**Karen Robinson**

HELLO, THIS IS KAREN ROBINSON ON 6TH AUGUST 2014. I’M TALKING TO DALE ROOKS, WHO’S THE YOUTH DIRECTOR AT CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE AND, I BELIEVE, DALE YOUR NAME IS SPELLED AS IT SOUNDS D A L E R O O K S.

**Dale Rooks**

It is, yes.

**Karen Robinson**

WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHEN AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

**Dale Rooks**

I was born in Gloucester, um – I was actually born in Gloucester and then moved quite quickly to north London, north of London, which is Stevenage, um, and I lived there for a very, very long time during my childhood years and then I moved to Chichester in the '80s – 1982 I think it was.

**Karen Robinson**

SO TELL ME HOW YOU CAME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE.

**Dale Rooks**

Um, my previous life was teaching. I trained as a teacher in drama and I was Head of Performing Arts at a school just outside Midhurst. It was a school for young people with disability um, and it was a fantastic opportunity knowing that the theatre was here in Chichester and so close to bring my young people to. So I became involved by introducing them into the world of theatre and then I was asked to come and lead some of the sessions. So I started out actually as a youth theatre leader. I’d also been to the theatre and seen things myself cos it’s always been my interest.

**Karen Robinson**

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE REACTIONS OF THOSE CHILDREN WHEN YOU BROUGHT THEM TO THE THEATRE?

**Dale Rooks**

Um, they were well tuned with theatre anyway. I mean I didn’t just take them to Chichester. They went to London, some of them went to New York, some of them went to France. We did lots of exchange projects with a school in France, so I think they were well versed in theatre. The piece I saw them [laughter] I took them to first was a play called ‘The Sea’ by Edward Bond and er, it was, I think it was directed by Sean Holmes, and it was a really powerful piece and actually quite difficult for them to understand the dialogue but visually it was stunning. And they were so very excited. I then, er, found out that there was a dra – a schools drama festival that was running every year and it used to involve the local secondary schools, and I very bravely said ‘Well how, how do we become involved in this?’ And I have to say at the time it was sort of frowned upon, not, well – maybe not frowned upon but it – it – kind, I think there was a huge reluctance maybe to have young pupils with disability performing because it may not have been the same standard as the other secondary schools. So that made me more determined. Um, and we devised a piece we did eventually, we were eventually invited to perform. We devised a piece called Nowhere to Go and it went into the Minerva. One off performance, and it had so many lovely reports and feedback that the following year we were invited back.

**Karen Robinson**

WHEN WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN?

**Dale Rooks**

So I did that, that was in mid, mid 90s, that would have been. And then that was repeated year upon year. We did about four. We had a lovely letter from Patrick Garland. The most moving, wonderful letter, um, to congratulate the young people. ‘Dear Young Ladies and Young Gentlemen’ he said, and it was really lovely. And he said he likened it to a piece of theatre that he had seen in Japan because it was so inventive and so beautiful.

**Karen Robinson**

PATRICK GARLAND WAS THE DIRECTOR OF THE THEATRE AT THE TIME?

**Dale Rooks**

He was, I think he was the Director of the theatre at the time, yes. He must have been because he was around, so, yes. I’ve seen so many directors. Yeah.

**Karen Robinson**

SO HOW DID THAT FEEL?

**Dale Rooks**

Oh, it was phenomenal, I mean to know that those young people could stand alongside main stream peers and have the confidence to perform but not, not just the confidence but to perform excellently. Um, and I always strive for that quality in young people’s work. I can’t put an excuse in front of them. If I place that barrier there then they, they will place it. So, I used to always say to them ‘You can be the best, you really can.‘ And they were, they were absolutely fantastic. They had such confidence, certainly in the performing arts and I think that had a knock on effect on what they were doing in other areas of life.

**Karen Robinson**

DID YOU MENTION THE NAME OF THAT SCHOOL? I CAN’T REMEMBER

**Dale Rooks**

St. Cuthmans. It closed. That’s how I got my job here. [laughter] That’s another story.

**Karen Robinson**

CAN YOU GIVE ME A SORT OF ROUGH OVERVIEW OF THE TIMELINE OF YOUR CAREER?

**Dale Rooks**

Yeah, um I started teaching in, well I trained late actually. I trained when I was 24. I did a teacher training, it was a B.Ed. Um, because I wasn’t really sure what I’d wanted to do prior to that. Um, and then suddenly I just got hooked on the idea that I wouldn’t go to drama school. I wasn’t really a performer. I used to dance – and I tap dance – badly. Er, but, yeah, I would always, even at the school I was sort of on the other side of performing. Always wanted to be in that kind of directing, or assistant directing position. So at 24 as I say I went to college. And then I started my teaching career early 80s. And then the school that I was working at, and I only worked in this one school which was a residential school for young people with disabilities, but they came from all areas including sort of outskirts of London and they were very troubled young people um, and I found that drama was the key to unlocking er, a lot of that kind of emotional stuff. And then as I said I started leading at Chichester in the 90s, mid 90s whilst I was still working. I was then offered, I think it was 1999, I was offered the Assistant Director job at the theatre but it was very difficult because I was still teaching. And then in 2002 the job came up here as Youth Theatre Director, so I was interviewed and I took it, and I’ve been there ever since. So that’s 12 years back, isn’t it?

**Karen Robinson**

MORE THAN THAT

**Dale Rooks**

Oh, is it?

**Karen Robinson**

THIRTEEN

**Dale Rooks**

Thirteen [laughter]

**Karen Robinson**

‘99 IS FIFTEEN YEARS, I THINK. TIME GOES TOO QUICKLY [laughter]

**Dale Rooks**

No, no, 2002 I became youth theatre director.

**Karen Robinson**

OH, RIGHT. OK

**Dale Rooks**

So, yeah. That’s, that’s been my career. I’ve done lots of things in between. I’ve done a little bit of freelancing. I worked for a company called Artichoke which is a, a gigantic street art, er spectacle company and I did a couple of big gigs with them, one in Liverpool with a big giant spider and I worked with schools. I did a lot of - kind of - work packs but also running workshops with schools in London.

**Karen Robinson**

WHAT DOES A PERFORMANCE ART GIG LOOK LIKE?

**Dale Rooks**

Er oh, it’s massive. They, er I don’t know if you ever saw the Sultan’s Elephant that went through London and took out roundabouts. And they’ve just got two giant puppets – I think back in Liverpool actually there’s a girl that – it’s huge, it’s taller than the house. And then a canopy operated by a French company with big cranes so it’s free art for everybody, which is lovely because it just brings crowds in and I think, I don’t know, the that one that I saw in London – the Sultan’s Elephant – it just had people in tears. It was very, very emotional to see such a wonderful spectacle going through the streets. So it’s very different, a very different way of working to being inside a theatre, because it’s unpredictable. You don’t know how people might react – but it’s fun. And I worked – I just developed links with the things within the street art programme to the schools so that when they came to see it they would understand it a little bit. Because there’s always a story behind it.

**Karen Robinson**

SO YOU WERE OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF CHICHESTER THEATRE BEFORE YOU EVER WORKED THERE.

**Dale Rooks**

Yeah, yeah.

**Karen Robinson**

DO YOU HAVE ANY MEMORIES OF IT AS A YOUNGER PERSON?

**Dale Rooks**

Er, not really. Because I didn’t move into the area until, how old would I have been, 30? [laughter] That’s not terribly young is it, well maybe it is. Um, my, I think my initial memory was the space itself. I’m terribly excited by thrust stage and that’s the way I love to work. I think I find it quite hard now when I’m looking at pros arch, because I have - for me it feels more limiting, especially with the big companies that I work with and I tend to work with large scale [laughter] large scale companies which, I don’t know, there’s something about that that really excites me. But, yes, it’s the space itself I think, and because it’s a community theatre it just feels as though everybody, everybody should be welcome er, and is welcome. And I feel, you know, not just for young people, but I think theatre is an incredibly powerful art form for anybody who wants to be involved in whatever way they want to be involved. There, there feels as though there’s something for everyone. Whether that’s performing or doing backstage work or playwriting o, you know, wardrobe and costume, design, it just feels so inclusive because there’s so, so much to offer. I think, I don’t think people realise always, especially young people, just how many careers there are in theatre. They’re quite surprised when we run our careers days, the openings and the options that there are.

**Karen Robinson**

YOU TALKED ABOUT THEATRE COMPANIES PLURAL. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT TO ME? SO IT’S NOT JUST THE CHICHESTER YOUTH THEATRE COMPANY?

**Dale Rooks**

Did I?

**Karen Robinson**

Yes, you said ‘I tend to work with large companies’.

**Dale Rooks**

Oh, yeah. Each production that I undertake I regard that company as a different company because it’s a new set of people. So it’s not always the same company that perform in all the shows. So I just regard them as my ‘companies’. And I like to use that term. I think for young people coming out of school and into theatre you know it’s really important that they understand the kind of professionalism so I always use the correct terms with them. So I wouldn’t call them a group if they were in the company and they were performing or producing plays. They’re always a company.

**Karen Robinson**

WHAT AGE RANGE DOES IT TEND TO BE?

**Dale Rooks**

Er, 10 to 19. We are looking now at developing 19 plus group because I think there is a need for it. But within our, I don’t know how much you know about the Youth Theatre but within the Youth Theatre overall there are 10 satellite companies that spread out across the county and then we have the majority of the young people attend Chichester um and we also have 2 groups, er for young people with disability and we’re about to set up a third one. Um and we have a youth dance company and three technical youth theatres. So we have a partner theatre that we work with in Horsham and there’s a senior Youth Theatre Leader who’s based there. Who works from there into areas like Burgess Hill and Lancing and Crawley. Um and that’s developing all the time. So yeah.

**Karen Robinson**

How’s it working with such a wide age range of kids?

**Dale Rooks**

Er, it’s, it's really good, I think, I hope we’ve got it right. We tend to, we run the weekly sessions in year groups. So it runs from year 6 up to year 13 and then the gap year. In the satellite groups they’re integrated age groups, so it’s year 6. I don’t know if you know the school year groups but it’s year 6 to year 9 so that’s sort of 10 to 14 year-olds and then 15 plus. Both seem to work quite well. I think there’s a huge benefit in bringing those age groups together for productions. Er, so when I talk about the large scale I have about 70 plus people, young people in the company. And just bringing, you know, older working with younger and younger working with older is beneficial to both. I mean, you know, they learn from each other. And, you know the youth theatre feels more like a big family and it’s very, very special. And I really mean that. It’s not just about people come for a year or two and then they leave and you don’t see them again. They sometimes stay for 9 years and I really get to know them over that time and I can see that progression and that development and that confidence building. And then they never leave – because they’re always in touch. And I go and see them. Next week I’m going to London to see one of my ex Youth Theatre members in a West End show. Or you know, I get a call to say come up to drama school and see what I’m doing technically. And it’s a real, it’s such a joy. I think it just has a very, very, very special feel to it. Which is more than just attending a group.

**Karen Robinson**

BUT WHEN YOU THINK BACK TO WHEN YOU STARTED AT CHICHESTER WHAT WERE YOUR MAIN FEELINGS AND IMPRESSIONS?

**Dale Rooks**

Um, I felt that maybe, cos it, I was working within the education department, so the youth theatre comes under the umbrella of education, which is now LEAP, which is learning, education and participation. It felt a little bit divorced from the rest of the theatre both in location and in terms of its profile.

**Karen Robinson**

so where did you?

**Dale Rooks**

We were in the Minerva Box Office. In fact, to be perfectly honest when I started as Youth Theatre Leader we were, the education office was at the end of Gunters, which was the old restaurant where the Steven Pimlott building is now in a ramshackle room next to the shoe/boot room with broken windows, and it was draughty and it was noisy and it was miserable and bleak. [laughter] We then moved to, er, the, in fact we moved to the backstage area, in a dressing room or stage management room temporarily and then into the Minerva where the current box office is. And that’s very accessible but it felt, because we were on one side of the building and the rest of the staff in general were on, in the admin block we were quite divorced from the work. I think now and over the years it feels as though the Youth Theatre has become much more integral. In fact the work of the department is much more integral to the theatre and sits more comfortably. I think it’s recognised much more, and valued.

**Karen Robinson**

SO, UM YOU TALKED ABOUT BEING A BIT DETACHED NOT JUST PHYSICALLY BUT IN OTHER WAYS. HOW DID THAT MANIFEST ITSELF?

**Dale Rooks**

Um, you’d, it sort of felt in some ways that we were just an ‘add on’, so, um we could have been there or not there. You know, once I think we were offered the Christmas production in 2003, that felt as though we were being incorporated into the theatre’s programme and we were advertised in the brochure. And that was a hugely significant thing, just to be part of everything that was happening in the theatre. And it felt like a real buzz. It wasn’t the best show in the world – I don’t think! – it was terribly nerve racking to be on the big Festival Theatre stage although we had had slots in the Minerva Theatre, but sort of separate slots if you like. Um, so just being in there and producing a musical, and prior to me becoming Director there weren’t any Youth Theatre musicals, they were kind of disregarded for plays, so.

**Karen Robinson**

WHAT WAS THE MUSICAL?

**Dale Rooks**

It was ‘The Wizard of Oz’. Gosh, it was hard! [laughter] It was really hard! Because we didn’t have young people trained singers. You know, we started from scratch. So it was very momentous, it was very historical, you know I will always remember that first production. I guess with trepidation but also with pride because it was the start of us becoming much more recognised. Um and for the young people as well I think they feel that, you know, they feel now that they really are a big part of the family at Chichester Festival Theatre, um and they’re involved in everything. Um and they’re great young people – why not? You know, they need a presence around the building and I think they do have that now. They were the ambassadors for the recent gala, the reopening of the theatre. And they got to do the first test event in the Festival Theatre, on stage so it does really feel as though everybody values them, and that has an effect also on your relationship with other people in the building. So, yeah.

**Karen Robinson**

WERE THERE ANY OTHER EARLY PRODUCTIONS THAT PARTICULARLY STICK IN YOUR MIND FOR ANY REASON?

**Dale Rooks**

Um. Yes. Lots of open air productions. So every other year the Youth Theatre take on an open air promenade show and I did a couple at the school, in the school grounds at St Cuthman’s, in Midhurst, and I incorporated the Youth Theatre and my young people into one big company. The first one I directed was The Land of Oz based on The Wizard of Oz, , that was before I became Youth Theatre Director actually, in 1999. Fortunately we had good weather but had problems with casting the dog, as Toto. We had dog auditions on the park which was hilarious. We had every size and breed turn up and some were really naughty and unruly. And then I found the perfect Toto called Raggle but he was so naughty in the show. Um, he er, I had to keep cutting him actually and sending him back to the dressing room. He had a chaperone. He barked at the Tin Man because he didn’t like the sound, he growled at the Lion and then the Scarecrow fell over in one scene and he just lifted his leg. And you can imagine what happened next. So er he kept getting cut, but you know what it was great fun, it was terrific fun and I do remember those shows because the environment was fabulous and the integration of the young people with special needs and my youth theatre was, yeah.

**Karen Robinson**

SO THOSE OPEN AIR SHOWS WERE JUST IN THE PARK, WERE THEY?

**Dale Rooks**

Everywhere, actually. I’ve er, we’ve performed Toad of Toad Hall at Rolls Royce car factory, outside, using so, the promenade you take the audience from scene to scene although sometimes they do turn up and think they’ve got a seat and have to walk quite a long way. We did Grimm Tales at the Cathedral. We try to keep it fairly local, so if we go too far out that’s quite difficult for audience members to access. We did Arabian Nights in the beautiful gardens at Goodwood through a little wooden secret door. And The Firework Maker’s Daughter at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. That was rather lovely. We even put the goddess out on the lake in that one but we had to build a platform without puncturing the lining to the lake. That was quite scary. I mean they’re big, they’re big productions to organise. You need a good production manager, a lot of support on them. But er, and of course you’ve got to rely on the weather. So if I remember anything it’s having to change direction in the middle of the show, in the middle of the show when the heavens open and it just starts pouring down.

**Karen Robinson**

IS THERE A PARTICULAR EXAMPLE OF WHEN YOU DID THAT?

**Dale Rooks**

Yeah. At the Weald and Downland. We were weather watching all day this one particular day, it was a little bit like this, it was quite overcast in the morning and then by late afternoon gorgeous, absolutely lovely. And by 7 o’clock the clouds were starting to build and it was getting greyer and greyer and I thought ‘No, were going to get away with this ‘, so I made the decision we’d go out. Well, we’d got to the second scene – and that’s actually worse – starting and having to come in because you’ve got to – all the stage managers have to shift everything inside, the audience have to give us 15 mins and then we have to perform the rest of the show indoors. And that’s exactly what we did. And the audience were with us, they were absolutely marvellous. They were sopping wet, and so were all the costumes and all the actors and everything. Um but then towards the end of the evening, just because it’s such an important part of the story, we had fireworks. So we decided to go out, so at quarter past nine or thereabouts we went out and lit the fireworks and did the final scene. And we were so wet! [laughter] But, you know, that all adds to the experience, doesn’t it really?

**Karen Robinson**

SO WHAT ARE THE STAND OUT PRODUCTIONS ARE THE ONES YOU’VE ACTUALLY DONE IN THE THEATRE ITSELF?

**Dale Rooks**

It’s funny. Everybody asks me that question and I find it really difficult to answer it because I think each one brings something very different and very unique in a way depending on the story. But um I honestly don’t know I could choose one that stands out. I mean I’ve repeated two. I did The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe in 2005 and then again in 2011. And they were extraordinarily different because I did, I had a different creative team. So my designers were different and my MDs, um so I suppose it’s challenging if you do something a second time round but it’s, it's fabulous when it works and you’re managing to shut out the previous production. Obviously if you’ve had a fab idea you’re going to take it forward and not just be arrogant enough to push it to one side because you’ve done it before. But, yes a real challenge to sort of bring something back and make it refreshed and different. And of course you have a different company so you’ve got different dynamics in the company. But yeah, I guess I remember that one just because I repeated it. Um, they all, they all bring something, I think some for the audience are better than others in that they tell the story better. But that’s sometimes down to the adaptation. So.

**Karen Robinson**

SO WHO WOULD YOU HAVE WORKING WITH YOU ON A TYPICAL PRODUCTION – I DON’T MEAN THE PLAYERS, I MEAN THE TEAM?

**Dale Rooks**

Er, very much the same creatives as work on the Festival Theatre shows. So, and that again raises the profile when you’re working with such magnificent people who are at the top of their game. So, Simon Higlett who designed Amadeus has designed a number of our shows, and lighting designer, you know. We do, even the Musical Directors, this year for The Hundred And One Dalmatians we have Matthew Scott who’s Head of Music at the National Theatre and is also our Associate at Chichester, so I think the fact that those people come and work with us, and regard that as, you know, as important as what they do for the other big professional shows speaks volumes really.

**Karen Robinson**

HOW MANY PRODCTIONS WILL YOU TYPICALLY DO IN A SEASON?

**Dale Rooks**

Normally, well, we do the Christmas production. Long may it last! Um, and every other year we’ll have an open air promenade show. They’re the big productions so they involve a lot of Youth Theatre members. In between there’s lots of smaller, you know productions and plays and opportunities. So, for example with Heritage we’re doing a play called Out of the Archives so it links the Heritage, the theatre and the Youth Theatre performing ideas that come from those concepts, if you like. I know that’s a funny thing to say but, and that will go in the Minerva. And then we do Saturday Shorts and that’s often linked to a theme within a play from the Festival. We work with the National Theatre on new writing. So, it’s called Interconnections, and then we have a different company that works on a smaller play. There might be - I don’t know- somewhere between 15 to 30 young people rehearsing, performing that one. And we work with our young playwrights as well, so it’s actually trying to join everything up so that um things are relevant. We don’t just pluck something out of the air. But, yeah, there’s lots and lots of opportunities for, well, performance opportunities, albeit they might be shorter projects. And then every Youth Theatre member gets to perform a devised piece in the autumn term We have a sharing, and we’re getting too big now, the numbers are just so vast it’s quite hard to find a space to do that sharing - so it’s often not all together. But now that we have the theatre back I’m hoping that we that might want to do the sharing in there. So each separate group, and there are thirty seven groups, will work for a term towards the performance and then they’ll bring it all back together and share it. And that might be theme based. Last year we did work on the archive and every group had a stimulus that they took and they interpreted in their own way. That was directed by them and their leaders and then that was shared back. So it’s great because I think the one thing that I find is very difficult, because the Youth Theatre is so accessible, is when you audition and that becomes the real experience and some people get into the show and some don’t. And I don’t like disappointing people but that is a part of life. It is quite competitive in that respect. Um it’s not competitive to get into the Youth Theatre because there’s no auditions to join, so everyone and anyone can apply. So that feels good and that feels kind of inclusive.

**Karen Robinson**

OVER THE YEARS YOU’VE OBVIOUSLY MET A LOT OF CHILDREN, A LOT OF PLAYERS. ARE THERE UM ANY THAT YOU WANT TO TELL ME ABOUT PARTICULARLY?

**Dale Rooks**

The young people?

**Karen Robinson**

YES.

**Dale Rooks**

Um. Yeah, we’ve had some huge successes. Look, not all of them want to go to drama school and you know that’s not what we’re about. Our Youth Theatre is not about training people up to be actors, not really. It’s much more about involving people in a team, you know, working together as a team, building confidence, learning new skills, making friends. Also learning how to be professional in a professional environment. But some do go on. We’ve got a boy um who is now in The Book of Mormon in the West End. We’ve got other young people who’ve just graduated from drama school but have got into plays, fringe theatre. Technically we’ve got people working on Les Mis, which is in town as well because a lot of our young people do train in the sort of technical and backstage work. But at the other extreme we’ve got people who equally make successful careers but not necessarily in theatre but they’ll always take the skills with them, whatever they’ve learnt. And they will say that. The alumni records will show that they feel the experience has been so positive for them and they’ve learnt how to present themselves, whether that be in an interview situation, you know, or a job, or taking promotion, or just socially. There’s a young man who, and I know he wouldn’t mind me talking about this because he’s spoken about it himself many times, when he came to us age 10 he had the most severe speech impediment, and, just a terrible, terrible stutter. And, he after about 2 years he was managing to overcome that. He’s now a sports commentator for Sky Sports. And I think that speaks, you know, volumes. And he says he puts it down to being able to be himself and, you know, just improve his confidence in larger groups. So there’s, yeah, there’s lots of stories. I mean the joy of the Youth Theatre is that the young people come from very different backgrounds, and very different schools. I mean some are in public schools, some mainstream, some are special, some are home educated but they all come together and work together. And I just think that’s probably the most exciting thing to see.

**Karen Robinson**

CHILDREN BY NATURE TEND TO GET UP TO MISCHIEF. HAVE YOU GOT ANY STORIES ABOUT EXAMPLES OF THAT?

**Dale Rooks**

Yes! [laughter] I remember there was one lad who was just, yes, quite naughty. And he would do things like take somebody’s shoes and um put them in the sink and fill them with water because he thought that was dead funny. [laughter] But of course it wasn’t. Um, and er some of my, what I’d call my ambassadors, the older Youth Theatre members thought it would be a great idea to go and paint the toilets in Gunters without asking. And they painted this vibrant pink.

**Karen Robinson**

GUNTERS?

**Dale Rooks**

Gunters was the old restaurant. So it used to be our rehearsal space. And er it was pretty run down but they just thought they’d be very helpful. But of course they didn’t ask. So they just [laughter] took this bright almost fluorescent paint and painted the toilets. I just remember everybody’s reaction to it. It was, yeah, I mean, you know, there are some mischievous young people but yeah, that’s fun isn’t it? You have lots of different personalities coming together. You wouldn’t want them all to be the same.

**Karen Robinson**

WERE THERE ANY EXAMPLES OF THAT DURING PRODUCTIONS?

**Dale Rooks**

Um, there was one time, do you know I can’t remember which show, but, let me just think. I think it was Alice in Wonderland. And obviously the main characters are miked and one girl didn’t realise that her mike was on when she’d left the stage, and she’d made a blunder on stage and then said something, which I can’t repeat [laughter] which, yeah, came out over through the audience. Um to be honest I’ve had more problems with animals than I have with the young people. They are hugely disciplined. They do, they sign contracts when they come into the youth theatre so everybody knows the parameters, and I think you have to have that when you’ve got such an enormous, um, youth theatre, you know, and big groups and there’s an expectation from them that, you know, they are there for the right reasons. And they also sign contracts for the shows as well. So that becomes again a sort of professional step up, which feels right. And I think it sort of raises the standard, you know. What we always strive for is excellence in our work and I think once you put that, you keep pushing up what you want that to be and that expectation from young people they will rise to it. If you hold the bar somewhere further down, then they’ll rise to that but they won’t go any further. So, I think I lost the question there! [laughter]

**Karen Robinson**

NO, IT'S FINE.

**Dale Rooks**

I started talking about something else other than naughtiness. But, yeah, no, animals, animals are definitely naughty. Bullseye, in Oliver, and it was the one and only night that I wasn’t in the theatre, because normally I’m there, my AD was there, the Assistant Director, and the dog, the character Bullseye got off its leash and ran around the audience so that caused a bit of mayhem. [laughter] Yep!

**Karen Robinson**

WHEN YOU AUDITION ANIMALS DO YOU JUST ADVERTISE IN THE GENERAL POPULATION, OR HOW DO YOU FIND?

**Dale Rooks**

We do, but with Bullseye we went to a place called Top Dogs which I think is a professional kind of, I don’t know, it’s a sort of a place where dogs are able to perform somehow. But normally, yeah we’ll just go to the general public and ask.

**Karen Robinson**

AND HOW DID YOU GET HIM BACK IN THE END?

**Dale Rooks**

I think one of the actors went out, and he’d already built a kind of bond with him so he managed to get him back on the leash. But of course the audience love anything like that, don’t they? Something that’s a bit different, that’s not expected. [laughter] They quite like, but yeah.