

# THEATRE ARCHIVE PROJECT

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## Tony Dunn – interview transcript

**Interviewer: Dominic Shellard**

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Theatre-goer. Berthold Brecht; Early Morning; fringe theatre; Hedda Gabler; impact of the Lady Chatterley trial; Italian theatre; Liverpool theatre; Living Theatre; Marat/Sade; Mother Courage (Gaskill production); Royal Shakespeare Company; Saved; Paul Scofield's Lear; theatre dress-code; Monica Vitti; The Wars of the Roses.

DS: OK, we've had a brief chat about the areas that you might wish to cover; can we perhaps start with your first experience of going to the theatre.

TD: Well this is going back in the mists of time a bit, but I think that I'd like to start with a theatre, not so much a theatre visit, but an actual theatre performing experience which is also linked to football, and that may seem a strange combination. I was born and brought up in Liverpool, and this particular prologue as it were to what I am going to talk about later occurred in my last year at school. We had a good football team but not as good as the one the previous year. The one the previous year had reached the Shield Final and we played at Goodison Park. And we lost 4-2 in extra time. Goodison Park held 76,000 in those days. There was a stalwart crowd of 400 supporters, but I played at Goodison! The following year the majority of that team left, I was the team captain, I was the oldest and we did reasonably well. I played on the left wing or 'inside left' in the old time terminology. At the same time I had been rehearsing for quite some time for a performance of Romeo and Juliet by a local amateur dramatic society - I think it was called The Merseyside Players - who usually put on a show for about four days at the Liverpool Playhouse after considerable rehearsal. My part was not a large one. Indeed one could have said that it wasn't essential at all. As it turned out, it was. The opening of Romeo and Juliet has two serving men who come on and engage in a bit of chit-chat and then, as it were, the major principals start, as is often the case with Shakespeare. I was one of those serving men and a school mate of mine was the other. We engaged in some banter and then the play started. However, the director introduced a juggling act with oranges - literally orange juggling! And so we'd rehearsed this for three or four weeks and we got very adept at it. The reason I am saying this is this, that this play was performed for four days as I said, including a Saturday matinee and we'd done Thursday and Friday and we'd done them very competently. You can understand from the juggling act that it wouldn't have been easy to replace me, minor though my role was, at the last minute. In the course of this play, it was announced that I had been selected to play for Merseyside Schoolboys. This obviously would have been the apex of my career. But I found myself in a collision with Merseyside Players, you can understand the importance to a boy of 18, Merseyside Schoolboys, Liverpool, need I say more? I was faced with a terrible dilemma, indeed there was no way out of it. On the one hand I had the director saying 'You simply can't let us down' and on the other hand the sports

master saying language which can't be repeated within these four walls. It was a terrible dilemma because I'd have no further opportunity of playing for Merseyside Schoolboys - that was my last year. In the end I decided that I couldn't let down the theatre and therefore I abandoned Merseyside Schoolboys. And I see your approval on this, but it still grates. So that's not the very first experience of theatre, but you can see why it marked - how can I put it? - well, to what I am going to talk about, a sort of prologue. The other memory I have again is the Liverpool Playhouse, because in those days the Liverpool Everyman did not exist and I'll have something to say about that a little later. But my other memory is of a tenure performance of Hedda Gabler there and this was quite popular among us, quite a group of us went.

DS: Roughly when would this have been?

TD: Yes exactly. We must be talking about 1959, 1960. I came down to London as a student in '61 and I think I saw the Gabler a little earlier, and as I say the incident of Merseyside Schoolboys/Players occurred in '61 in my last term. And all I remember is... I think anyone who ever attended that would always remember the same... Tesman had developed a particular angle on his part, Tesman you know is a rather browbeaten husband. And so he'd decided to do it his way, so he had developed a little tic, so whenever he said 'Hedda Gabler' he said 'What do you think of that Hedda, hmm, hmm?' and that's always remained in my mind. So it just shows you it's not always the full script!

DS: That's right.

TD: So that's, as it were, the prologue to really, what I see insofar as I my theatre going and theatre experiences in the 1960's being divided into three blocks or acts - three sections anyway - and I think, looking through my notes, I will have a little epilogue for you at the end, but we'll get to that. I'd divide it in the following way. First of all my experiences of theatre, both as a viewer and also as a player between 1961 and 1965, so that's what I would call the first act or the first block. The second one I would say from 1965 to 1967 when I was living and teaching in Italy, first of all in Northern Italy in Brescia, and then more importantly in Naples and although we're concerned with British theatre, there are one or two experiences I had there that I think had relevance to theatre here, both in that period here, mid sixties but also subsequent to it. So I will attempt to justify that by that kind of information but I think it will be of interest and the third one is really in a sense an unfinished act, it's when I came back to London, did my MA in 1967 and that takes us up to the end of your particular period with as I say perhaps a little epilogue from 1970. That's the structure in a way, well not so much in a way, that's really the structure of my life in that period, and while I'm not saying that my life was all theatre - although one could argue Naples certainly was, by the very nature of the city! I could also say that theatre played a very important part in my, both in my cultural and my personal formation in that period. Perhaps - and I speculate - perhaps it played the kind of role that maybe for students of humanities like myself in this current period or perhaps a little earlier, of cinema, possibly, but I just float that speculatively. So OK, I came down to London in 1961 from Liverpool, direct grant grammar school, Jesuit education, ready to enjoy London to the maximum. This brief experience of theatre that I have mentioned, again notwithstanding the whole theatre of the school education experience, which is not proper for me to go into at this stage but certainly

taught me the values of wit, repartee and resistance to tyranny. I would say first of all it's important where I went to college in London for my theatre formation and that was at Kings. Now, Kings is just across the road from the Aldwych Theatre, and the Aldwych Theatre was the London based branch of the Royal Shakespeare Company from 1960, therefore it had barely established itself there, because it was the receiving house - as it were - for the Stratford performances when I started at College. It was an absolutely marvellous experience, I and my colleagues [had], because there were a lot of people very keen on theatre in that period, very keen indeed. We had a theatre education - it was just across the road, the prices there were cheap prices for students and something that struck me again in comparison with my Liverpool experience and important I think at another time. The RSC I wouldn't say insisted, but was very happy to promote informality of dress. Now this may seem a minor thing, but you as a theatre historian will know just how important these shifts can be, and I am not saying they were the first to do this but I think they were in the vanguard of it. So we got used to going to the theatre dressed as students.

DS: When you said they promoted it, what do you mean by that?

TD: Yes, it's very difficult at this distance in time to give a sense of what I mean. I admit it wasn't as if there was a notice saying 'please dress informally.', it was just that you had no sense when you went there of having to wear a suit and tie. And this may seem absurd to present day students, but it's perfectly true that formality of dress, even for lectures, was still very much the style in 1961. Because in my view - and this is a parenthesis - 1961 was not the beginning of the sixties at all, it was a continuation of the fifties, but there were signs breaking through of what we might call the sixties proper then, but formality of dress for an occasion like the theatre was still very much de rigueur, and likewise, as I said, for lectures. I didn't like this and I didn't conform to this at all, but I'm just saying that a lot of my fellow undergraduates did. So, informality of dress, there was no sense - let me put it this way, there was no sense going there that this was to be a special occasion out of any other of everyday life. And one could argue that the theatre of the sixties began gradually to develop this as a theme - almost as a politics - that the boundaries between theatre and 'everyday life' began to be, by certain directors, as far as possible eroded. This I think was a very central aim of the living theatre, but we will come to that later. So, first of all then, the informality; and looking through my notes, not for that period but more for my second period or the end of the first period, I notice that on a trip to Vienna, hitchhiking tour, student tour of Germany, I notice in 1964 - September '64 - 'not able to get tickets to The Marriage of Figaro at the Vienna State Opera since must wear suit - what pompous nonsense!'. Now that is, that comment arises directly as a result, you follow me of that theatre going experience at the Aldwych.

DS: Does that extend to things like, how you purchased your tickets or where you actually sat in the theatre, all those old sort of divides still in existence in the early sixties?

TD: Very much so, the Aldwych Theatre was a theatre with the gods. It still is, I think, a three-tier theatre of the late nineteenth century. And so we purchased our tickets, we lined up... I can see us now, lining up in a great queue around the corner from the Aldwych, the one that goes up to Drury Lane, queuing for King Lear, which we did for eight hours, taking it in shifts! And in the end our seats were up in the gods certainly,

but as I say, that sense of there being a class - sort of status - division in terms of the architecture did not impinge upon us in terms of what it seemed to us the plays were trying to do, and what it seemed to us - the whole as it were costuming of the situation - both audience and actors seemed to be doing. In other words there was an attempt at... I suppose in those days where people like Brook would have called it democratisation, there was an attempt at that, even though you were working within the confines of a very traditional three tier theatre.

DS: You said earlier that a lot of people were very passionately interested in the theatre in '61.

TD: Yes, of my generation.

DS: Of your generation. What would you put that down to?

TD: I think that's very difficult to analyse, first of all because I am really talking about my immediate colleagues and mates at King's, and we were a very heterogeneous bunch. Indeed, the English department then had a policy of having as significant a contingent as it possibly could from the north of England, so I would have said of a class of 30 - in those days class intakes were 30 for English, yes, with a staff complement of about eight! - I would have said that 50% were from the north of England, so that was a very particular policy - for whatever reason - for the department. I think also that... I don't think any of us were really conscious of the breakthrough by *Look Back in Anger* and so on and so forth, because we... you know, we were too young for that, we was only what, 14, 15 then, that didn't impact. I think those of us who were interested in theatre saw it indeed as a way, first of all, obviously for self expression. Secondly some inkling - without yet having any direct evidence - some inkling that this is where language might be used in a more adventurous way. Thirdly even though theatre was under censorship, the sense that that language might be... shall we say of a wider range and register than had happened before. I think we were aware of the *Lady Chatterley Trial* which was 1960. I think we had some inkling by then - being 17 or 18 - that a book like that which could now be sold meant that sex could be talked about in a way that was different. But I wouldn't have said there was a direct connection between, '*Lady Chatterley* we can buy, and we can hear effing and blinding on the stage'. As you know, at that age you're pretty inchoate, yes.

DS: Did you read reviews, or was that not something that was important in your experience?

TD: It certainly impacted... we certainly knew of it, and being brought up in an all-boys Roman Catholic school you can imagine that we clocked that. But I think at those times, at least for myself, there was so much else going on. There was the excitement of London being in the offing, maybe, depended on A-levels, the football which I have talked about, and Liverpool itself was a thriving city at that time, an exciting city, it's just pre-Beatles time, 1960 - I was in London when they were really taking off. But nonetheless there was a lot of activity in clubs and pubs and so on and so forth. It was an exciting city to be in, and mores were beginning to loosen just a little, so I think, and

maybe other my contemporaries might not have said the same, there were quite a lot from Lancashire - I'm from Liverpool which is in Lancashire but as you know it is not quite Lancashire - there were quite a few from Lancashire in my year doing English, I don't think they had quite the same sense of London actually extending the sort of experience that was beginning in Liverpool. I mean this is a theme I would love to talk about forever, but perhaps another time!

DS: Indeed. So what was the first RSC production you saw?

TD: Well I have been racking my brains as to what it was, and I can't absolutely remember, so I am simply going to have to say that the one that made the most impact on me, that I can remember initially was *The Wars of the Roses*. The exact date of it I couldn't swear to, but it must be '62 or '63. I reviewed it for the college newspaper, so I didn't have to queue for that one. It was quite stunning. Again, you're not talking about someone who had a great experience of Shakespeare or of seeing Shakespeare. You knew Shakespeare from A-level - O-level and A-level - but Shakespeare performed - apart from the oranges at the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*! - I hadn't seen a great deal of - as I said there was so much else going on. So the sense there... there wasn't a sense, I don't think, coming to it on my part or on the part of my colleagues, that this was a different Shakespeare from the golden-tongued Shakespeare of John Gielgud. We really had no - or I had no - history to back that up. But it was certainly a Shakespeare that appealed to me enormously. First of all as I remember, was the relative bareness of stage - and this is a thing that crops up time and again - so that they gave space to the language and movement. Secondly, on that bareness, the shrewd move by the directors to make - despite all the enormous dynastic changes and interlocking and shiftings of families and characters - to have one constant and that was a throne, and that was variously upstage or slightly downstage left. It wasn't a very elaborate throne as I remember. You know, a high hard-backed chair with a certain amount of ornament to it but not much. So that throne remained constant while the people who occupied it fought for it, strove for it, died for it, committed murder for a change. And so therefore the sheer simplicity of that gave you a great narrative clue: whoever was on that or trying to get to it, was the one that wanted to be King, and the three parts of *Henry VI* - *Edward IV* as they called it - and *Richard III*, I mean, you know, there are quite complex plots going on. So I remember that, I secondly remember a largely bare stage and you know armies sweeping across it, although, you know, mostly gestural. The language I remember, not in enormous detail but it seemed that clearing the stage of clutter allowed the language to be prominent. It was only later I found out that significant parts of it had been written by John Barton, but I think you can do that because there are large swathes of early Shakespeare that are fairly journeyman stuff aren't they, so I think you can do that. The other things that I remember about it were having no sense of exhaustion at all about length, right, none whatever - because I think I saw all three in one day since I had to do a report for it - none whatever. I had the same experience, incidentally, many years later, not so long ago watching *The Plantagenets* at the Barbican. No sense whatever of exhaustion, you are absolutely taken by it. Other memories: Brewster Mason as Warwick, a great outstanding figure. Enormous paternal-type figure but completely ruthless, and he seemed to remain constant through out. Others were dying, other were betraying but Brewster Mason as Warwick the King-Maker remained always there. The relative simplicity of costume. This again I think was something that the RSC people were interested in, so, blacks, right. You know, blacks and reds as I remember for *Richard*, pale white for *Henry VI* and again Brewster Mason, dark armour. David Warner, wonderful as *Henry VI*, gradually becoming more and more

child-like, more and more evacuated as that long thin frame, tall thin frame. You used all parts of this throne, and you had this sense of a man gradually declining into weakness and into sickness, but every now and then roused to life by petulance. I think it was one of his first parts, so it must have been one of his first major ones. So David Warner, I will never forget him as Henry VI. And Peggy Ashcroft I think played Lady Margaret, I mean she was just a virago, she was absolutely what you had escaped from, she was appalling - I mean appalling in the sense of the character she portrayed. Appalling and superb, because she allowed herself to be made ugly for that and Ashcroft had a reputation as a beautiful actress, did she not, from the thirties. So I thought that was - in retrospect, I didn't know then - in retrospect I thought that was very daring of her. And Ian Holm's, Richard III, which was absolutely superb. Again, the image that remains - and I think the fight masters must have been splendid - was Bosworth, and Ian Holm as Richard III swinging a ball and chain, and it looked like a real ball and chain. And you know engaging in hand-to-hand combat with... I think it's Richmond isn't it, at the end? And Ian Holm is short. And the hump and the leg. So that the body on the throne in the end was so different from David Warner's body on the throne. I can't remember who played Edward IV, but whoever that was, that person also on the throne - which for that court became gold and white - became illuminated. Unless of course - taking up Richard's thing - Richard's delineation of Edward's court at the beginning of Richard III. So I think The Wars of the Roses was absolutely a wonderful, wonderful experience, but as I said, I think that in retrospect it was the clear stage, the foregrounding of language, the simplicity of costume that seemed to allow space for the words to work.

DS: Contemporary reports also often focus on the metallic stage and the aural dimension, I don't want to put words in your mouth but was that something that occurred to you?

TD: No, no, yes it was, wasn't it? That's absolutely right. I don't know whether it was metallic all the time was it? Hmm, yes there was, I was thinking of that more... no, no you're right. That did give a sense of real chain-mail and... ah yes, and certainly it had a tremendous impact with Richard's ball and chain at Bosworth... exactly. Yes that was a tremendous impact. So you had a strange sense of a realism, yes, and yet at the same time of language being at the forefront as well. I would have to look at accounts of it as you have done to jog my memory about it, I don't have that journalist's report. So that is the first great experience.

DS: Fantastic.

TD: Absolutely wonderful experience of that. Then there, again talking about the RSC, that, say, was... I can't remember, was it '62 or was it '63? '63 I think it was - '62 or '63 - and then the Marat/Sade, and the Marat/Sade was '64. There again another epic type play, completely different period of course, but a debate play of a kind that obviously that Shakespeare is not, and in prose Peter Weiss, Peter Brook, and that was again an extraordinary experience and it is one that I have got a few memories of here. I saw it in November 1964 - in fact to be precise November 20 - and of course what was fascinating about that was the beginnings of the presence in our lives of another figure, and that's Berthold Brecht. So the central dialectical debate that takes place there between De Sade and Marat, we were beginning to see as imitative of or derivative from the kinds of dialectical debates that we were going to see later on or at the same time in

Mother Courage and other plays of Brecht, so Brecht begins to come on stage for us in a way. I'm not saying that Weiss is just an imitator of Brecht - by no means, but that kind of combination of spectacle and debate, spectacle and debate and the attempts to join the two together seems to me to be an extremely adventurous kind of thing to try and do. Brook directed that, Peter Weiss of course was the author and somehow and in such a way as to not let spectacle overcome debate or the other way round; so it's almost as if English theatre - which has a long tradition of spectacle and certainly did from the nineteenth century and you know, just up the road at Drury Lane was indeed, you know, were very prominent musicals in the period - and here on the stage of the RSC at the Aldwych, you had spectacle but you had debate. And how to hold those two together I think in part is how the Marat/Sade develops. So I find it a brilliant production, and you know, the way in which the lunatics were as if categorised by specific sorts of traits, I have got one here - 'one forever twisting a piece of twine' - and then some brilliant strokes of stage invention, I've got some notes here. 'The swaying oblong sheet held up by the lunatics for Marat's nightmare'. And then a very interesting note, the beating of De Sade with the girl's hair. That was Glenda Jackson playing Charlotte Cordet was it not? Quite. 'The beating of De Sade with the girls hair' and what I have in brackets here may be of interest, 'What an advance that this could be shown on stage - but presumably only because it is an historical play.'. So if you're talking back to the Lady Chatterley thing and so on and so forth, that still, you know I am still surprised to see that possible I mean. Today let's not talk about it, but we're talking history here so, that's my little comment on that. And then yes the oil funnel, rasped across the grille to represent the guillotine. Again so the inventiveness with, you know the transformation of realist objects into other realist objects while keeping the quality of them in themselves, the rapidity of it. And again, the economy of it, the economy of the hair across the back, the economy of the rasp across the grille. And then a number of clown-like figures that were continuous. I have also got some notes on a thing that I think emerges very much in the theatre in that period, and that is Sade's important point that he is discovered lying in the isolated misery of the Bastille that - and this is a quote from the play - 'Only bodies matter. I saw for the orifices of the body, convinced that only through those could any human warmth be generated'. Now, that's a theme, obviously, that has been taken up, elaborated both in theatre, in academe and shall we say in popular culture... I won't say ever since then, but with that coming on the agenda in that way in a very dialectical and political play because Brecht is a bit anti-flesh I think, Brecht is an anti-sensualist, I think, in much of his work: there is not much sex in Brecht at all. A lot in his own life, but not much on stage! I always thought his interest in Galileo's portrayed as a sensual man but sensual in what? Food. But these kinds of plays, and if you take them together with plays that I didn't see in the period but plays by figures such as Genet, a lot of whose work is done by the Royal Court, but I think there was a production of one of his plays by the RSC in that period and it may have been... it was either *Le Balcon* or maybe *The Screens* later on. But someone like Genet is equally interested in that public-private split and the effect of flesh on both. So I made a note of that, and that is something that you know, perhaps might be taken up in other areas, but I am going to say both Marat and Sade are supremely isolated individuals and they hold apart from particular parties and factions. And my kind of summing up of what the play is about from the point of view of Sade is 'nothing but the body is true. That is a reservoir of such cruelty that it must continually be battered and chastised to reach any state of human warmth.' Thus Sade links - long before Camus and Artaud - the doctrines of the theatre of the absurd and the theatre of cruelty. My next note is rather neat but somewhat superficial, however I did go to the Theatre of Cruelty season at the LAMDA in 1963. My memories of that - again a long time ago - but my memories of that are - I think I am right in saying this - of again Glenda Jackson,

rising up from a coffin as Christine Keeler, I certainly remember that! And I think there was also an early run of a chopped up Marowitz Hamlet there. But that was a very off off-season organised at the LAMDA - again by Brook - and this was meant to begin to promote these ideas of the Theatre of Cruelty which were then in some sense to be embodied in something like the Marat/Sade.

DS: You mentioned Christine Keeler. To what extent did you feel theatre at that time was beginning to reflect or comment on contemporary political events?

TD: I think it was doing its best to, and I think it was impelled towards it by the satire boom because actually it was a form of theatre, indeed began in the establishment as theatre. Beyond the Fringe had already run in Edinburgh for some time I think just prior to the Keeler affair, sometime prior, about '59, '60. So That Was The Week That Was was having great fun. Private Eye of course was delirious, so I think all of that meant that a) there were people who were in that world who also had a foot in theatre through revues and shows and b) that yes theatre felt that it too, felt there was material here to deal with. Of course its business is not just contemporary, it's history presenting the past and the classics from their political angle is also important. But I suppose in retrospect you could say there was a certain inflection to do with the politics of the day, in relation to the shenanigans of kings in The Wars of the Roses and the attempt to as it were simplify, you know the lies and the smoke screens put across all of this by the sheer starkness of the throne and that's what everyone's after. A bit of a long shot, but I have no doubt in my mind that Hall and Brook saw themselves as wanting via the classics, via new theatre from abroad, via new work in the theatre here to make some kind... yes, to make some commentary on society.

DS: So does that sort of lend credence to your view that the sixties didn't really start in 1960, it perhaps started more in '62, '63? '63 is the great year of the Beatles, '63 is the year when Macmillan resigns, where there seems to be this kind of shift in social mores.

TD: Yes, it is very debatable, I am just reading Dominic Sandbrook's book. The way in which he is wondering about periodisation and has come to the conclusion that in a sense '58- '63 or '56 through '63 represents a kind of period and is the fifties, and then from '63 on we have all these other phenomena. I think it is always going to be difficult to sort that out, where the sixties as it's commonly known begins, because one could equally say something like '65. He goes through the various periodisations in his book. The point I certainly - as someone growing up in that period, the point that I certainly think is that the fifties doesn't end in 1960, the fifties carries on in all sorts of ways, and I think one of the ways to indicate its disintegration is the disintegration of the ruling elite. As soon as you see a ruling elite openly stabbing each other - Wars of the Roses - then I think is a fair sign that it is beginning to collapse because a great deal of the way in which the show is kept on the road is that everybody is solid, and you know [that] however outrageous the actions, [if] people at the top keep saying 'it's all all right, it's all all right, we have everything under control,' people by and large will go along with that. But when it busts out in the way that it did, and the way that it did is a combination of you know, the ruling elite in the country house and the working class girl from - not south London, where is she from, Surbiton? Surrey? Somewhere in Surrey and she is a whore and she is making her way that way - so the moment that gaffe is blown, then it becomes very difficult to maintain the fiction that we are as John Major used to say

'back to basics'. Here are basics, so I think yes, I think the gaffe got blown then. Secondly, I think that the fifties ended with the election of Alec Douglas-Home as Prime Minister and as Tory leader. That really did seem an extraordinary anachronism. That really, you know, nobody could really swallow that and the confidence that the then Tory party had that such a figure would be swallowed as Prime Minister, not elected as you know in those days but emerging...

DS: Sandbrook says the magic circle...

TD: Now that term is Ian McLeod's. Ian McLeod used that term in a very critical article in The Spectator at the time of the Macmillan-Home shift, because McLeod was someone who sensed that the Tory party couldn't continue in this way, all those Old Etonians in the cabinet and so on. So McLeod used that term, 'the magic circle', and indeed that was what happened. So I don't know, I mean for me a break with the fifties is very distinctly the Labour government of '64, yes it certainly is. Thirteen years of Tory rule. I campaigned for Labour where I was living. Many of us did. It really did indicate a shift I have no doubt, so if I was asked to I would say '64 and Sandbrook would probably agree.

DS: OK, to bring sort of act one to a close, I think you wanted to talk about, I think you said you had seen Scofield's Lear as well?

TD I had seen Scofield's Lear and my memories of that are very similar in a way to the Wars of the Roses. Dark costumes, the sense of real leather, this again is something that Brechtian-type directors insisted on. A most majestic decent into madness by Scofield, who was always a fantastically impressive actor of course. Was John Hurt the Fool? I can't remember. No, no, that was in the Olivier TV production. The Lear I just remember as dark, with some shafts of light, but again the Court itself at the beginning already overshadowed by the whole of this catastrophe... And superb verse speaking, right, but not of a... as it were, lilting and golden kind, but really visceral was my sense of it. So yes, Lear was a tremendous experience, but I can't elaborate any further on the memories of it but I would make links between the costuming of that and again the opportunities for pretty bare stage I think.

DS: So how did you move to Italy?

TD: Well by train initially! How did I move to Italy? Well, I had finished my postgrad. certificate in Ed, which I did after my degree in '64, '65, and I had been then living in London and enjoying everything for a long time but I felt at that moment I needed a break and I needed a shift, and my PGCE had been in teaching English as a Foreign Language, and therefore I was rather more orientated to going abroad to do this. So I looked at adverts - a good friend of mine was going to Poland under the auspices of British Council, I was keen to go with him. There were various hold-ups and break-downs - visa situations in those days was tricky - in the end I didn't; he went to Łódź and enjoyed himself there. I decided to just pick up an ad in the newspaper. I didn't have specifically Italy in mind, although, who doesn't? But it wasn't like, you know, I really wanted to go to Italy: I wanted to go abroad, my sort of angle of going abroad had

always been the Latin Mediterranean countries and typical northern European style. I knew France to some extent, I spoke good French, I didn't speak any Italian, but I had done Latin and Greek at college so that would be no difficulty.

DS: So what was your link with the theatre then, in Italy?

TD: The link with the theatre in Italy was two areas I think, one of them largish and one of them quite small which I think could be of interest. I've got a note here and it is noted October 1965, 'Saw some very interesting books in Verona, editions of Brecht's works by Einaudi, not so far published in England, Days of the Commune, Arturo Ui, also Drums in the Night, Man is Man and The Mother: get myself a big dictionary for these.'. I think the importance there is of, by now, Brecht terribly firmly lodged in the minds of myself and indeed my colleagues, but not all that many translations being available as I recall, and we still didn't have the full run of that Mannheim edition. So spotting these excited me because even relatively little known works - I had seen the Berliner Ensemble by the way in '65 at the National just before I had come to Italy and quite extraordinary that was, but even more extraordinary was the Gaskill Mother Courage at the National a little earlier, and if we ever have time I might say something about that. So I was on the lookout you see, I was on the lookout for things like that, so that's one thing. And I was learning Italian at the time and I think it's rather nice a couple of days later: 'Bought Brecht's Days of the Commune today which intend to use as starting point for serious Italian studies.'. I think that's a great way to learn a foreign language, through a Marxist in another language about the Paris commune. And I did stick with it and I learnt a lot of Italian that way! [laughs] But it didn't take me too long to learn Italian, although obviously there were periods when it was difficult. I worked in Brescia for a bit at this language school, and then I went down to teach in a private language school that was in effect organised by me, because it was an evening school. A friend of mine whom I'd met at a language school in London, one of my students, and he organised it and I lived with them and I gave these lessons in the evening in the outskirts of Naples in a village called Fratta Maggiore, and then little by little I moved into the centre, kept teaching there, taught at the British Council, taught at the foreign languages university, did a great deal of teaching of every sort. And well Naples, so it was really Naples yes, Naples was the key thing in Italy, and yes, Naples is theatre, there's no doubt, but there was - as it were - official theatre there as well. But the theatre I think that's of interest to us, to you, is the Living Theatre. Now I saw the Living Theatre perform their Mysteries, Antigone and Frankenstein in a very large 'drome just outside Naples, I'm not sure whether it was a velodrome. Anyway it's a very large playing space just outside Naples and I saw those and they were quite extraordinary. I saw them in June 1967 and now my notes read here, you don't mind me reading the notes do you?

DS: Of course not.

TD: 'Cultural visit of the Living Theatre, 23, 24, 27th of May to Naples with Frankenstein, Antigone and Mysteries. Radical theatre experience. Audience attacked in their fat seats by actors screaming, waving, grovelling around, behind and in front of them. Always in jeans, jackets, shirts, what they happened to be wearing before going on stage.'. So here, I think, is this theme of everyday life in the theatre, the boundaries attempting to be as far as possible dissolved, which is an announced part of their ideology was it not and also infused with the politics of, you know, the anti-Vietnam war

politics of the period as well in which they played a leading role. So to see the Living Theatre in Naples with a Neapolitan audience, it was a quite extraordinary experience, and of course the language was no problem because a great deal of it was either a kind of ersatz language which they'd invented, or else significant sections of any narrative were always given in the language of the country where they were. So they had enough Italian speakers to be able to do that. But of course visually was the thing. And again bodies visually making it up. It's bodies that by and large make up Frankenstein, yes? The monster is composed of bodies, bodies on trellises, on enormous balconies, scaffolded balconies. So it's bodies that build up and the body was central over and over and over again as it was in much of the Vietnam protest as well. American phrase at the time was 'putting your body on the line'. So bodies again I think, so you know, one would move between the highly organised Marat/Sade with its European history of intellectual debate about the body and the American very much more clearly visceral and presence as material living object, the Living Theatre. And then I have a further note, because they were travelling throughout Europe at the time and they also gave some performances on the south, on the coast further down at Positano. 'September 7th 1967. Julian and Melinda Beck, in a neon lit back street of Positano at 3am, loading the Dormobile to drive off into dark misty Germany after being booed and hissed by medieval south Italians. 'We want a reaction' they say, bravely - beautiful, beautiful people.'. So [there are] other things in Italy that I could talk about, but it does seem to me that that has got some relationship to what was going on. So yes, so back in London then.

DS: Act Three.

TD: Act Three, right. Well London... I have a few notes on a visit to As You Like It, I might check with you, this would be November 17, '67, - was that the all-male As You Like It?

DS: I think it might have been.

TD There was an all-male As You Like It at the NT, and I think it was this one.

DS: I think it was.

TD: It worked very well indeed - I had my doubts. But it worked extremely well. And I have got some notes here and I can't believe that this is what they say. Yes, it was all in white wasn't it? Yes, marvellous both of them, As You Like It, and a fringe production of a play called Tom Paine which was by an American writer called Paul Foster and this is really the main theme of my last section here which I will elaborate on in a second. Marvellous, and First Wife, that is As You Like It with all the sexual ambiguities outlined, some strange resemblances struck me, for example the Duke looks like Lenin, Jacques looks like Malcolm Muggeridge, and Hymen looks like Michael X, my comment, 'Well just imagine if all of them [were] in the forest of Eden' - ah sorry the forest of Arden! [laughs] Forest of Eden! Why not? So I remember being very impressed by that indeed and it worked, it worked extraordinary enough for me at any rate. Tom Paine was a very good dramatisation, at least in the first part of the life of Tom Paine and this leads me

really to what is the more important theme I think for my act three as it were. Because I talked in act one about the subsidised theatre, the changes being made and the modes of presentation in the subsidised theatre, primarily of course the RSC and The National. I don't say a great deal about the Court, although I went there very often but time doesn't permit. You take them as the forerunners. Now I see what creeps in in my notes is the Fringe, you see. So in a way it is a kind of record of a shift. So Tom Paine is a Fringe production - I think it was in the Open Space - and then a little later on I have a reference in November to seeing the adaptations of Kafka at the Arts Lab; these I think were by Berkoff - in fact I am sure they were by Berkoff - I remember very vividly the monstrous machine that was created for... and the penal colony. I was looking at his autobiog. recently and he was saying how it was constructed, so there is that. And then there are still going on these issues to do with the Royal Court... I saw Bond's Early Morning and that of course was made a club-only performance for censorship reasons.

DS: Can you remember how you bought your ticket for that?

TD: Yes, you became a club member, you went and you paid a pound, I think, to be a club member, and then bought your ticket at the same time.

DS: Was that an inconvenience, or did that add to its allure, that you had to go beforehand and become...?

TD: I don't know. I think by then I at any rate had got used to a variety of modes in seeing theatre, and we knew the censorship issue was very much on the agenda and of course we knew about this from the Lady Chatterley times. We wanted to see it because it was being banned, we also wanted to see it because it was being banned. I had seen Bond's Saved and I thought [that] an extraordinary work, I saw that in... '65 it was.

DS: At the Royal Court?

TD: At the Court, yes.

DS: Can I just ask you a little bit about that, because it is quite rare to have met people that have actually seen the Royal Court's Saved. Was the baby stoning...

TD: It was horrific. It was quite horrific, yes. I mean, it was clear that it was fictional, but it was quite horrific and you were shocked - very, very shocked indeed. And then later on... and it was the sparcity of language of course that was purporting to be a kind of South London language that struck you as well. I wasn't so sure, not at the time but talking to, you know, having lived in South London and knowing it, I am not absolutely sure it's the only discourse available, but for the play itself perhaps that was it.

DS: Was that the general feeling of the audience, can you remember?

TD: Oh I think so, everyone was very horrified, yes, yes. There was that 'ahh'.

DS: Was it felt to be unnecessary, or was it felt to be illustrating a central theme?

TD: No, I don't think so, because Bond's integrity is very clear, and it's very clear - from his other works as well as this play - what his targets of attack are, and they're not babies; so I think by then he'd established a reputation as a very sparse, intransigent playwright, a man who it was very difficult to draw into any kind of human warmth of any sort. And so seeing a scene like that in a play by him, which, you know, one had read about before, it wasn't seen as shocking in itself. Although your immediate human reaction was 'Yes this is awful', it was seen as part of the structure of the thing. So I don't think people came out saying, you know, 'He advocated the stoning of babies' it seemed to be part of this utterly bleak world that he'd been presenting right from the start.

DS: And did you see *Early Morning* as a kind of continuum of that or...?

TD: *Early Morning* seemed different. *Early Morning* seemed very satirical and very funny indeed, and by now the kinds of... how can I say? The kinds of depredations being made upon the reverence surrounding politicians and monarchy, the depredations that had begun with *Keeler*, *Profumo*, by now were gaining in momentum, and therefore, you know, Florence Nightingale having a lesbian affair with Queen Victoria was a hoot - the body again! *Marianne Faithful* was lovely as Florence Nightingale I have to say. [laughs] So it was... I think it was seen as, in a way, much more mainstream than *Saved*. *Saved* was kind of somewhere-else, right, seemed to be rather incomparable, but I think *Early Morning* in a way fitted in with all that satire that had gone before.

DS: You mentioned in act one that you had also seen Gaskell's *Mother Courage*.

TD: Yes I did.

DS: Can you just say a little bit about that?

TD: It will have to be brief I know, I have quite a lot on it. The opening scene was absolutely stunning I thought, the representation of, you know, pulling the wagon round the stage slowly with the sons, and then at the end pulling it alone, that struck home.

DS: Can you remember when this was roughly?

TD: I can tell you: I have down May 14 and it must be 1965.

DS: Is this the National Theatre production isn't it?

TD: I am pretty sure it is, it is '65 because I wrote a lot of notes on it and when I came to do some teaching on Brecht I looked up the notes and there was a big note on this, and I thought, 'Well this must be the Berliner Ensemble's one but the Berliner Ensemble wasn't until August '65, so it must be the Gaskill one, yes?'. So OK the topping and tailing of it with the wagon, wonderfully done, 'Half stumbling, recovering, dragging her feet, all this to the thunderous accompaniment of the thudding, whistling music of Dessau.' And here are my comments - which are not so much to do with the play but my comments on, I think for the first time really seeing a full length Brecht play. I think. 'Astonishing quality in B, of the importance of solid objects - like glasses with real water in them, a single bench, a brandy bottle, a clothes line, a drum. Lighting first rate, particularly with its grey for scene outside the vicarage. Last scene B's wonderful sense of what he can do with theatre props in the scene about the saving of Halle, dumb K. with the drum on the roof.' One always feels that Brecht never sat down to think out a policy of spare stage equipment, that he said to himself, 'The Theatre of Realism is ridiculous with its load of props; what if you reduced them to the minimum?' One feels that he just worked always from the rock bottom necessity of the theatre, language, plot, character, props. Because this theatre imagination instinctively worked on this level. Of course he has his ideological driving force, but his theatre sense is something other than doctrines and manifestos.' In retrospect, reading that, I think there's something of interest there but those are my notes on the Gaskill one so it may be, I would have to absolutely, it may be that that was the first full length prod I saw.

DS: The curtain is almost coming down...

TD: The curtain is almost coming down...

DS: We need to move on to the epilogue!

TD: ...so I need to move on to the epilogue and the epilogue takes us to 1970, and we did discuss this as being in a way a continuation of things. I said that at the end of the third act we see the Fringe beginning to move in, as distinct from the subsidised theatres at the beginning. And this is an incident at the Come Together Festival of 1970 which was a bringing together of fringe theatre but Gaskill - who was then director wasn't he? - from all quarters of the English speaking world and non-English speaking, there were groups from Italy as I remember, a large American representation, English representation and so on. So I attended, I think it was a performance of AC/DC by Heathcote Williams which I think was part of it, although I do know that it was also put on as a separate play, I don't remember a great deal of that except a rather mad fuzzy looking guy with some electric wires, a bit like Eraser Head. So I can't speak much about that, but, so I saw that and I remember I came out and I was standing on the steps of the Royal Court, and I turned around and there standing on the top step was one of my idols of film of the 1960s, Monica Vitti, and let me say Monica Vitti in inverted commas, 'real life and without makeup was exactly the same as Monica Vitti in the films by Antonioni, they were black and white films anyway. And she was absolutely stunning and need I say, the face, the figure, all of it, the lips etc, I mustn't go to town here, this is public! Still Monica Vitti was one of my great heroines, not just because of her looks, she was a great actress and of course at that time she was very much a product of Antonioni's particular

direction. I later found out that Vitti was not made by Antonioni and she had a very distinguished stage career before Antonioni began casting her in *La Ventura* and so on, as a comic actress, she was primarily a comic actress and when she and Antonioni finished their relationship, she went back to the stage and she went back to be a comic actress. She is still alive, that's what she is known as but there she was, standing - this is '70 - and I had had a real dose of Antonioni in the sixties and thought him marvellous and still do and there she was standing on the top steps. My Italian was still in good shape so I thought, 'why not?' So I went back up the steps and I was standing therefore a step below her, as was only proper and in Italian I asked her if she was enjoying the play and she said yes, and did she know London and she said not very well. And I said, 'Well, I know London pretty well, and you know, if at any time you'd be interested I could show you some interesting parts of London'. And she was certainly interested and she was, she may have just being rather gentle with an over-enthusiastic young man, but nonetheless there was no brush-off. So she was smiling at me and then I glanced from right to left and on the right hand side and on the left hand side were two very solidly built men in black suits. And as I continued my discussion I noticed that they moved just a bit closer and it was made very clear to me just by that gesture - because having lived in Italy I understood something about this, about gestures - that really you are perfectly possible for you to talk to Monica Vitti, perfectly possible for you even to invite her out, because we are all men. But that's where it stops. And she at a certain point, not exactly glanced from side to side but indicated that - in a very subtle way - that under other circumstances she would have been, you know, delighted to go to the pub in Wapping, but not now!

DS: Thank you ever so much.

TD: Thank you too, thank you for listening.