster. The Foster's Agency was the big agency and Foster... Harry Foster had an arrangement with the William Morris Agency in America, who had Danny Kaye and all the American Stars and all the American Stars came through the Morris office, straight to the Palladium and Lew and my father couldn't break that thing to get at the Palladium, which was the thing. Eventually a new agency built up in America called GAC with a guy called Buddy Howe, who had been a dancing act that Lew and my father had booked. I can't remember what the name of the act was but Buddy Howe was the guy.

SB: Yes.

MG: And he became the agent for all the new recording stars that suddenly emerged. From Frankie Laine, Johnny Ray, Nat King Cole. All those people would work through GAC. Because of my father's relationship with Buddy Howe they broke the Foster's/Moss Empires – Harry Foster/Val Parnell golfing cosiness - because Val needed these acts.

SB: Yes.

MG: And that's how they got into the Palladium. And the Morris office went back because they didn't have the kind of acts that the Palladium needed.

SB: Mmm.

MG: And Lew and my father had all the big Stars.

SB: Yes.

MG: Frank Sinatra, they brought over.

SB: Yes.

MG: ...and so on and that was the foundation. And then, Lew and Val began to get very, very close and they had an office opposite the Palladium which – 235 Regent Street – then one day in 1954 – '53 or '54, Lew and my Dad had adjoining offices and Lew came into my father, "Leslie", he said, "Have a look at the times". And my father said, "What do I want to read The Times for, I'm trying to book some acts here you know". And in The Times was an advertisement, which said, "Invitation to apply for Commercial Television Licenses. Independent Television Authority". And Lew had been to America, which was a big thing in those days. No one flew to America. It took forever. You re-fuelled in Greenland or something – to get there. And Lew had been to Los Angeles and brought back Dorothy Lamour and Bob Hope for the Palladium.

Lew travelled. He'd seen the power of television in America and he said to my father, 'Leslie, we're going into the television business'. To which, my father replied, 'What with?' - because they didn't have a pot to piss in, quite honestly- And Lew said, 'Don't worry, we'll find the money'. And that was how they started and they got Val involved, so Moss Empires invested and various... Pye which was a big industrial manufacturing business and the Daily Mirror Group, eventually, and they launched ATV which was 'Sunday Night at the Palladium' and all that. But, my Dad stayed with the Agency business and Lew went to work with Val and they shared an office.

SB: Did they... when they went into television... Did they think that the two – Variety and TV – would work together or...

MG: Absolutely, absolutely. I mean, if you were with The Grade office... If you were with Lew and Leslie Grade, which later became The Grade Organisation, you were halfway to getting onto television, which was important. They had the influence. They did Sunday Night at the London Palladium. They did all the shows; Thursday Spectacular, Saturday... Showtime, you know, it was all Variety Shows and the rest of it and they had...

SB: So do you think Television damaged Variety?

MG: No. I think Variety was a thing of its time. I think that it would have come to an end but I think that television hastened its end because to get booked you had to be on television and once you'd been on television everybody had seen the act. There were people in Variety, when I got involved as an agent later, who had been doing the same act - and we'd book the same act - for thirty years! They went on and did the same thing over and over again and once you'd been on television a few times, there was no novelty value any more. Everybody had seen it. So, that kind of hastened the end. There's a famous quote from Val Parnell, which I love to quote. He was quite acerbic, Val and he was asked by a Press man, you know, about the demise of Variety, you know, 'What are you going to do as the Variety Theatre... its popularity is waning?' And Val said, 'Well, we've got a plan. We're going to close Liverpool Empire and if that works, we'll close them all!' [Both laugh].

SB: Oh, yes. Now, apparently, I read somewhere – and I don't know if it's true or not – that Val got in with a development company or he had some partnership or something with some development company?

MG: I don't know anything about that.

SB: Because, I can't remember where I read it, but it was saying the same sort of thing, that if they closed one theatre... they made enough money to put into television...

MG: Yes, Oh, I see. I don't know anything about that.

SB: I wanted to ask you about the link between Moss Empires and The Grade Organisation. Did they have – I know they had Sole Agency agreements with the acts – but how did they... because The Grades seemed to book most of Moss Empires.

MG: The reason that The Grade office was able to book so much of the Moss Empires... Fill so many of the Moss Empires... They had the attractions. They had the Headline Attraction. If you had the Headline Attraction....

SB: Then you put in the bill?

MG: Yes. I mean, the first person to do that was - Moss Empires, Val and Cissie Williams
 -

SB: Yes, Cissie!

MG: Val and Cissie just booked the acts direct. Never let anybody put the shows in. They'd keep all the profits. They'd just pay you a booking fee. You'd get your acts and then sell your acts to Moss Empires. But, Bernie, in 1947, I think, brought over Laurel and Hardy, as an attraction. And Bernie, and Billie Marsh - my late partner who taught me the business, God rest his soul - he and Bernie went to see Cissie Williams about the deal. To get the dates and seal the deal for Laurel and Hardy. And Cissie said, 'Well, yes I guess we could put them in. They might be a bit of an attraction'. You know, playing hard to get. And Bernie said, 'Well, we're going to put the bill in. We're going to do it, we're going to put the show in'. 'We never do it. Mr. Val will never agree to that'. 'Well, then you won't get Laurel and Hardy. We'll put them in a tent'.

Well, anyway, that kind of broke the Moss Empires monopoly in the Variety Theatres and Bernie put Laurel and Hardy around the Music Halls. And Cissie Williams uttered the immortal line - they were trying to do the deal, what the percentage was going to be and all the rest of it - and she was giving them a hard time on the deal and - Billy told me the story - Billy said to her, 'But, Cissie, I don't know what your arguing about. They're going to sell out every possible seat, every possible performance. You know, they're going to do fourteen performances a week' - or whatever it was in those days - 'What are you worried about?' and she said, 'That's no good to us', she says, 'the theatres full. All that wear and tear on the carpets!' [Both laugh]. It was the only argument she could come up with! And then eventually, the big thing was those big revues at the Palladium, in the summer.

SB: Yes.

MG: Pantomimes and revues. And again, Moss Empires used to produce them themselves and you'd be booked directly by Moss Empires and then Bernie and Billy discovered Norman Wisdom and Billy and Bernie went to see Val and said, 'Norman would like to do a Summer Season at the Palladium'. Sixteen weeks or whatever it was. And Val said, 'That would be fantastic. A sell-out. Fantastic'. And Bernie said, 'But he's not going to do it unless we put the show in'. And that was the first time that they then let that go and they just became landlords really. They would approve what was in the show and everything but they became landlords.

SB: Mmm. Yes.

MG: And broke the Moss Empires stranglehold. But, Moss Empires - Prince Littler, who was the boss and Val, who ran the business - they put up the money... they put up some of the money that started ATV, which was...

SB: Oh really?

MG: Yes, that's how they were joined at the hip. Eventually, Lew bought Moss Empires. ATV bought Moss Empires.

SB: Oh, did they?

MG: Yes. Bought the theatres. And that was all part of Lew's TV empire.

SB: And what did they do when they bought them? Did they start selling them off?

MG: No. They looked after them, very well. The ones that were left. You know, Bristol Hippodrome, Liverpool Empire, Birmingham Theatre... Birmingham Hippodrome... The Palladium. That was all that was left by then.

SB: Mmm. So, your Dad, did he personally manage any performers?

MG: Oh, yes he did. Very much so. He had a whole... endless string of stars. From... in the early days, I'll give you some of them: Billy Cotton and his Band; Dickie Valentine, who was huge; Dave King, who was huge; probably the biggest personal star that he looked after – not right from the beginning but from very early days, after he had his first hit record – was Cliff Richard. And he really looked after Cliff's career – got him into movies – did all the Cliff Richard movies and all those things, so he was great... But my father had his domestic roster... he had a lot of agents in the office... a big office and they had... He didn't personally look after Arthur Askey, Arthur Haynes, Roy Castle, Kathy Kirby... The Seekers, Des O'Connor, Lonnie Donnigan, Peter Sellers and they were all looked after by different people in the office. My father was also hugely active in bringing the American Stars over for Variety tours and for TV and they eventually did 'Sunday Night at the London Palladium, they did a Variety tour, a week or two at the Palladium and that's how it all worked.

SB: So they all helped each other.

MG: Absolutely. And eventually, Bernie built up a Variety agency under Billie Marsh and Keith Devon and Keith was fantastic. Keith found Winifred Atwell, The Beverly Sisters, Joan Regan...

SB: Ruby?

MG: Ruby Murray, who had five records in the Top Ten. Who sold billions and squillions in those days. The Three Monarchs.

SB: Yes.

MG: Cedrick. And a few others but Billie had found Norman Wisdom, Harry Worth, Frankie Vaughn, Morecambe and Wise, Tony Hancock, Bruce Forsyth and so on.

SB: So, tell me... did they go out and look...?

MG: Billy did.

SB: Billy did? So, if they saw a good act, they would go and..?

MG: Sign them. Well, there's a favourite story of Lew going to New Cross Empire and saw some fantastic Spesh act and rushed back stage in the Interval to see them and said, 'Oh, you're fantastic! Wonderful! Marvellous! The act's sensational. You should be playing better places than this. I can get you here.... I can do this....', he said, 'Who's your agent?' They said, 'You are!' [Both laugh] It's a famous story. You've heard it a thousand times? But I suspect it's true.

SB: I'm sure it's true [Laughs].

MG: That was Lew.

SB: Now, tell me about yourself. How... I know you went into the Grade Organisation...

MG: Well, what happened was I left school when I was seventeen. I didn't go to University and I knew I didn't want to go in the business. Didn't want to go into the family business. I just wanted to be independent, you know. I had a bit of a rebellion. And my father got me a job as a trainee Sports writer on the Daily Mirror. And the Daily Mirror were investors in ATV so it was a real 'sweetheart', who you know, sort of job, which I loved. I did that for six years. 1960-1966. And in 1966 my Dad got very ill. Had a very bad stroke, which incapacitated him for about 12 years before he died. And Bernie took me out to lunch and said, 'Your father's very sick'. My father by this point had bought Bernie's business and Bernie was running it – running the business while my father was sick – and Bernie said to me, 'Michael, you know, you've got to come into the business now, the business needs you'. I said, 'Well, that's a different basis' - to in the beginning which was... it was inevitable - 'If you need me, of course, I'll do it'. And he said, 'Well, I'm going to put you with Billy Marsh. He's going to teach you the business'. Which was the best possible education anyone could have... about integrity, about managing talent, about how to make deals. Yes, it was just... he was the sorcerer and I was the apprentice... He was magic. Absolutely, magical, magical man and I keep a picture of him on my desk.

SB: Really? Oh, do you?

MG: Yes. Over there. He was magical.

SB: Because he was there when I worked there [London Management].

MG: Billy? Yes. And Billy taught me the business and he loved Variety. And I loved Variety. But we were at the end. I came in right at the end. But we used to do Variety Bills and he and I used to have a game. We'd say, 'Here are the acts'. I'd say, 'You do your running order and I'll do my running order', and we never ever came up with a different running order.

SB: Really? [Laughs].

MG: Yes, it was just one of those things.

SB: So, in the early days. Did they always do – in the office – work out the running order and then send it out?

MG: Absolutely. You would work out the running order, then make sure you got.... You would have your Headliner. Then, the next thing is 'who's going to finish the first half'. OK?

SB: Yes.

MG: So, you need a bit of a splash. OK. So, you've got a singing Headliner so you need to open the second act with a Comedian. A few laughs while people are coming in from the bar. Then the Star will do the rest. Or you'd have dancing girls, then a Comic. Or, if you had a Comic Star then you'd want... and you'd work out the sort of ingredients you'd need. Then you'd put the building blocks in place. You'd have a list of names... who's free?.... 'Well, we'll either have Arthur Worsley, or Albert Saveen or one of the vents'. You know, which vent is free?

SB: Yes.

MG: You know, which bicycle act is free?

SB: It must have been really good fun.

MG: I loved it. Absolutely loved it. And of course, we used to do that all round the Summer Seasons. Because the Summer Season shows were basically Variety shows with a bit more money spent on them. A bit more scenery and what have you. But you know,

you'd be booking all the shows in Blackpool. North Pier, Central Pier, South Pier. ABC Blackpool had shows in those days. The Opera House, the Queen's, where else?

SB: and the Grand.

MG: The Winter Gardens and the Grand. Three shows in Bournemouth. Three or four in Yarmouth. Yarmouth, Blackpool, Torquay and Bournemouth were our pitches – where we used to do the shows.

SB: And the other thing I wanted to ask was... the dressing room situation... did you or... do you know if they did that in the office, as well? Who was in which dressing room or...

MG: There was a sort of pecking order. The Top of the Bill would get... the problem you had was when you had co-Tops of the Bill. If you had Jimmy Jewel and Hilda Baker, for example... there'd be murder. So, you'd have to change... You'd get them to change the... you wouldn't have "dressing room number 1" and "number 2", you'd call them by names. Waterloo and Trafalgar. So nobody knew which was the Star dressing room. You used to have to go through all those games. So, you had to think about that but really only so far as the top two or three acts on the bill. After that, it's up to the Company Manager or Stage Manager to allocate the dressing rooms.

SB: And did you used to... I know, originally there wasn't a Company Manager but by the time you got into the business... did you have your own Company Managers?

MG: We had our own Company Managers who ran the shows. Yes.

SB: And they did all the box office receipts?

MG: Yes. They'd send you a telegram overnight, in code, as to what the takings were.

SB: Yes, yes. And did the Stars... Were they on a percentage early on? Or...

MG: Some were. The one that always was... the first one to be on a percentage, I think, was Gracie Fields. She was such a big attraction.

SB: Mmm. Yes.

MG: She was like Elvis Presley would be today. Just a phenomenal attraction and she used to go in on a percentage. But, you know, you'd do the best deal you could with the big talent. You know, it's market forces.

SB: Yes, and also if you had an agreement with most of the theatres to put the acts in then... I mean... the Stars needed the agent as much as the agent needed the stars.

MG: Oh, yes. Yes, we didn't just book only our own talent. There was a lot of talent we booked that we didn't represent. Frankie Howard, Tommy Cooper, Ken Dodd who was with Dave Forester.

SB: So, if you wanted the act it didn't necessarily have to be with you?

MG: No. No, the important thing was to make money out of the show.

SB: Yes.

MG: The commission was secondary. And if we put our own acts into our own shows we didn't charge them commission.

SB: Oh, right. OK. So, when you went with Billy Marsh, did you... you worked side by side with him?

MG: We shared an office.

SB: Oh, did you?

MG: We shared. We had one room, two ashtrays and about twenty telephones! And we just went at it all day and all night. It was wonderful.

SB: And do you miss it at all? Or not? You've got so much going on...

MG: I love television. And once I fell in love with television I could see that was the future. Or, I could see that Variety theatre was... I couldn't see a big future in booking dog acts.

SB: Mmm. And what do you think now, about Variety shows coming back?

MG: I have to say to you... I was saying this to my people here... That if I'd been running ITV 1, as the Controller of the Network, which I used to in the old days and somebody had come in with the idea for Britain's Got Talent – this is where knowledge is a dangerous thing – I would have said, 'I think it's a fantastic idea but all you are going to do is re-create The X Factor because there's no dog acts out there, there's no

Speciality Acts, there's no Ventriloquists, there's no Impressionists'. You're either a Stand-up Comic already, working the clubs – the Comedy Stores around the place – or you're a singer. There's no Variety. You won't find anybody. And now, of course, I switch on and I see, kind of, pale imitations of some of the great Variety acts. It's amazing that people are still doing that. It's wonderful.

SB: I mean, the difficulty for them is... Where do they learn...

MG: I'm still waiting for someone to do Gaston Palmer's act.

SB: Yes, well there's a few acts...

MG: Do you remember Gaston Palmer?

SB: Yes, yes.

MG: With the tray and the glasses? "All the spoons in the glasses"

SB: Well, my Dad was always talking about that.

MG: Tip tap, tip tap, tip tap. And he'd keep getting it wrong and in the end he did it!

SB: And who was the billiard one? He used to catch all the balls... he had a billiard table on his back.

MG: Oh, that was Rudi Cardenes. The other one was Rob Murray. Do you remember Rob Murray? The Australian gentleman.

SB: Yes.

MG: He used to mutter. "Same ol' thing, every night. I'll catch this one. I'll throw three up – that'll please them" – and he used to patter. The best Spesh act of all time – for comedy – was Bob Williams.

SB: Oh fantastic!

MG: "He sees me now" Do you remember that?

SB: Yes [Laughs] That was great.

MG: "Do it again, Louis... a little quicker this time" [Both laugh].

SB: The dog.

MG: This dog. This mutt would sort of collapse on the table. "He sees me now" [Laughs].

SB: They were amazing acts. But, you know when you were saying...

MG: Do you know what happened in Vegas? Bob Williams became famous in Vegas?

SB: Mmm?

MG: And let's say he was in... I don't know which hotel it was but let's say he was at the Tropicana and he was a big hit. People came... he was the talk of Vegas and people said, 'You've got to go and see this guy, Bob Williams'. And he was an attraction, and for a Spesh act that was quite something and his contract came up and another hotel booked him. He did another contract with another hotel. Twice or three times the money or whatever it was. And the people at the Tropicana or whichever hotel it was, got the needle and in those days it was... we're talking MAFIA here... Gangsters... They poisoned the dog.

SB: They didn't!

MG: Yes. And it took him two years to train another dog. He was out of work for two years. After that, he always had two dogs in training.

SB: That's terrible!

MG: Isn't that terrible?

SB: That is... Terrible.

MG: That's a terrible story... Las Vegas in those days.

SB: Yes. [pause] I was thinking... when you were saying about sitting on a bucket on the side of the stage...

MG: Yes.SB: Well, I was brought up standing on the side of the stage but now with 'Health and Safety' ... my daughter has been a Stage Manager... and she was doing Spamalot and she said, 'Isn't it sad' that her son, who's seven, can't stand on the side of the stage and she said, 'You know... it's awful'. And he watched the show from the front and she obviously gives him back stage tours, but she said, 'Well, how can they learn?'

MG: How can they learn? Oh, It's ridiculous.

SB: And... because we always behaved... Because a) we were interested in what was going on and also, we knew we'd never be allowed on the side again if you didn't behave.

MG: Absolutely. Have you talked to John Fisher?

SB: Yes.

MG: Because he's the main one of all this stuff. He's amazing, isn't he? He's got it all.

SB: Yes. I talked to him for an hour and forty-four minutes.

MG: He's wonderful.

SB: And I interviewed Marc Berlin too.

MG: Oh, Marc Berlin. His father, Cyril had Des O'Connor, Shani Wallis, Lonnie Donigan was his big, big Star. The first big, big Star. Arthur Askey, he looked after. I can't remember who else.

SB: Yes. And he was saying that his Dad had booked The Beatles for Australia...

MG: That's right.

SB: Because Brian Epstein was looking for work for them and they didn't get much money I don't think.

MG: No. I'm sure they didn't.

SB: But between signing and doing it they became big... hit the top.

MG: Fantastic. Cyril used to do a lot of business in Australia, that's right.

SB: Yes. So..... really, I'm thrilled to bits about Britain's Got Talent and shows like that...

MG: Variety's back! Isn't it wonderful?

SB: Yes! It is.

MG: Magic!

SB: And hopefully, we'll get a National Variety Archive, at some point.

MG: Fabulous.

SB: That's what I'm working at. Anyway, it's been really great talking to you.

MG: It's a pleasure. A great pleasure.

SB: Thank you very much.