CITATION: Women's Work in British Film and Television, Wendy Toye, http://bufvc.ac.uk/bectu/oral-histories/bectu-oh [date accessed]

 The subject is Wendy Toye, interviewed by Linda Wood, 20 May 1991, recordist Dave Robson. File 197

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

LW: Can you say when and where you were born?

WT: I was born in 1917, in London, May 1st.

LW: Where about in London?

WT: Upper Clapton. North London, it was very pretty in those days, it had a village pond which I fell into a lot, and all those sort of things, it's very different now but it was awfully nice then.

LW: Did you come from a show business background?

WT: No, there was nobody in it at all as far as I knew that was anything to do with show business at all.

LW: What first attracted you to that?

WT: It was really my mother so wanted to do it herself, she so wanted to be a dancer, being a very very brilliant lady, she somehow or another got in touch with all the right people and did all the right things, so that by the age of 5 I was being allowed to watch the rehearsals of the Diagliev Ballet Company in London which was an unknown thing for anybody to do. It was never allowed, but she somehow or another found, because she sent me to a very good dancing school to begin with.

LW: How old were you when you started?

WT: Three. And the rehearsal pianist, accompanist there, was Glynis Johns mother, and I think it was she who suggested that I should go in to do some special kind of performance at the Albert Hall, and I was 3 and a half when I did that, which was my first performance, it was a charity performance of course. And it was the first time I danced in public and I seemed to get on alright and I was very small so that was an advantage.

LW: Was it something, that when you started dancing that you knew that was it for you?

WT: I think so, I absolutely loved it and I worked very hard as a dancer and also I was lucky because I got parts as an actress, I was the original Marigold in Toad of Toad Hall. And I was very

lucky in that people were interested in me, so I didn't stick to one thing, although now that I am older I think it probably would have been better if I had stuck to one thing rather than try to do all the things I've tried to do, but I was so interested in everything. I think that I was very musical and that helped and I was always making up little dances. And I remember going in to the bedroom in the morning saying I've made up a dance. They always had stories and it must have been terribly boring to my poor mum and dad. They bore with it and she did all the right things in that I met the right kind of people.

LW: So your family was very supportive at a time when it isn't so fashionable to be a ballet dancer as it is now.

WT: No, that's quite true. Of course, I wasn't a ballet dancer at three and a half, that wasn't until I was a bit older, although I trained in ballet from when I was very young. My father was supportive but he was not interested, he just didn't come and see anything I did. He died when I was quite young sadly, but I don't think he ever came to see any performance of anything. And of course I was really without sounding pompous, or showing off, I really was very very famous as a child, because I did so many charity shows and so many professional shows when I was old enough, so that my name was very well known. And the sort of things happened to me – which were great fun – when Jackie Coogan came over, and I heard somebody on the radio the other day who said they'd named their grandchild Coogan after Jackie Coogan,

LW: Brian Cluff

WT: That's right, and it all brought it back to me, because I was one of the most famous children in England, the publicity people arranged it that I met him when he was at the London Palladium, and I've got a picture of him and me. Of course, I just lost my heart to that darling looking young man. I think he was about 14 and I was about 7. But all those things happened to me which were great fun. I was always coming out of things because I was so tiny and when I did charity shows they would think of anything they could to stick me into to let me pop out of as a surprise.

The Mayor of Chicago, who happened to be Irish, it must have been in about 1922, and they put me in an Irish stewpot to be brought in by two chefs, and I was to be put on the table which happened, but they forgot about me and the cabaret was delayed, and there I was nearly suffocating in this great copper pot. Eventually they carried me on and dumped me down on the table and took the lid off, and out I sprang and danced the Irish jig to the very

astounded Mayor of Chicago. He gave me a five dollar bill which I think I've still got, he tore it in half and signed it. It was a great experience.

LW: Did you have an agent.

WT: Not in those days, my mother wasn't a pushy mother at all. She was a most remarkable charming lady and everybody adored her and all I wanted to do was get away from her really because I had no freedom at all. But when I was older, it was during Tulip Time at the Alhambra, the last show at the Alhambra, I shared a dressing room with Betty Bascombe and my mother always came with me, she was in the theatre all the time, I said to Betty one day couldn't you ask the stage management to say that my mother had to leave at the half hour which everybody else had to, and she said no, of course I couldn't, who would do all my sewing and mending and ironing for me. So I could never get away from it.

LW: So she kept a very close eye on you.

WT: Very close, too close really, because she was watching rehearsals, watching classes, it was just like, I don't know what it was, in the end it got too much for me and I kind of ran away from home.

LW Where you doing standard schooling?

WT: No, I went to my local school which was two doors away from us, a children's kindergarten, when I was 3, but when I was 5 I was so busy dancing and performing that I then had to have a governess from then onwards. And sometimes if you are in a theatre, in a show, you have to have lessons in the dressing room or down in the film studio. It was all quite fascinating, all that

LW: Did you appear in any films?

WT: Not while I was very young, not until I was about 14. And then I can't remember what they were called. When I was 14 of course I was choreographing a film called, which was quite interesting, a film called Pagliacci, and I think I'm right, I think it's the first British film ever to have any colour in it.

LW: Richard Tauber. Yes, it's got a sequence in colour at the end and at the beginning

WT: Do you remember you the director was.

LW: I can't remember [Karl Grune]

WT: It was somebody like Ludwig Berger, not that there are many somebody's like that, but you know what I mean, somebody European, but the director was so busy and so engrossed in the colour sequence, the colour in the colour sequences, that he handed it over to me to direct those sequences. And when I say direct, I mean rehearse them and direct it with the actors and then he put the cameras on it. But I had all that responsibility in those days, and I was so fascinated by the editing, that I used to spend every minute I could in the editing room and they were very friendly with me, and they used to let me go into the editing department, which again I don't think could happen nowadays, and I got sort of o-fay with how things worked which partly made it possible for me to direct when it actually came to it.

But before that I had been assistant choreographer to Anton Dolin, my beloved Uncle Pat, on a film called Invitation to the Waltz, with, Lilian Harvey was in and I was in it too, I played a part and danced in it. And funnily they've enough they've used in a documentary on me, they used a little bit of me dancing. And when I heard about this I thought how dreadful, because I've always thought I was kind of fairly good, especially when I was young, and I thought suppose I see this and I'm disappointed. And then I saw this little flash of it in the documentary and I was alright and I was so relieved.

Anyway Pat Dolin fell in love with Lilian Harvey and she was always going back to Paris, and he was always going back with her, so he really left the dances to me. They weren't anything very exciting or unusual or different, but because of that people saw in the studio that I had done a lot of that sort of work and Donald Wilson was the production manager on it. He might have been first assistant, he might not have moved up to production manager in those days, but it was he who then got me the job for Pagliacci, that's how that happened.

LW: Lilian Harvey was really a major star in Germany.

WT: She was a tremendous star, she was awfully sweet and very good. I can't quite remember who it was with Tauber in Pagliacci, was it Steffi Duna, I know I had to do a sequence of part of the opera and they weren't terribly good movers and when I've seen it recently I've been very disappointed.

LW: So you got quite a lot of film experience quite early on.

WT: Yes, and I danced, there was just a little dance sequence which I was in, with an Irish comedian, Jimmy, I can't remember

his name, but I was in a lot of films like that. And I was in a film with the Crazy Gang, but when these films are shown these days on television, they cut out all the extraneous bits, I think I was in that and then I watch it through and find out I wasn't. They cut it out.

LW: Which studios did you work at?

WT: Gainsborough. I've got a marvelous story about Gainsborough. Not that many years ago I was in New York and Dicky Attenborough was directing Chorus Line, and I went to the theatre where they were working to see him and he was very sweet and he said very pleased to see me. He said you know everybody here. He pointed out where his wardrobe mistress was and his make-up girl was and I did know most of them because they were his crew. And he said do you know Ronnie Taylor, my lighting cameraman, and I said I don't think we have ever met. He came over and I said I am glad to meet you at last, I'm such a fan. He said we've met. I said really. He said when I was 14 years old, I came to Gainsborough studios to try and get a job on the camera crew as a runner, and he said there wasn't any space but they gave me a job for the sound crew, runner on the sound crew, runner boy for the sound crew. And he said the first thing I had to do was get the tea, so I got the tea, I came into this huge studio at Gainsborough, and there were a whole lot of dancers dancing and there was someone in charge of them and I was stuck in the middle of this group. And I said to somebody can you tell me which is the sound crew is and this person said over there, if you don't know who the sound crew is and you're working for them, you better come back and I'll tell you who all the others are. So he said he went over to the sound crew, gave them their tea, came back, saw all these dancers dancing away, sat down besides the person he first met. And that person told him that that was David Lean who was editing the film, and that was Ronnie Neame who was the cameraman and that was Carol Reed who was the director and that was Robert Morley, and that was Robert Donat, and explained everybody. And he said, this is Ronnie Taylor the lighting cameraman, he said that person was you Wendy. I thought I was going to be the person who was rehearsing the dancers but that was probably my assistant. I thought that was a lovely story and he said I've never forgotten that, I've always remembered you for it.

LW: It shows how people do remember kindnesses.

WT: When you're very young. They do because you're so worried in life in general that a word of encouragement does it but I was thrilled to bits about that. I was at Gainsborough Studios, BIP, which was Elstree, Denham because I did the dances and a lot of

the movement for The Thief Of Baghdad, which is when Korda first knew me.

And the first time I met the Kordas, again I was quite young, I don't remember what year it was, but I went to this long long table in Shepperton, and there was Alex sitting opposite me and the two brothers either side. Alex was explaining what it was. He said these arms of Indie, they have to go, I think they are sticking out the side, you must decide two people or one person, how you can do six arms, I don't know, six people or 12 people, it depends on how wide is the statue, but they must go tick, tock, he was moving his arms going tick, tock. But then Zoltan said no, no, no, no Alex, it must be zeem, boom, zeem, boom. And then the other one said no, no, flutter, they must flutter, the fingers must flutter. And these lovely three gentlemen were all going zeem, zong, bing, bong at me, I didn't know where to put myself. It was very funny. They were all very serious. But years later when Alex gave me a contract to work with him I reminded him of all this and he hadn't realised it was the same person.

LW: Regarding working conditions, you were strictly freelance, were you employed by the day, when you were doing things like Pagliacci

WT: Yes, by that time, I suppose I had an agent, and then later on Dennis Lantal looked after me who was London management but also who was casting for Alex Korda. I think he was there when I was there. And the whole reason I ever got into films was through a wonderful fellow, as far as I'm concerned he was a wonderful fellow, Bill O'Brien, who used to cast for Alex in those days. And I'd made The Stranger Left No Card for George K. Arthur who had gone into production with silent film stars, Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan and all those people. And I'll tell you how he got me to do it, but at this particular point I'd made it and he'd taken the copy back to America and he'd left a copy with British Lion. And this particular evening Alex Korda was having a party and showing a film to some of his guests, they were quite important people and he rang down to Bill O'Brien to find a short film to be seen with it.

So Bill then rang the librarian and I don't know who it was but the man who looked after all the pictures in Korda's library. And this man said I was round at British Lion the other day and we were looking at various things and I saw a short film that was really remarkable, and I think you ought to have a look at that tonight, I think it would interest you all. And that was The Stranger Left No Card. And Alex saw it and was so impressed by it that he asked if he could send it to the Cannes Festival under the banner of London Films, it was British Lion by then, and he

asked to send it to Cannes which he did and it won an award of course for the short film of that year.

And so it was entirely by luck, it could have sat down in those vaults forever, because it was a year after I made it, something like that. And Jonah Jones, who was the cameraman on it, it was the first film he made that was a dramatic film. He'd done Target for Tonight and F for Freddie and all those documentaries and this was the first thing he'd ever done dramatically. And it was exactly what I wanted it to look like, I wanted it to look a bit like a documentary and in those days that sort of thing didn't happen with films of that sort. They were much glossier looking. And that was part of the success of it, his wonderful photography. And of course Alan Badel who was so marvelous in it.

LW: A really great actor.

WT: Wonderful actor. And how that all came about, I'd done a show during the war for George K. Arthur, for the American 8th Army and Airforce and I'd staged it all and rehearsed it all and I was made a second lieutenant in the American Airforce which was very nice. And this man, George K. Arthur, who I knew under another name, I knew him as George Brest, and I finally learned he was George K. Arthur who was the silent film star and he went back to America at the end of the war. And he was very grateful to me because I'd done a lot of work, and it was for nothing, why shouldn't it be, all the men were away at the war anyway. So it was the least I could do and he and his very dear wife had a child which they named Wendy and about 3 years later he came over to, no I went to America to co-produce Peter Pan with Jean Arthur and Boris Karloff, that's right, that was a stage show, and Leonard Bernstein had written the most wonderful new score for it and the lyrics himself. And it was a tremendous success and it was on Broadway. And while I was there I remet George K. Arthur and his wife and he showed me three stories, three short stories and said what do you think of them. I said well I think this one, Stranger in Town is one of the best stories I've ever read. But I did suggest to him and also to Sidney Carroll, who was the author, who was very famous in America, has done some wonderful things,

LW: Was that the Sunday Times film critic or was it another Sidney Carroll.

WT: No, that was the Sidney Carroll stage producer – a different one. But George came over after about three years, with this story, with all the alterations I'd suggested. He also said he wanted to make it in England, which I'd suggested. I said it should be in Windsor or somewhere like that which had the

background of England in it, because it's a typical English eccentric, the man. If you do it American, there is something trixie about it. Anyway, he asked me what who I thought should do it. And I said obviously Alan Badel would be wonderful. He had never made a film, he had just been a wonderful stage actor at the Old Vic. I think he was playing Romeo at the time. And I said Muir Mathieson ought to control the music and Jean Barker would be lovely to edit it because she was so good. And I would take it to David Lean, I said, because I think you ought to get the very topest director because it is such a wonderful story. And I suggested lots of things to him. And he went away for a week, Alex Stone to design it, which again she did brilliantly. Dorian Carwinter to write the music. And Muir Mathieson to conduct it.

And he came back in a week's time and he said I've got everybody. So I said that's marvelous. Have you got David Lean. He said no, I haven't got David Lean, I said oh what a pity, that's sad. Who have you gone to. So he said well I've always wanted you to do it and he put the script on my lap and said get on with it. But I did ring up, I'm not sure if it was David, I know I rang up XXXX and I rang up Donald Wilson and I rang up Darnborough, Anthony Darnborough, I asked them what they thought, they knew how much film work I'd done, or how little. And they all said oh yes, have a go for goodness sake. So I did.

LW: What happened with your early film work. Did it just fizzle out with the war.

WT: It wasn't really anything important. I never acted in films. I acted in one documentary film which was made by Donald Wilson. But I was a sort of speciality act. They wanted a bit of dancing and they would call me up and say are you free.

But I did lots and lots choreography. I did the dancing such as it was in Anna Karenina, the ballroom scene, that Vivien Leigh was in. I did a lot of dancing in films. I did some Anna Neagle ones, Piccadilly Incident. It wasn't bad that, except the waltz at the end which was very dreary. But some of the rest of it was quite good, I saw it the other day and I was very pleased about it. So the film career was very, I don't know much about the film business. If you're talking about theatre I do know a lot more about it, but I only know my tiny little experience in it.

LW: You were continuing to choreograph all through the war.

WT: When I was a dancer, Dame Ninette de Valois was very interested in me and so was Dame Alicia, and Sir Anton Dolin. And I worked with them all. I was with the Vic Wells Ballet when it was created. I was in the corps de ballet of that. And I was a

solo artist and choreographer in the Markova/Dolin company and Dame Ninette gave me a certificate for choreography when I was about 13, I think I was even younger than that. And when I 14 I was asked to choreograph a ballet for the Comarga Society, which was a great a concern which was trying to create ballet in this company really. And it was a great honour to be asked.

All the other ballets I did at the Palladium and things like that, they were all a bit of a gimmick because I was so young. But this was a serious work by Frank Bridge that Ninette asked me to do. And it really was a great honour. I don't think I came up to her, I think I probably did with that ballet, but I don't think I came up to her expectations as a choreographer because I then really left the ballet world. When I was about 18 I left the ballet world and went into the commercial world more. And it is very difficult to do both. I think they can nowadays. I think it is much more acceptable nowadays. But I think in those days the commercial world although I tried to alter certain aspects of it, and I think I was the first person, certainly in this country who had classical dancers in a commercial show, with George Black at the London Palladium. And that was some time roundabout the 40s. Yes, that 38 39 40, 41, 42, that was when I was doing all the Palladium shows and the Hippodrome show. And I really did start to infiltrate really really good dancers into the companies. And I don't think anyone else over here had done that. I'm not sure they'd even done it in America. They had had things like the troupe of Albertina Rash Girls but they weren't really absolutely first class dancers mixed up with, like the Tiller girls and the Sherman Fisher Girls. So I was very pleased to do that.

LW: Did you find the more you were choreographing the less you were able to perform.

WT: Yes, what happened was that when I was in the Markova/Dolin Ballet at the age of 18, I had a very bad appendicitis. I think I was about 18, 18 or 19. And in those days it took a long while for you to recover. So I wasn't able to actually perform, and people who wanted me to choreograph for them asked me to. And this is when I started with George Black. And funnily enough the assistant or the cameraman on Invitation to the Waltz was Alfred Black who was George Black's son and it was he who suggested me to his father to go and choreograph some of their shows because he had seen what I'd done in the film. It is amazing how things go round in circles.

And it took a long while to recover in those days, so then I choreographed things and I didn't go back to dancing seriously ever again although I was in lots of shows. And actually I was in a play at the Globe Theatre called Love and How to Cure It, which

was produced by Tyrone Guthrie, lovely play to be in with Athene Seyler and Edward Chapman and Stephen Hagard and Peter Copley was in it. It was a lovely lovely production that was the first part of the evening and while that was happening Alicia Markova was taken ill and I had to travel over to Golder's Green to dance her part in the ballet I'd choreographed for them, because I was the only person who knew it. So I was doing both at that time.

But then years later I went into a show called Follow the Girls at Her Majestys and I played opposite Arthur Askey in that. That was a kind of return to the theatre. I'll never forget that first night as long as I live, because I had been out of performing for quite a long while and the kind of reception one got, it was so warming, it was just incredible. I'll never forget that evening.

And then I was in Annie Get your Gun at the Coliseum again. I kept returning to the Coliseum all through my life. I went into that show quite again by accident. I'd just directed Bless the Bride for Charles B Cochran at the Adelphi. That was the second big musical production I'd done for him. And a friend of mine, Irving Davis who was a wonderful dancer and had been in lots of shows with me wanted to go and audition for Annie Get Your Gun, and he didn't have anything he could dance. He was grumbling about this and we'd just done a television together with a really good routine in it which he'd choreographed. And I said well if you like I'll come along and do that with you. He couldn't have done it by himself. So I did and I turned up on the stage and everybody was surprised to see me. And Emil Littler was in the front, and the American director, Helen Tamiris, she was in front. It was just three days after Bless the Bride had opened which was the most fantastic success and I'd directed it. So they were quite surprised to see me. We did our routine and Irvin got the job and then Emil shouted up and said would you like to be in it, Wendy. I said I don't know, I haven't been in anything for years. So I thought about it. And he said you'll have to dye your hair blond. So I said alright, don't mind that. That will be great fun. Because Delores had to die her hair darker, Delores Grey who was a wonderful Annie in it. So that was how I went into Annie Get you Gun. And I suppose that was the last thing I ever actually performed in.

David Robson: Amazing good fortune you've had, meeting the right sort of people at the right time.

WT: I've been terribly lucky, I think most careers are meeting people at the right time. Actual geniuses and people who have got a great deal of strength and get up and go, I think they will make things happen. But I've got no get up and go at all. Absolutely none, I've just for instance this morning, I've just

had William Graves on the telephone to me, who is Robert Graves son. And Robert Graves was a great friend of mine and his daughter was a great friend of mine. William has got a play about Robert Graves and the White Goddess. I know if I was the right sort of person I could take this and really get it put on and direct it myself. But I know what I'll think, oh so and so will do that beautifully, let them have a look at it William. And the next thing I know they will be directing and it will be on and I will have missed that chance. But I'm just no good at that at all.

The story about Robert Graves daughter and me. We used to go into competitions together. My mother had me in for all the competitions and I won everything. And I won so much that certain schools wouldn't enter their children if I was going to be in the competition. So finally I was banned from one or two. I wasn't aware of this at all I just used to go for the doughnuts and the cups of tea. And I used to sit on the organ pipes with Jenny Nicholson, and my mother would sit a little further away, that was the furthest away I ever got from my mother in those days. And I was always grumbling, or rather admiring Jenny because she used to come on her own. She was all by herself always and so independent and I used to admire that so much. I said to her you are lucky, it is wonderful to do it like that. And she said no, on the contrary, I wish to goodness my mum would come with me and look after me like your mother does, she never did. She never pays any attention to me at all. So we both were grumbling about the way we were brought up. She became a wonderful journalist. I think William is going to try to set up a trust in Oxford for his father.

LW: What was it like working in the war

WT: It was a mixture, when the nuisance raids started in the war I'd done the dances in a show called Black Velvet at the Hippodrome and when the nuisance raids started George Black asked me to come in every evening, because what happened was, I'm not even sure that I hadn't gone into the show, I think I'd taken over from the American dancer in the show. And the sirens used to go off at about half past nine, and we carried on with the show until it was finished, but then nobody was allowed to leave the theatre. So we had to entertain them all the way through the night. So we all did different routines and gags and acts that weren't in the show at all. And then suddenly Sid Field would come over from the Prince of Wales, which is also where I think I had a show, no I think that was later, I think it was Tommy Trinder used to come over from the Palladium and he would act with Vic Oliver and do an act with Vic Oliver. And then Vic would go over to the Palladium and I would stay the acts and organise

how it went on. And then about 6 o'clock in the morning the all clear would go and everybody was allowed home. But that was fascinating, and we got so used to it we thought there's never going to be a raid, it's just going to go on like this forever.

And it did go on for about 3 weeks like that, and then I got to the stage door and Carol Lynn and Iris Lockwood and Vic Oliver and all the people who were in the show, we were all outside the stage door because it was closed, one Monday. It just said the theatres will be closed from now onwards until further notice. And they must have known all about it, the spy system must have been terrific. And so I went home, we all went home and that very very night the very first air raid that there ever was. There was a direct hit on the flat that I was in, which was a basement flat. My husband had taken, because he thought when he had to leave me that would be a safer place as any to be in. And the bomb came right through the window, blew all the four floors up on top of us. There was nobody up above, they'd all gone to the shelter, but we hadn't because we thought it was safe. So we were buried under that and then we were dug out of that at half past six in the morning, marvelous how they got us out. There were no other bombs any where around, were the only direct one. And then we were taken to the air raid shelter and half an hour there was a direct hit on that and somebody was killed sitting next to me. So I thought one of them had got my name on it. But that was the worst part. We didn't do anything for ages and gradually it started going again. And little companies started at lunch time. And entertainments at lunchtime, nothing at night you see, people were too frightened at night. And gradually people got a little braver but I still think it was a couple of years before anybody risked night time because of the raids.

LW: I suppose it went on so long people began to think

WT: No, we never got used to it because there was always something dreadful happening. First it was the ordinary bombs. Then it was the bombs on parachutes that they used to capture in the searchlight, in the searchlight you would see this parachute coming down and you would will it to pass over and kill somebody else. Dreadful thought when you think of it. You would pray for it to pass away over you, to land somewhere else. And then there were the torpedo things, there were just so many types of different warfare going on, you never sat back and thought we know how to behave about that one. It was really horrible. Absolutely horrible.

LW: Did you stay in London throughout.

WT: No, I was bombed so many times. There was no way we could

stay in that house, so I went to my brother in laws, and before long there was a bomb in the back garden there. And we felt we were a kind of bad luck token. So we then went to the country and it was a five mile walk to anything, to a station or a bus, so I didn't come up to London much. But I do remember I came up once to see George Black about starting off again and doing something. And the Arts Theatre Club had got a ballet club at lunchtime and I went to see them. A lot of my friends were in it. And then I went back to the station at King's Cross to go back to Cuffley. And I was in the carriage and so you know they always came in bunches of three, these bombs, and they got closer and closer, one bomb whistled, it's siren had gone, and one whistled, whee and bang, and the second one whee and bang a bit nearer. And the third one, wee and the door shot open and a long black object shot in and I thought it was a bomb. But it was the guard. I was so scared, but the third one did break all the windows and the roof came in of the train and everything. So it was very difficult getting home. It was horrible. It was unbelievable. But nothing like as awful people are having to but up with now abroad.

David Robson: It's amazing how lucky you were in show business but you were very unfortunate to catch all the bombs.

WT: Yes, very strange. But I was lucky in the war, because I was lucky to get asked to do, I would never have done films if I hadn't done the American 8th Army Airforce Show and of course I did that because there were no men around. George K. Arthur actually went to George Black and Cochran and xxx and said who should I ask to do this for us. We want a really good show that will eventually will come to the West End if possible and give the boys something to be interested in. And they all suggested me, not because I was all that good I don't suppose. But I was just there.

LW: You are now directing in the theatre, did you get a chance because most of the theatre directors were away doing

WT: Not really, because it was much later that I started directing, I started directing in 46, and of course the war was over and done with. I got dances on in practically every theatre in London, there was a time when I had done the dances in five theatres in London. Charles B Cochran who was a great impresario had asked me many times to do the dances for his shows. And I hadn't been able to because of dates. They didn't work. So he then sent me a script to read called Big Ben by A. P. Herbert, as most of his things were, and Vivien Ellis wrote the score. I read it and loved it but I couldn't see any place for dancing. So I sent it back to him and said, dear Mr Cochran very honoured to

read this and would love to work with you but I can't see any place for dancing in this show at all, much as I would try and squeeze some in so that I've got a job with you. I don't think there is any way of doing it. I don't know what you meant but I can't see it. And he sent me a letter back saying that's exactly the answer I wanted from you, because in fact I want you to direct it.

Again I don't think I'd ever thought about directing, not really, so that again was just because he'd followed my career and watched my career. And of course, when he first knew me, I was 9 years old and he had produced a huge big thing called the Charleston Ball, which was enormous, the Albert Hall was absolutely filled with people and there were over 200 entries in my class, which was the amateur Charleston Championship and I was the only child entered and I won it. He remembered me from then, I was called No 66. I was No 66 when I won it. Some years later when I was 13 I think it was, I went and auditioned for Massine, the choreographer and I was accepted as one of the dancers in The Miracle, at the Lyseum. And that was a Cochrane show and so I was in touch with him with that. So he'd watched my career ever since I was a little girl. And I think he had it at the back of his mind all the time. Waiting for a subject, yes.

It was a funny subject for him to chose a women for, because it was all about the House of Parliament. It was a lovely show. And then after that I did Bless the Bride which ran for 3 years. And after that I did Tough at Top for him and it was during that time I went into Annie Get Your Gun. And of course while was on I'd done the dances with Noel Coward in Sigh no More, his show, and Gay Rosalinde, which Tauber directed, musical directed, he was the conductor for it. Lots and lots of other shows, lots of things.

Then I had a ballet company called the Ballethoo de Wendy Toye which went to France and it appeared with George Gettaly, who was the leading man of Bless the Bride and he wanted English dancers with him, so I organised that.

LW: Is this immediate post war

WT: I don't remember when the war finished, but this was 1948-49, yes Ballethoo was 1948. And then I went to New York for the Peter Pan and I stayed there about a year

LW: What was your impression of New York.

WT: Oh I loved it. I loved it and of course working with people like Jean Arthur and Boris Karloff. John Burrell was the co-

producer of it. We were going to do it together and I was going to do the dancers. And he was very very English, a brilliant director, very intellectual, and he so frightened Jean Arthur, who was a very shy little woman, a brilliant Peter Pan, but he so frightened her that they had a bit of an upset in the first week and he withdrew from it and I had to do the whole thing. And Motley designed it, who was a wonderful designer, who had been designing for Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft and all those people right from the 30s. I was lucky to have them. And it was marvelous working with Lenny Bernstein.

LW: That would have been before West Side Story

WT: Yes, that was in 1950, I don’t know was it. I don’t think it was on.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

LW: You worked with Julien Duvivier doing the choreography for Anna Karenina

WT: That's right. I didn't like him much. I thought he was wonderful director and therefore I was very disappointed when I found, saw the way he worked. In fact there was an incident on that film. As you know Vivien Leigh was in it and Kieron and Ralph Richardson, and I knew Vivien Leigh from other work. And at that time, funnily enough, she was reading a book, a play, which she said one day on the set, she said I'm going to make a film of this Wendy, and it was Streetcar Named Desire. And when I read it I thought my goodness it will be amazing if she does get that because it is so American. And of course she did get it.

But Duvivier, I can hardly call it choreography what I did was the ballroom scenes, and I had lots and lots of extras, I suppose about 80 extras, and I had the whole of the Rambert Ballet Company. And the Rambert Ballet Company of course were to the foreground, because they looked elegant and danced it beautifully. And the other extras were in the background. And we did the main shot with I suppose about 3 cameras on it, and then Duvivier said now I want to break it down and I want to have just this section and I want this bit of dialogue to go on while that is happening. So then I had to rehearse that bit. And I was going to change over the dancers so the extras weren't so much in the front and the dancers were because he was moving the cameras in, I said I'm just going to change, move, no, no, don't want it changed, don't want it changed, I want to keep it as it is. Which I quite saw because probably for continuity it was not possible.

Anyway, I then rearrange it, and it was very difficult to get the extras to rearrange something as quickly, they were not as quick as the dancers would have been. Anyway, he insisted on going for a take when we weren't quite ready. And he did this take and he cut in the middle of it, and he screamed his head off at the extras. He didn't realise they were extras I don't think, I don't think he knew which were which really but he screamed his head off at how badly they were doing, and how disgusting it was. At the end of it he calmed down, and he swore at them, he said rehearse them some more. And I said I will when you've apologised to them. What me apologise. I said well you were very unnecessarily rude, this group are not dancers. They are extremely good extras and I think it is very unfair, will you would please apologise to them. He wouldn't so I left. Everybody thought I was going to go back but I packed my little bag and I got on my little train and I went home. And they had to have the whole of the set next day with the whole of the group again to do

it all. So I think he was rather sorry he didn’t apologise. But he did apologise to them before we began the next day. So that was my experience of Duvivier but a wonderful director for all that.

LW: Were you around for the other filming, or did you just come in to do the little ballroom scene.

WT: NO, I generally managed to wangle my way round. That is why I learned so much because I could get into see it and watch it. It was all so fascinating to me. I used to go and watch as much as I can so I was there quite a lot. And during the Thief of Bagdad, I think I actually only did perhaps I rehearsed for 3 weeks and shot for about 2 weeks but I think I was 14 weeks in the studio because I was enjoying all of it so much, not so much the effects, because you didn’t see how they done in those days. They were all done somewhere quite different and took so long. I remember sitting a whole day while they lit a matte shot and lit this blue thing. I couldn't understand how it took all day to shoot it, all day to light it and took about 20 minutes to shoot it at the end of the day.

LW: Which directors were working on the film

WT: The funny thing was I thought it was always Alex, but I’ve read so much about it now and I realise that Ludwig Berger was on it too. And the strange thing was that almost at the same time as that I was in a play called The Golden Toy at the Coliseum, a musical which Ninette de Valois had arranged the dances and I was the principle dancer with Freddie Franklyn whose now in America. And Ludwig Berger was the director of that show. And it wasn’t until years afterwards, looking at my autograph book I realised that Ludwig Berger had signed the page of The Golden Toy, and he had also signed the page of The Thief of Bagdad. And I had no idea that I’d worked with him before

LW: What about Michael Powell.

WT: Very little Michael Powell. I knew Emeric Pressburger quite well and both Emeric and Michael Powell did want me to work for them, because they did the sort of films I would have been quite helpful on. And I would have simply loved to worked with them because I think they were imaginative and wonderful and they were the sort of films that I always wanted to do. And when I was with Korda he was trying to find a way of finding films for me to do like that. But in the meantime he offered me lots of things I didn't think I would be very good at including The Man Who Loved Redheads, not that one, -- it’s a film with Moira Shearer and four men -- I just didn't think it was my kind of film at all and

I didn't think I was experienced enough to do that type of film. At least that was my excuse. And in the end Alex directed it himself and it wasn't really a success. It wasn't the right subject for Moira, she was lovely in it, but again it wasn't the imaginative thing that Powell and Pressburger did. But when Alex died and my contract went over to Rank I think I was in the midst of doing something with Ian Dalrymple at that time, who I think was the most fabulous film producer. He did everything in the world for me. And he really encouraged me and it was his idea for me to do Raising a Riot. And he asked me to show the story to Kenny More and see if I could get him to do it and I did. It was wonderful that he had such faith in me.

LW: How did you come to know Ian Dalrymple.

WT: He was working with Alex Korda you see. And the second film I did after The Stranger Left No Card, Korda asked me to find 3 stories. This is a fantastic story, he asked me to find three stories that we could have Alan Badell who played the lead in The Stranger Left No Card that won the award and everything, to play a very small part in the first story; share the leading role with somebody else in the second story. And be the lead in the third story. And I found all the three stories with the help of that wonderful woman Moira Budberg who looked after his script department.

And the first one was a story I'd heard on the radio and got adapted by Sidney Carroll called Who Killed Elizabeth and the second was a Somerset Maugham story called Lord, we will have to check up on that, and the third was In the Picture. And they all took place in a museum. And the man, Hugh Price, who played the man who showed everybody around the museum. First of all he show them one thing and lead into Who Killed Elizabeth. He showed them another thing and that lead into the Somerset Maugham and he showed them another one and lead into my In the Picture. And at the end of In the Picture he was killed, so there was no more of that little man. So the first one to be shot was Who Killed Elizabeth, it was a very, very good story. The second one was mine because he hadn’t cast the costar with Alan for the second one. So the third one was mine and the excitement for me was that Georges Perinal lit it. Can you imagine. And I’d been ever since I was a child I’d been taken to see Sur Les Toits de Paris and all those films. I couldn’t believe I was with this great man. And he was so heavenly to work with and so adorable.

LW: When you worked with were you aware of the difference in quality.

WT: Oh yes. I mean I've been very lucky and have worked with

very, very good lighting directors. But this particular film wanted a quirky thing about it which he got anyway. But in the middle of me shooting it, Alex called me to the office and I went to see him and he said I've got to co star to play opposite Alan. I said wonderful, who is it. Orson Welles. So I said that is absolutely terrific, great. And he said there's only one stipulation is that his has to be the last film. Well that made absolutely no sense at all of the whole operation which was for Alan to play a small part, co-star and then the lead. It was now small part, the lead and then a co-star, so it didn't make any point. Also we'd shot all the links of Hugh Price, I was in the midst of shooting my film and there was no way we could stop him being killed at the end of it, so that would be second so he would be killed so there was no one to lead you into the third one. So what did you then, Alex got me to shoot Eamonn Andrews linking the thing together. Eamonn always used to show off that I was the only person who had ever directed him in films. It was the only film he had ever made. He was very charming but the whole idea had gone for a Burton you see. George Moore O'Farrell directed the Somerset Maugham one and it was a beautiful film that. And the picture was quite good in it's way. And it was George Moore O'Farrell, who was at the Cannes film festival, I wasn't even there when the film went. I wasn't invited, I knew about it because I'd visited it just as a visitor many years before when I was in France, but George Moore O'Farrell sent me that photograph which I'm pointing to on the wall there of The Stranger Left No Card and it's got the most marvelous message from Jean Cocteau on it for me. He was the head of the jury, and George Moore O'Farrell took that trouble to send it to me.

David Robson: He went on to direct in television didn't he, because I worked with him in Redifussion days. I think he went eventually to Anglia or one of those companies, because he didn't have him on our books, he was a guest director and he would come in to direct for Anglia, because Anglia was very small in those days, therefore the big plays requiring lots of sets were having to be done at Wembley. But I met him there and he was a very fatherly man.

WT: Do you know who I first worked with for television, Mr Baird.

LW: How did that happen.

WT: When he was experimenting in a room behind the BBC, he was always asking for people to come and jig up and down in front of the cameras really and truly. I was a child but he got remarkable people, I remember one day I was up there and Tamara Kasavana, the great ballerina who actually I trained, was one of the people

I trained with, and Lydia Sokolova was up there. And he had all sorts of people, big variety stars and everything and there was no sound – it was just picture. And one day was up there, I used to go up about once a month, this was all before the war, long before the war.

LW: At Alexandra Palace.

WT: No, just a room behind the BBC. A good long time before that, when was Alexandra Palace

DR: 1936

WT: It was a good long while before that.

DR: That would have been in his 30 line experimental days then.

WT: That's right. It was 1929 or 30. One day I was dancing the hornpipe and I had got my white thing on and black marks down the side of my nose, which you've heard about and a little tiny triangle to dance on. No bigger than this table, you couldn't go anyway, you just jigged about really on the spot. And suddenly at the end of the dance, I'd saluted, and Mr Baird came out and beckoned me and said Wendy, come and look. And he took me by the hand and took me into the room behind the little room I was in. And there was the last I think it was 30 seconds or 60 seconds of me dancing. I couldn't really see it was me, you could just see two black lines and a white sort of sailor suit but I realised it was me. And he was standing with his hand on my shoulder, and I was looking at this, and then I saluted and then it went away. And I looked at him, I was amazed, I said it's not on film, I'm in here, I'm not there doing it, how. He said well you see on my system it goes out for about 30 seconds and come back. He was very accurate but I can't remember, out for thirty seconds, back for 30 seconds and you see the last 30 seconds of yourself dance, because it takes 30 seconds to come onto the screen. And that was one of the days that he got a good picture.

And then many years after that when I used to go up to Alexander Palace a lot. And it was great fun in those days, because nobody watched, you weren't in the least bit nervous, and all these terrific people who were directing the shows and having ideas for things they were doing it on faith, really. Because if you got a message from what Forrest Hill to say we've seen a picture we were thrilled to bits, let alone having a message from Birmingham or something like that. But we used to always have telephone calls at the end of the programmes as to how many people had seen it. Sometimes you would get five telephone calls and we would all jump in the air and go and have a cup of coffee. And in those

days Baird was in one studio and Marconi in the other. And somehow or another, certainly I always liked working with the Baird boys the best because they were Scots and English and they were the people who had invented it and worked with him. Whereas the others were people who had been trained by him or they were Americans or Italians. Somehow one belonged to us and the other one didn't

And then the great day came, I used to do a show almost every month up there with lovely people like Doris Hare, Maurice Denham, huge amount of people. They didn't spare on the number of people even though it was such a small space, they had lots of people and I did lots of ballets for them, I've still got some of the programmes of those days somewhere or another. And then the day came when it said up on the board that the big decision had come. And we all knew it was going to happen, everybody was going into great detail and they had decided that Marconi was to stay and Baird was to go. And it was really, really sad and we were in tears. I can't remember what the show was we were doing or who was directing it, or anything, but I've kept in touch with most of the directors who were working there. But we were in tears, we were very sad about it. But of course the boys all stayed on, because they all went to work for Marconi, but Baird of course just went, never saw him again.

DR: Fascinating, I've often wanted to talk to somebody about that, to find out what effect that had on people, the fact that Baird was paid off. Everybody knew it was going to happen, because

WT: It wasn't such a good system, no. But he was the inventor of it. But you would have thought they would have done something about him, wouldn't you, to give him some money or look after him, or to honour him, and nothing. But he was a nice man, I used to like him ever so much. He was very gentle, and nice to everyone. I've read since he was a cantankerous crabby sort of fellow, but he didn't seem to me to be that in those days.

DR: He was a Scot

WT: So am I, I'll have you know. I'm half Scots, my mother was Scots. So they were incredible days and incredible days for long after that when we were working for Marconi.

And then I was asked to direct, my very first play I directed for television, which was after I had made films, and it was a thing called Esme Divided, a very, very good play. I had Philip Guard, a brilliant idea, and I had an excellent cast and all sorts of trickery in it that had never been used in those days, and

electronic music which people hadn’t use very much of. But of course it was live and I had the fright of my life the night it was happening, because I had a lot of children in it, I had lot of film. We’d filmed down on the river, because the man drowns himself. It was the idea, it was called Esme Divided, it was the idea of being inside a man's head and seeing through his eyes, so the camera saw through his eyes as he was walking along deciding on suicide. And his brain I think was Robin Bailey, his heart was Brenda Bruce, his psycho was Jimmy, who is in a wonderful television series at the minute, a great cast. And all sorts of tricks and films and things that I had to cue. And I would rehearse at home with the script saying cue number 4, you know. Because in those days, I seem to remember, no I had the girl who cued cameras, there were four cameras, and all the film stuff. And of course I had to cue all the film and everything. And there was such a lot to be done that it was arranged in the studio that I should cue all the film things by sound, by word of mouth, but all the effect cues I had to do into the effects department next door. All the sound was next door and that was all done like this. Literally three quarters of an hour before the thing was going out, and it was live they told me that particular equipment had broken down and they had to put them upstairs. So then I had to relearn the whole thing and cue them upstairs.

And when we began, I couldn't swallow or anything I was so nervous, it was the most terrible feeling. You know it Dave.

DR: Yes I know it.

WT: And just before we started I realised I didn't know how to get from one programme to the other, I knew how to do my bit because I’d practiced it, we’d had the amount of rehearsal time, we’d had camera rehearsals, we’d had studio rehearsals, we’d had all that. And I’d practised at home doing all the cuing, I didn't know how to get from the last programme. And I was sitting there and I shouted at the top of my voice I don’t know what to do. So somebody came in and sat in the seat just for a minute and took over getting from one programme to the other. And then when I was going into mine it was alright. And she had been a stage manager who was called Joan Craft who then became one of the very best women directors, and she had been a stage manager with me. It all goes round in lovely circles.

LW: How much rehearsal time did you have.

WT: I think I had three weeks.

LW: Was that standard. Or had they just given you a bit extra because it was your first.

WT: It was standard

DR: When we started commercial television, the BBC used to have long intervals when you could go and make tea, we were given a lecture before we went on the air, there will be none of that nonsense, if you lose a camera, you could carry on with three. If you lose two cameras, you carry on with two. It was murder.

WT: Of course, in those days David, you were on tape,

DR: No, not in 1955 we weren't, we didn't have tape until

WT: Of course you had to go on, you couldn't stop

DR: We weren't allowed to stop.

WT: How could you stop if people were watching it live.

DR: Because the directors were so superbly drilled that if they knew what to do if they lost a camera

WT: With the BBC did that automatically, you couldn't stop. If you lost a camera of course you had to go on.

DR: Very often used to put a caption up saying, do not adjust your set

WT: I see what you mean

DR: While they unraveled all the cables. We had to keep going.

WT: So did the BBC, once commercials started doing it, the BBC did it too. Because when I was going there I couldn't have stopped.

DR: It was an American idea, we all had a long lecture.

WT: Well time is money on television isn't it.

DR: It was awful for the directors really.

WT: It was very tough. Having directed now theatre, opera, films, even an ice show, I did the Torvill and Dean World Iceshow, I was the associate producer on that, all sorts of variety things, and television, still think television is the hardest. It's the worst of all worlds and hardly any of the good things about it.

DR: The amazing thing about it, we used to find in the live days,

was that when you off the air, the relief was so enormous that people used to go mad and shout to get rid of that feeling. Everyone was going yes, we've made it.

WT: The tension in your throat, I think the difficulty, I don't think anybody realises this who isn't anything to do with it, and I don't think even the people who are to do with television who have never done anything else but television, I don't think they realise how clever they are, because when you're in that control room and you're trying to hear what the actors say, see whether that's good, watch this, listen to that. Everybody is talking, you've got the girl who is saying the next camera shot, and then the present camera shot, you've got all the sound people talking about what they've got to do, you've got every camera up in front of you. The concentration that it takes. I think that television directors are brilliant. I think they're absolutely marvelous. I think when you've been brought up to it and you haven't done any other kind of directing you don't realise how difficult it is, because it comes as second nature

DR: It's very easy for them now, because they use film techniques. It's go on with take after take after take, until they get the take they want.

WT: Generally yes. There is very little live now but in those days it was all live.

LW: You also had to be careful about keeping to your running time.

WT: Yes, terribly difficult. Another thing I did for Granada, was I had done a production which was very famous at the time of Orpheus in the Underworld. It's now been, after 21 years they have got rid of that production thankfully really, and there is another a new one, which Scarfe has designed, and it is also very funny indeed. But mine was fairly outrageous in those days, I did it in 1960 and I can't remember what year I directed it for but I directed it for television with completely new sets, based on ours in the studio at Granada.

And it was the first opera which had ever been done which had been pre recorded. Because everybody disapproved of it and thought it was a ridiculous idea. And I said look, they will only get dust down their throats, they can't sing as well, they'll have been rehearsing all day long, they will be exhausted. Prerecord it. So that very very good, Dennis Forman was responsible, but there were two brothers, Terry, it was Douglas Terry and he and Dennis Forman agreed for us to pre-record it which was a fantastic break through, because I don't think any

opera or operetta had ever done it, because they considered it was cheating. But of course it is done by everybody now.

In those days too, I suppose a bit before those days I used to direct films for advertising. I was one of the first name directors who agreed to do it. I accepted it willingly because it was great fun and I won some awards for some of things that we did. It was in that time that I had the most ridiculous experience. We were doing an advertising film for a very famous black stout, not Guinness, whatever it was we carried on a kind of plan that they had in America for advertising this beer, and it was people in their completely correct uniforms. So often you don't see them, people who clean the drains, in their complete uniform, with the ropes all round their arms and their shoulders and then the guards and then rowing people and then gardener and all the people absolutely correct. And it was very stylish and rather good. It was J. Walter Thompson and it was the usual kind of producer who was on it who said to me that he'd got a frightfully good man who could be the gardener, the gardener of a friend of his. Absolutely right, rosy cheeks, perfect for it. And I said well, I don't really approve of that because there are so many actors out of work and they're so anxious and pleased, that was a long while ago, to do that kind of sort of thing. Well they're pleased to do it now, aren't they. It was an interim in the middle of it all when it was rather bad to do it. Anyway I was overridden and this gardener was employed for it and there was a gamekeeper too who was an actor and there were three rowers and there were three guardsmen and so on.

And we had two days in the studio and all they had to do, this was a very visual joke but I think I can manage to tell it to you, all they had to do was on a certain beat of the music, and there were words going over it, they just had to put their thumb up like that to the camera. Or turn their backs to you, and over their shoulder do this. So we did about six sets on the first day and six sets on the second day and on the second day the gardener was brought along. And he was a darling little man with rosy cheeks and he had got his own tools with him and everything shiny, bright. And I could quite see why the producer man wanted him. Although I thought he was a bit of a fool to agree to do it that way. Anyway I asked him if he would just like to watch it for a bit. And he said he would. And so we did all the sets until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Then I got him onto the set and I said now would you like to do it to music or would you like me to go just one, two, three. And then you can put my thumb up to me. And he said yes, I'll do it like that. So I thought we might as well roll the cameras and rehearse on film because we might get it the first time. So there he was standing quiet every where, are we ready, yes, action, one, two, three, umm. And he hadn't

got a thumb. I thought very quickly. I know what I'll do, I'll make him do it with his left hand and flick the film over. So I said that's very good that way, now we'll do it with and you see the producer's face, standing off stage, you can imagine what it was like. Anyway, we said we'll do it with the other hand and all will be fine, so 1, 2, 3, umm, and he hadn't got a hand, he had a hook. He had got four fingers on one hand and a hook on the other. I think it was the best incident I've ever know, and of course we had to have a studio for the next day and we had to hire an actor.

LW: How did you get into advertising.

WT: I think the first one I did was a very big dancing one, and they wanted somebody to do some dancing on it. And I think my agent at the time, said of course she will but she will direct it to, because she is now a director of films, so that was how that came about. And I did a lot for 3 or 4 years and then it became rather the thing to do it and every name director accept it. But I don't think I would have been asked if all the others had started doing it but I was asked early on and therefore I was very pleased to. They were great fun on the whole.

LW: Where did you make these

WT: All funny little places, where is the place that is past Denham, there is a little tiny film studio that is past Denham, we did some there. I did some at Hammer.

LW: Can you name a few as well

WT: Do you remember don't forget the gums, mum Roundtrees gum, with the little boy. I did some hair shampoo which I really truly can't remember the name of, but we won an award in America for it. I did a new kind of washing powder which didn't catch on and it was a very difficult one, because they got a little man who arrived through the kitchen ceiling on an umbrella, like he was coming down in a parachute. John Cato played it for me. Then I did another one, Eric Shilling, the opera singer, did it for me. I did another one, a wonderful one, I can't remember what the set was but it was a fairly stylised set of some sort, and I don't remember who the cameraman was, and I wouldn't tell you if I did remember who it was, but we shot it and it was quite effective, it was very stylised, because they were the kind of things that I was asked to do. And the next day we went to the rushes and of course the client was there and everything and there was a huge great lamp in shot. So I turned to the camera man who was sitting by the client, wasn't that brilliant, the idea of having that lamp in, doesn't it just give it hat

marvelous sort of style, and so unusual. Really congratulations. We got away with it. Afterwards the cameraman put his arm round my shoulders and gave me hug and he said, I was just looking at the wrong measurements. Because it was at the time when you worked on so many different measurements.

I can't remember what else I did but I used to do a lot for the same firm, don't forget the gum mum or whatever it was. I did really dozens of them, different ones.

LW: Did you find the clients came to watch you shooting.

WT: All of them, all of them, that is why it was so wonderful when that man didn't have a thumb, because it was their responsibility entirely. You couldn't have put them in a more difficult position

LW: Did they attempt to give you advice

WT: Yes, of course they did. But I'm quite good at that. It was probably easier, or it was in those days, easier for someone like me to shut them up than another man. I think a woman has quite a lot of advantages.

I think I did a lot of Black Magics, I've a feeling it was me who suggested they had the song of Black Magic which nobody thought they would be able to get hold of. Yes, I think I did. I must have a think about all the ones I did.

LW: Did you ever go on exotic locations

WT: No, I don't think did in those days. I think they were all done at home in little very, very tiny studios. I can find out for you what studios were used

LW: What would be the set up, I would like to have such and such cameraman

WT: Absolutely not, with me. I would go into the office, I would be asked if I wanted to do it through the agent. The agent would fix the fee. I would go up to J Walter Thompson in Berkeley Square and I'd see the story board. I think they did once or twice say would you like this cameraman or that cameraman. But I've always found all of them so good and easy to work with. Once or twice when it was a very stylish sort of thing I suggested somebody that I thought might be more suitable.

When my contract went to Rank after Korda died.

LW: How did you sign a contract with Korda in the first place.

WT: The Stranger Left No Card, he saw it, was so impressed and sent it to Cannes and put me under contract straightaway. And the same with Alan Badel. And then we spent weeks and weeks and weeks trying to find a film which would be suitable for him. He kept suggesting things I didn't think would be suitable. Actually I didn't like the idea of them really but I didn't have the nerve to say that so I kept on saying I don't think I've got enough experience to do this or that or the other. And then he came up with this idea of 3 films for Alan Badel, I spent lots of wonderful times with Moira Budberg and Alex himself.

LW: Were you just looking for scripts for yourself, or were you also used to comment on other people's scripts

WT: No, only for myself excepting that in the picture I was expected to find these three stories for two other directors and me. David Eady directed the first, George Moore O'Farrell the second, and I the third.

LW: And they were all under contract to Korda at that time.

WT: I don't think David was, I think David was brought in as a freelance but I think George was. The wonderful thing about that office was, it was where it's all been pulled down now, Hyde Park Corner. My office was, it was the House of the Duke and Duchess of York, if I'd been able to sit in my window for the Coronation I would have had a wonderful view. Instead of which it was sold to somebody for hundreds and hundreds of pounds and I sat out in the rain.

But his office it wasn't like an office, it was like a great big sitting room for one thing. And he had these magnificent paintings. And you would go in and one day there would be a Picasso and a Renoir and a few others. And then you would go in a week later and he would have changed them all, swopped them over from home and brought the others in. These magnificent things to look at. He said to me once when I said it wouldn't be long enough, he offered me a script and he said if you can do this in six weeks you can have it. And I said I don't think I'm experienced enough, honestly I don't, I think it would terrify the life out of me. I did Stranger in 13 days and I did most of the other of the other films in a short time, but this again was an excuse really. I didn't want to do a film. He said I'll tell you a story Wendy. I was in Hungary one time, and I made these 8 films to make and it was in the summer time, and I went over there and Wendy I made these 8 films in 6 weeks, 8 weeks, nothing, no time at all. I did them all. We really hurried and we

got them all finished and then we came back home to London, and I ran through them. And I could only find 5. Which was a marvelous let down for me of all the things he had been expecting of me. But Moira Budberg was this extraordinary lady who was a great friend of his, who was the most well read woman you can imagine who was really in charge of the script department. And I've got a little book somewhere here of all the scripts that I read with a view me doing them, view to me directing them.

LW: Did she just send you scripts

WT: She did and Alex did and I sent scripts in. And one of the things that I wanted to do was a Pinter play, and he wasn't at all well known by then. It was not The Caretaker, it was the one with the two people waiting by the kitchen, The Dumb Waiter. I looked at it just a little while ago and I said this was one of the most remarkable things I've read and I long to make a short film of that. Of course that was of no interest to anybody in those days.

DR: Joan Kemp-Welch did a lot of contemporary material for television

WT: She was a marvelous, she was doing a Shakespearean play, and she had had a run through and she was speaking over the tanoy into

WENDY TOYE

SIDE 3, TAPE 2

WT: About Joan Kemp-Welch, she was in the studio and she had finished the rehearsal and these golden tones came over the tanoy saying now darlings we're going to have a little break now. But I do want to tell you that you've all got to wear jock straps, even those with small parts. I'm glad you're going to talk to her, she has a million stories

LW: What are your memories of Korda

WT: Just those that I've told you really, great authority. When I didn't do one of the films he wanted me to do because I said I couldn't do it in the time, he actually directed it, this one with Moira Shearer and four men; and of course he got it done in 6 weeks because he got every single technician from every set all over Denham in to doing his film. And so of course he did it in 6 weeks

LW: Where you ever aware of any financial problems behind the scenes.

WT: Not at all

LW: Did he always convey great confidence.

WT: Oh absolutely. It's only what one has read. It's the same with Cochrane, great, great producers their great advantage is that they don't mind losing other people's money. It's a gift you've got to have. Because you mustn't think about other people losing money if you want to produce something probably that is absolutely brilliant and good. And yet when you think of Henry VIII, I'm sure he made that for very little money. I'm sure that didn't cost a lot. But it was so different going from Korda and Denham and then over to Rank. And luckily did I work Ian Dalrymple, who I think was the most extraordinary man. He was so knowledgeable

LW: When did you go over to Rank

WT: As soon as Korda died.

LW: Were you the only woman director

WT: Yes. Excepting, oh Muriel Box shot films at Rank, Pinewood but she worked for Sidney Box which was really separate to Rank. The first film I made for Rank was All for Mary, I suppose, either All for Mary or True as a Turtle.

LW: I've got All for Mary as 1955, and True as a Turtle as 1956

WT: That's right

LW: What was the set up at Rank in comparison to Korda

WT: It was more diverse, there were so many people in charge. There was Earl St John, James Archibald joined, who was brilliant and he was my producer on The King's Breakfast. He organised that for the Butter Board, it was backed by the Butter Board. Then there was John Davis, he was my immediate boss. But also there was Peter de Sarigny he was the producer of True as a Turtle. He was very good to work with. All for Mary was Paul Soskin. That was alarming.

LW: What was he like

WT: Ridiculous. Probably a remarkable man, but he was very, very Russian, held his cigarette in the wrong fingers and all that, and didn't understand English jokes at all. And there he was producing All for Mary and seeing the rushes and deciding whether it was funny or not. Which seemed to be fairly bizarre to me. And there was a point when we actually managed to succeed to shut him out of the studio when we were shooting. We put the red light on, we shot a very difficult bit which was the boys, it was David Tomlinson hanging on a sheet going past the bedroom window that Nigel Patrick was in and Kathleen Harrison, that lovely Kathleen Harrison, brilliant. And the house was four stories high and they got lots of cardboard boxes underneath and he was well attached to wires and things, David, but he was very frightened. And as he went past the window he had to say his line and then he disappeared below onto the boxes. And that was alright. But we were four flights up. So we did it three or 4 times and got it what we thought was right, and down we went, climbed down these four flights, got the camera down and everything. And the door was opened and Paul Soskin came in very angry that he hadn't seen it. He said I've got to see this shot, you've got to do it again.

Anyway we had to so up we went again. And David Tomlinson was in his pajamas. So we got all settled with the camera. And I said action. And the squeak of the rope started. And I heard David's voice say take the weight, and his body shot past the window and fell four stories down onto the floor. By the time had hit the head had hit the floor I knew it was a dummy, because it didn't

make the noise of human being. It made the noise of a bit of wood. But by that time I'd gone, I was in hysterics. I thought he had actually fallen. He had done it as a gag. He and the prop boys had got the dummy together, put the little moustache on it, a joke. A terrible thing to do. Paul was satisfied after that. He said you needn't go up there again, if you think it's alright that will be ok.

But where I've been lucky in my career really in my career is the span that I've covered when you think of it. Having been in the presence of Diagliev, and having actually danced for Pavlova. And gone through all that era with all those people into this very, very different age. Past through really all the stages of film and television. Haven't been involved with things so much but have seen a lot of it, and it's just marvelous.

I'm glad I was born as early as I was because there are things that I've had which nobody on earth could imagine. When you talk to ballet people that I worked with, I was talking to Margot Fonteyn, not long ago before she died. She was much later than me, because she didn't start until later than me although we were roughly the same age, but she and Maude Lloyd, and the Rambert Company, when you think we danced every single night. It wasn't a question of dancing twice a month like they have to now because there are too many people and not enough things, we danced every single night and we didn't have any masseuse to look after us. And the traveling was rough. And we didn't know whether we were going to get paid, and when we did we got £7 a week. But as they both said you wouldn't have missed that for the world. The same in The Miracle I was in, there wasn't any Equity, I think Equity started that year, I'm not sure, but we were four days and nights in the theatre without being let out at all. And we didn't get out of our costumes. It was dress rehearsals. And we just laid down where we could in the stalls and when I was talking to Equity about it, I said it could never happen nowadays and I never enjoyed myself so much. You really felt you were creating something when you worked like that. I know it's not ideal nowadays. And people would think it was alarming. But at the time it was marvelous, it was wonderful.

DR: Did you have anything to do with the trade unions.

WT: Not really, I just joined them,

DR: Were you an Equity person rather than a

WT: Yes, all of them, I have to be all of them. And you see when I directed Stranger they had to allow me to become a member, so they did allow me to become a member on condition another

director was paid. So that's what happened. Luckily I was able to insist that the other director didn't come on the set because I was afraid that they might think that he'd done it and I hadn't. That's how that was arranged. And of course much later on in life, about 10 years ago, I was the first director to be on the Council of Equity. Because directors were accepted in Equity after a long while. They weren't for ages. They didn't think it was good to have the directors and the actors in the same union. But now of course we've got the Directors' Guild of Great Britain, so that is another one I belong to, lots of them I'm afraid. But they all work very hard for one, so that's nice.

I only stayed on the council for a year, I'm afraid I'd not very much a council person. I found the politics quite exhausting, and somehow distressing, I got very upset by it, so I was only on it for a year.

I was also on a very interesting thing which was accrediting the drama schools which happened, I suppose it started about 8 years ago and I began with it and went on with it for about 7 years and then I withdrew and somebody else took over. You can't go on doing those things forever. But that was very interesting. I've had a very interesting time really.

When I was in the ballet at Sadlers Wells I was in the very first performance of ballet which was ever given at the Old Vic, Saddlers Wells. We used to do two performances a week and we were never sure which theatre we ought to be at. And there was opera going on there and Shakespeare going on there, so we all got in a great muddle at times. But at the same time I was working on cabaret at Grosvenor House, with this brilliant dancer Frederick Franklyn who I danced with as my partner for many years. We used to leave Sadlers Wells and rush up to Grosvenor House and do our cabaret, or there was a season at the Opera House, Covent Garden, they used to do one week a year in those days, and we were dancing there. And then we would tear off to do the cabaret. And then be at dancing class at 9 o'clock in the morning. And you get such a discipline from that that nothing has seemed like hard work ever since.

DR: What was your cabaret act

WT: It was like a little review at Grosvenor House. They were called the The Follies. Carl Heissen was the producer. And he once had a dancing act with Dorothy Dixon, and he is the father of Dorothy Heissen and he had about four or five acts. And he had Freddie and I dance. We had 2 or 3 spots in which we danced and I staged the whole of the cabaret; and did all the dancing numbers in it and everything like that. And it was the time when the

Dorchester had all the American girls who came over and the American girls all married into the aristocracy over here. And we had all the English girls in ours and they didn't all marry into the aristocracy but they were lovely people. I always remember, it was quite interesting, about once a fortnight Jim Mollison and Amy Johnson, the first woman to fly the Atlantic and the Prince of Wales, they used to come in about every fortnight. He knew me quite well, because he was at the Charleston Ball and he also was in Denmark when I was over in Denmark with the first British ballet company that was ever formed. And he sent a message round to say if Wendy Toye would be allowed to dance the famous hornpipe, he would come again on Thursday.

We were talking about, I didn't realise until I looked out some of these things for you, I didn't realise On the Twelfth Day of Christmas was nominated for the 28th Academy Award Presentation, 1956 in Hollywood. I didn't know. Perhaps I knew once, but I'd forgotten and there it is being nominated as one of five short two reel subjects. The Battle of Gettysburg won. I always think it's nice to be nominated, I think it's a great honour to be nominated. I don't think it matters a bit if you win or not. But I suppose it is good for business though.

I think being nominated tells you your work is valued. It's embarrassing for people, when you've got people like the five actors who are picked or actresses, I think it is quite embarrassing to be told you're the best of that lot, really embarrassing. But obviously very nice in some ways. I have a lovely picture here, it's a memory of mine I will cherish forever. There was a prop in the picture, which was a musical box, and it was a little boy sitting on a box playing a banjo. And at the end of the thing , when you're with all the crew and you have your photograph taken, there's Ian Dalrymple presenting me with the musical box. That is Denys Coop. He was the lighting cameraman. And they gave me some flowers. Peter Maxwell. And that's Georges Perinal, sitting there. There is Alan Badel with his hair curlers in. I've also got a lovely thing from We Joined the navy. And it's a shield I've got upstairs which was made by the prop boys and it's all done in rope. You know how you can do that marvelous decorative rope work. It is all done in rope and all the chippies and the prop boys and the crew have all signed it. Those things mean a lot to one. That's Hugh Price who was with Alan Badel, who was the one who was killed in it. And the poor fellow, he died very young.

Dal, during the filming of Raising a Riot, of which he was also the producer, he got Lowry to come down and paint while we were filming at the Hamble, he did this specifically because Lowry was going through a bad patch. And he knew very well he wouldn't use

these paintings, he kidded Lowry that he would use them for advertising on the buses and stuff like that, but he knew that he wouldn't because there was too many colours and too many figures. And it was not likely that it would work but he a was a great upholder of the arts, of painting and music and everything, Dal. So Lowry did these sketches and then made about half a dozen paintings of us. And the film was such a success and made so much money and I had been on a flat salary, I hadn't been on a percentage of any sort. So about 10 years later, Ian Dalrymple gave me that painting which is on the wall, and it's a Lowry and I'm in it. It's me by the camera. And Kenny More lying on the ground. So Dal has done some extraordinary things in his day. That was entirely Dal who really supported Lowry in those days.

And for a long time the xxx Gallery wouldn't believe it was a Lowry because it hadn't gone through their hands and it wasn't until Mr Lowry asked to borrow it for a retrospective that they then had to accept it. And it's called On Location. He was very fond of ballet too, and I knew him before the film because and he used to come and see shows in Manchester and he used to come and see the ballet. And once when I was in Edinburgh, at the Edinburgh Festival, we'd done a ballet that I'd choreographed, and Gillian Lynne was in it and Paddy Stone and Irvin Davis and Beryl Kay. And suddenly there was Mr Lowry I saw him in the box while we were performing. And then he came round afterwards and came to the stage door and came and saw us in the dressing room and it was lovely, because he was a very shy man. And during things like Robert and Elizabeth I went to his home when I was up there with Robert and Elizabeth in Manchester, and I went to his home and saw his lovely collection of paintings.

DR: Lowry was done recently on television

WT: Yes, Gillian Lynne choreographed it, and Moira Shearer danced it. Moira Shearer and then Lynn Seymour. And I think Gillian has done it herself somewhere. She has danced it herself too. I found him a much more positive man than she drew him in the ballet. She drew him as very obsessed by his mother, which he was, but very controlled by his mother. I think he was controlled in his life, he never had much of a life of his own, which is why he had such a strange secretive life. But I do really think he was a very strong man and when he used to come and see me and we used to drive him back he would get out of the car at Russell Square and stride away with his head out like a very tall giraffe, walking along, very positively.

Another film I made for Korda was The Teckman Mystery. After In the Picture, that was the one that appealed to him most. It was a Francis Durbridge story.

LW: I've seen it and I like it very much

WT: Did you really, how nice, they look so awful to me nowadays. The people in them are very good, but I think they're slow, of course they're slow because now we don't have to walk down the street. We just go out of one door and into another, which is much better, much more exciting.

Another interesting thing I was concerned with was the Magic Lantern, the Czechoslovakian Magica Lanterna. And I was sent over to have a look at it to see what I thought about bringing it to England. And I thought it would be just marvelous, but they would have to cut out a lot of Lenin and a lot of the statues and a lot of the politics and everything. But I spent a long while with them. I went over 3 or 4 times to Czechoslovakia, and spent quite a bit of time there. And Milos Forman was one of their directors. They had 5 directors and about 3 producers and about 4 designers and huge company, they had a great big air carrier shed outside Prague and I would go and work there. And they couldn't understand me at all, because having been a choreographer and having been to do with films, they would, from the way they were trained, and the way they were brought up, they would sit for three weeks round a table deciding on one cut. And I would just say can we stop. And I would get the reels off the camera and take them into the projection room and cut the bit out and stick it together and bring it back. And they were horrified to do anything without talking about it for a long while. It was the only way to do it really. They said yes, I asked them whether they thought this was a good idea. But they couldn't get over the fact that once they said yes, it was being done. But it was wonderful working for them because they were so inventive. They're such, they've got such new ideas and all these, we had I think it was 11 screens, and four projectors to make the whole thing work and people walked through the screens out of the film. You know, and then the films took over from one another. Oh they were brilliant, absolutely brilliant. And I learned so much from them. And funnily enough I was asked to go to America by a designer to work on the same sort of thing in America. Now the only reason I was asked and I knew this was because I'd worked with the Czechs. And they knew that I would know a lot of things, the way the Czechs had done things. And I said no, because although it would have been a wonderful trip, it would probably have meant a lot of money and everything, it would have been just giving ideas away that weren't mine to give away. And the Czechs heard about this, and they'd heard that I'd refused to do it and they sent me a little letter to say if ever I wanted to use any of their ideas on any of my shows, or anything I was doing would I please feel free to do it because

I'd helped them such a lot.

And when I did a show called On the Level, Malcolm Pride was the designer who is a terrific designer and we used projection in it and we could only have got such good results and such great effects from knowing the way the Czechs had done it. And it was one of the first times projection really worked with dancing. Because with dancing you rattle the floor, and then anything that the projectors are on usually shake with them. And these projectors were all hung, and we had things like people in a motor car with a motor car going along the back and stopping and then people would come out through the door, the screen door would open and it was quite fascinating. I appreciated my time with them enormously. Since then, that was their first visit to London, when we brought them to England that was the first time they'd been out of Czechoslovakia.

And Milos of course, whose family were interned when the Germans came in, so of course the Russians were the great heroes to them. And they were all Communists. And I went to Russia with them, and going to Russia with a bunch of Communists was very different from going with the Old Vic Company. And the Old Vic Company were there as the same time as me and I had directed a play for them that season, I'd done As You Like It. And all the cast were there and you would have thought they were having a different trip. You would have thought they were in a different place to me, because they had the red carpet. Our lot weren't even allowed to go and see the impressionist paintings. In the end I insisted because I said look I'm English and I'm not a Communist, please will you allow me to go. And they allowed me to go in, but they wouldn't let any of the others in. That was in 60 something. I think it was 1960, a long while ago, it's very different now.

LW: I would have thought they would have welcomed fellow Communists.

WT: They did welcome them enormously, and in fact the reason they wired me to go there was they were going to perform for Stalin and they wanted me to take a rehearsal. But they still didn't think it was good for young people to see such decadent work as the Impressionists. It's unbelievable. Anyway it's different now.

LW: Was The Teckman Mystery the last thing for Korda, or was On the 12th Day also made for Korda.

WT: No, On the 12th Day was George K Arthur. And then James Archibald was the producer of The King's Breakfast,

LW: What was The King’s Breakfast

WT: It was the king asked the queen, the queen asked the dairy made, would you like some butter for the royal slice of bread. And it was designed again by Ronald Searle, the brilliant Ronald Searle, who also designed On The Twelfth Day of Christmas, and that’s why it won all the awards for design. And he'd also done a show for me called Wild Time. No I think I did True as a Turtle after Teckman.

LW: What was the difference between how you were treated as a director by Korda and by the Rank Organisation

WT: Korda treated one as a personal friend. And he was obviously quite intrigued by me because I’d had a ballet background and all the things that he liked, I’d been involved with in some way or another. When I went to Rank to start with Earl St John, who was a dear man and very nice but you didn't feel he was the least bit involved artistically, I hate that word, but artistically in the film you were doing; and John Davis you felt was absolutely against whatever film you were doing. You didn’t feel there was the slightest bit of interest. That he just hated the whole idea. Didn’t like anybody in it, kept on wanting to change everybody who was in it and I had quite a fight over one of the artists in True as a Turtle, because he wanted to get rid of her after the first week’s shooting. And I said no. And then James Archibald came on the scene and he was a remarkable man and treated one very much the same way as Korda. Very personally. And I was very lucky that he arrived just at that time. I think I might not have stayed with them if Archibald hadn’t arrived. Although I don’t know whether I’d have the right because I had a seven year contract. I was playing out the end of my contract with Korda

LW: What were the terms of the contract, did you have to make so many films

WT: I don’t think I had anything. I think it was something like one a year and I could do any sort of theatre work I wanted, because I never wanted to sign a contract that would mean that I couldn’t go back to the theatre. Because I always felt that I was a bit of a guest in the film world. I didn’t ever feel I was so much part of it as I am part of the theatre. And then of course, Ian Dalrymple became involved but I don't think he was on the Rank payroll. I think he was working quite individually. And that was a joy for me. Well, In the Picture was done when Korda was alive, wasn’t it. Then Raising a Riot was done after he had died, and Dal was the producer of it, but was it for Rank

LW: It was for British Lion

WT: British Lion, at Rank Studios or at Denham. I don't remember. I know I got very confused about that time. But I have just been so lucky that I worked with James Archibald and Ian Dalrymple as well as Korda, two very knowledgeable, and Peter de Sarigny was a very knowledgeable man, very helpful as a producer. I was very lucky indeed. I learned from all of them, and I needed to.

LW: Can you remember your first day as a director.

WT: I certainly remember the first day on the set of All for Mary, I've a picture of it. It's a picture of me taken with strangely enough John Gregson, Peter Finch, Kay Kendall and Dinah Sheridan and me. And they were all in the other film that I wasn't directing, they were all in Muriel Box's film which was a very good film, it was about a television actor. It was good.

LW: It had Ian Carmichael

WT: Perhaps it wasn't John Gregson, no John Gregson was probably in mine. I think I was doing True as a Turtle at the time with John Gregson and Cecil Parker and Keith Mitchell. I think it must have been that one and I know I somehow got my photograph taken and I remember very well, because luckily, because I always insisted on rehearsing a few days, it broke the ice a bit. And also having meetings with the crew and the lighting people. But when you meet a whole lot of absolutely new people on the first day of any job, it's quite alarming. If you're not of the studio, the first very time I went onto a set at Pinewood. I mean it took a lot of courage really.

And I remember the first day, was In the Picture the first thing I did for Korda

LW: Three Cases of Murder

WT: That's In the Picture, yes and I don't know why but I felt quite comfortable. It was Georges Perinal and I think Sir Alex had had Georges and me in the office to talk about it all before. And you had quite a bit of time with the designers, and because of being theatre orientated I always like to see everybody before and meet them all before, and talk it all over with them before for these two or three days. So one had broken the ice. I do that in the theatre. I'm starting a workshop on the 3 June with Cleo Laine, John Dankworth, Benny Green, Neil McCall and a cast of 6 other people. And we start on the 3 June and I've got them coming here on Wednesday before it to have some tea. And on the Sunday to have a drink. Because they can't all come both

days so at least everybody will know each other before they start. And it gets over that awful first day thing which can be really as I say, really alarming, but I always get over that. I always think it's awful for people who play small parts in film. They come down, all the crew know each other. All the cast know each other. Everybody knows the script. They come down and are generally handed about 4 pages of script. Well they were in the old days, I don't think that happens now. But I think any director worth their salt will let them have a whole script and talk it through, no matter how small a bit they have to do. And I'm sure they do now. And I think a lot of people rehearse now. But I think they do now.

LW: Perhaps you could describe what you did from the moment you'd actually chosen to do a particular piece, you're not quite at the script stage, but you've decided what project you're going to work on next

WT: All of them are different. I think most people's subjects would be entirely different. For instance with In the Picture, one was being creative about everything because I'd chosen the stories and Alex and I then had a say about the directors. Then I had the books adapted and then I followed it through talking to the directors about how I felt the three would go together in those positions. Then they got on with them, and I got on with In the Picture. And it was really first of all there were a lot of technical things in it. So in that particular thing I had to see the technical department and find out from them how they were going to do the breaking of the glass to come out from the picture. And how they were going to do walking up the path so you could bang at the door in the picture and then go into the picture. And all those technical fellows are so incredible. I think in England they're the best, everybody says so, just remarkable. So all that was done first. Normally speaking you wouldn't have had that sort of thing to contend with.

The next thing I usually do is decide the sort of mood of the whole thing and the feeling of the music. Because a lot of that, like The Stranger, was actually done to music. And a lot of that was set with the music at the very beginning of the picture, and then I'd usually see the actor who was going to play the leading part and play the music to them and we'd go through the script and see if he agrees that's the sort of sound he wants to back up the performance and that particular dialogue scene. And then have a bit of rehearsal. And then get the designer in on it and see how a person is going to look, feel and whether they feel comfortable about it. And usually discuss the casting of the rest of the thing with the producer and the leading actor. Because I think it is important that it is the right sort of chemistry. And

then have two or three days with everybody together, even the small parts. And that was quite unknown in those days.

And of courser things like On the 12th Day of Christmas, I rehearsed for a whole week and we rehearsed it to music and we did it in sections, because in the film you can't have continuity, but we would rehearse this little section here, that little section there. And then I would have the girls with the cows. I wouldn't have all of them every day, but I would rehearse a lot of it.

In the King's Breakfast, it's an extraordinary cast, Mischa Auer was in it, Maurice Denham, Jeremy Lloyd, David Warner, Una Stubbs, Tony Bateman, Robert Flemyng, there was an enormous cast. I could go on forever. And I wanted Mischa Auer in it, because he'd been in We Joined the Navy and I'd really brought him back from the dead. His agent said he was dead, we'd started work on We Joined the Navy, and I'd seen a bit advertisement, saying Mischa Auer in Bal Tabarin. And I didn't know if it was yesterday, or 15 years ago because it looked so old. But anyway we wrote to every film studio and we got a message back saying he would love to come and see us. And he came and saw us and he was so good in it that we made him - he was the dictator of one of the imaginary countries. And we made him play his twin brother, the ruler of the other country. Because he was so good, far from being dead he was marvelous.

So when I did The King's Breakfast I asked him to be in it. And he arrived on the first day looking very good but kind of gloomy, he had got that wonderful gloomy face. I said you look a bit upset, what's the matter. I'm going to the dentist, could you let me off tomorrow. So I said yes, of course, as we were rehearsing for a week, I can rehearse all your bits there afterwards. So off he went to the dentist and he came back the day after and he smiled at me, not a tooth in his head. He had had every tooth taken out. And I said Mischa. He said, I have to have it done. I said when will they be ready. Oh they will be ready in time for me to go back. I said yes but what about the film. So he said I will play it with my mouth closed, and he played this conductor who is supposed to be frightfully bright with his mouth closed the entire time until one moment he just had to smile, because he had to encourage someone. We had to borrow a set of teeth for him, bless his darling heart.

That one I rehearsed for a whole week, and then we did it out of sequence. But then another drama you would perhaps do entirely differently. You wouldn't, you'd just go straight into the script and get everything from the script. I think you do in most things

anyway. But it just works a different way round. And I think sometimes, one of the most difficult things for a director in the theatre, I don't think so much in films, I think it is very different but in the theatre when you're directing for 3 or 4 weeks and you have an actor who likes to go very quickly at the beginning, and then very slowly. And another actor who likes to go very slowly and get the characters straight and then go quickly. And one of the jobs the director has is to try and pull these two people together so they don't go at each other's throats, because they're not sympathetic with the way each other work. And it's quite a business doing that.

After the workshop, I'm doing a comedy at the Watermill called The Drummer and I'll do the same with that. I'll get the cast altogether before we actually start rehearsing. Did I tell you I'm going to Tokyo for the film festival, I've been invited as guest of honour to go to the Tokyo Film Festival this year and they're going to show some of my films.

I went to Paris at the beginning of this year or last year, I think it was last year, and they did the same, they did a retrospective of my films and of Muriel Box's and we were there together. So nice I had that trip with her, I didn't know her at all before that except bumping into her at the studio.

LW: You must have been aware of the other few women who were working

WT: I never have been really, I've never taken that much into consideration, I think you have to forget that. I've always had such splendid treatment.

LW: That the wonderful thing about film, because no matter how good your work in the theatre, once it's gone it's gone.

WT: That's the sad thing. I did a production of Showboat which Benny Green rewrote and Harold Fielding put on. And it really worked, it worked a treat and Cleo was in it, and she was just marvelous in it. And xxx was very good. The design was lovely, by Tim Goodchild. And it was a great success, it ran for a long long while at the Adelphi. And now there's another one and that's forgotten. And that's rather sad in it's way. But that's theatre, that's what happens, it can't be helped. But you're right, in the film, but there is nothing of mine except perhaps I'm quite proud of Stranger, but that's probably because of what everybody else did in it, not necessarily I did in it. It is beautifully written I just had to do what was written. I just had to do what was written. On the 12th Day is fun. The King's Breakfast, and Raising a Riot because Kenny is so good in it.

LW: Did you know him before doing it

WT: Only having known him as an actor and having met him in the way of being a director and him being an actor, we'd never worked together.

LW: He was under contract to Rank and suggested as a possible

WT: No, I don't think he was under contract to anybody, I think he was always freelance.

LW: That was the only one you did with children, was working with children difficult

WT: Absolutely not at all, because I chose them very specially. They weren't acting children, they weren't from a school of acting. Not that I'm against that but they were the sons and daughters of actors, you get a feeling of it at home, and Jackie Billings little son was the boy and Michael Bentine's little daughter Posty,

SIDE 4, TAPE 2

17 JUNE 1991

LW: Can I ask you about Dance Pretty Lady

WT: That was a long while ago, it was directed by Anthony Asquith and it was based I think on the book of Carnival by Compton Mackenzie. I was a member of the Ballet Rambert at the time and the Rambert Ballet company were engaged to do the dance sequences in it. And we went into, I think it was the Lyric Hammersmith, on about midnight on a Saturday night, after the last performance there, and we worked all night, all day Sunday, all night Sunday night, and all day Monday until they did the show that night in the theatre. And I think in the end it came out about four minutes of ballet in the film. That was in 1932.

DR: Do you remember the cast

WT: XX and Anne Casson

DR: Where was it made

WT: At Elstree. I think Carl Harbard, Michael Hogan.

LW: Towards the end of the last tape we were talking about your working methods, perhaps you could tell us how you prepared the script

WT: I suppose the same way as anyone else really. You break it down into scenes and generally with a script writer, always with a script writer, no not always because I did King's Breakfast and the 12 Day of Christmas I scripted myself and broke it down completely. I think first of all you go on location with your designer. Because you can't start working on how you're going to shoot anything until you've done that. And then it is very much in the same way as I would do a theatre thing. Which is really concentrate on the script hard and leave oneself open to change anything when it actually comes to shooting it or doing it. Nowadays I think because so much is done on location, I would think you could be much freer. In those days, particularly with me when I started, one had to have a script to show people, to show how you were going to do it, to prove that I had some sort of idea how it ought to be done technically. So I had to be very thorough with the scripts and when I look at them now I think my god I must have spent hours actually working out things before either we went onto the set or onto location. But then I think it

is terribly important to leave yourself very free so that any ideas that come out of anybody on the spot at the moment, including oneself, that you're free to be able to change, not to get too set.

LW: Did you show your cameramen what you wanted from them, how free did you leave them to do their set ups, being a non technical person

WT: Well exactly that, I showed them really exactly what I would have liked, what I wanted and then they either agreed or improved on it. And I remember very well Jonah Jones, when we did The Stranger, I wanted the front door that he went up to to have a gate because I wanted to cut back on the crowd watching him and chatting together, because it fitted the music and the music fitted it. And he said yes but wouldn't the initial shot be much better from right down here. And it was a lovely idea, and of course we did it. But I think I always had a fairly pictorial view about things, which I think was helped with all the groupings and shapes one has to do in ballet and in the theatre. But I was always helped a lot by the cameraman of course. And they were always so willing to be helpful, this is what I found always. Far from the problem of being a woman, they were so extraordinary helpful.

LW: What was the average shooting schedule

WT: It varied. The Stranger which was a short film, a 20 minute film, 23 minutes and a half it had to be in those days because you had 23 minutes and a half of the short film, you had two hours and a half of the big film, and you had whatever the balance was made up with the news. So it had to be exactly the right length. And there were one or two bits that broke my heart to cut out of it but they had to go. I did that in 13 days. And I think I had, I can't really remember about 5 or 6 weeks on schedule on location for We Join the Navy and then about 6 weeks in the studio, probably longer. About that time about 5 or 6 weeks for a feature film. But if there was a very difficult one.

I think All for Mary was a bit shorter because it was more confined. Having been a play it was more confined, so I think we had a four week shooting schedule in the studio and a bit of time on location with that one

LW: What was the working week like, in terms of number of hours

WT: We worked, the actors of course had to get in much earlier, but I think we started at 8.30 and went on normally I think to 5.30 and then took the quarter or the half after that if we

needed to. And of course, never Saturday or Sunday. But I think on location we worked Saturdays and Sundays, I'm pretty sure we did.

I know on True as a Turtle we used to find ourselves on this tiny little boat, well we used to go out on a fairly big launch to get on to this small boat at about 6.30 in the morning, all having bacon and egg sandwiches, really the nicest times of one life, they were with the crew.

LW: While you with Korda you were doing thrillers, and at Rank you changed over to comedies.

WT: I don't know why that was. I think really what it was is that they got me and they didn't know what to do with me much and I think they had All for Mary on their hands and thought as she had been a theatre director and that had been in the theatre, maybe that would be good subject for her. I think that's how it happened, not so with True as a Turtle of course because that was an original story and Peter de Saligny wanted me for that and I really don't know why I was chosen. And of course in those days I didn't think, I always thought I had a certain flair for doing odd ball stuff, which is what I always wanted to do but I don't think I had great opinion of myself as a film director. And I think I was just very thrilled to do what whatever I was given, I felt I was really training in a way, I never got much further than the training.

LW: Did you go to the cinema as a child

WT: Yes, I used to go a lot, I used to go a lot to the Chaplin films and Jackie Coogan of course which is why I was so thrilled when I met him when I was about 7 or 8, I'd seen him for years. Yes I used to go a lot and my mother used to take me to see all the French films, Les Toits de Paris and all those. And again that was why I was so thrilled when I worked with Georges Perinal because he had lit all those films, so yes I used to go a tremendous amount. And I remember very very well, and the funny thing is I was, I told this story to the people who were doing, did they reproduce the old Ben Hur

LW: They did a special presentation at the Dominion

WT: I met the people who did this and I said I remember I saw it four or five times and I remember sitting right round at the side one time so I was looking over the orchestra and I saw in the orchestra there were men with huge big sacks which must have been full of metal, and they used to shake these up and down on the floor when the battle was happening. Not the battle the chariot

race, and all the clinking of the wheels they did with method. And he said I wish we'd known that, we'd have put it into the orchestration, used the sacks full of whatever they were full of, broken glass or whatever, but they hadn't thought of it, but I remember that very well. I must have been very young when I saw that. And I used to love, I wasn't so young then but I used to love the Norman McLaren films. And I'm not sure whether I told you before but John Grierson was very interested in me at one time, when he ran Group Three, and of course Norman McLaren had worked with him a lot and I'd always wanted to meet him because he was a sort of idol of mine, McLaren and the work that he did. And I've been seeing it recently on television and it really is remarkable, it is great stuff. I think he is a very special man. I still haven't met him, I would love to meet him one day.

LW: You might get a job in Canada

WT: I've worked in Canada a lot, I've worked in the theatre in Canada ever such a lot but I've never thought of it I've been so busy. I've either gone to Niagara on the lake or I've been in Winnipeg and I've only been in Toronto for a very short time and I think that's where he is.

LW: You worked as a child, do you think it is a good idea. Lots seems to have gone on to have problems

WT: I don't know if you're right. Shirley Temple and Deanna Durbin didn't and they were the two greatest young stars seem to have been ok. I think it all depends on your parents and your upbringing and the people you work for. My mother was very strict with me and she always said you will never be very pretty so you've got to work hard. And I never remember her complementing me about anything ever, which I wanted her to be pleased with me more than anyone else. But I suppose she was right because so many other people said how good I was that I think it was very good that she was very firm with me. And you see when, I was a kind of stupid star, did I tell you I was called the Pocket Wonder, and did all sorts of things in variety with people like GH Melvin. GH Melvin taught me his hornpipe, he was a great star and he taught me the hornpipe that I did for years and years as a child. I never thought I would forget this man's name but I have, I was a stooge for Alan, I can't remember his name, but he was a great singing star and I used to stooge for him when I was about five years old. But all the time I was working in really serious dancing and by the time, and it sounds silly because I was so young, but when I was about 8 or 10 I was really training hard to be a serious dancer and that is so disciplined I don't think there is any way you can get spoiled. And I was about 13 when I danced for Ninette de Valois in her original company and it's

such hard work, I was at class at every single morning. And I use to have a governess in the afternoon and I was generally working at night and back at class again in the morning. I don't think I had time really to be spoiled. And I admired so many people so much that all I wanted to be was to get better and be like them. I never thought I was particularly good myself,

I'm surprised when I see myself dance on old things. I watch with great trepidation because I think oh my goodness, it's just hearsay that I was any good. But I was good, I'm very relieved to be able to see myself and not shake with horror.

And Bonnie Langford or instance who is our star, who like Natalie Wood started as a child and has done everything, Bonnie has done every type of entertainment. She is the least spoiled person you can come across. And the most hard working and very very clever. The ones who are successful, who carry on, I think they are generally speaking perfectly level headed and hard working. It isn't as if that works any different to any other work, really. Except you're in the public eye, that is a difference. But it is just as hard work as studying for anything else.

LW: Going back to the cinema theme, were you ever an act inbetween films

WT: Oh yes. Terrible experience. Freddie Franklyn and I, we were partners at that time, and we also were dancing with Anton Dolin, Sir Anton Dolin, who is like my second father, great man, lovely man. And he was doing five shows a day and we were doing two of them with him and we were doing two or three on our own at the Trocadero, Elephant and Castle. And he was at the Garrick Theatre in a review and he was also at one other venue, and I can't remember where it was, and we did that one with him and our own three at the Elephant and Castle. And it was a very very slippery stage, and there was about 6 ft in front of the screen and we danced to the organ, and we couldn't hear the organ at all, we heard it about 15 seconds later than the audience did, so we weren't dancing in time to it. And we did the first house which didn't go down very well. And we did the second house which didn't go down very well. And we did the third house and we got the bird. And so we thought to well with the show must go on, that's the last time we do that. They don't want us, we don't want them. So we never did that venue again.

And then another time when we got the bird was with Dolin again on tour in show called King Folley with Billy Bennett, that lovely comedian. And it was a number two tour but a very good one and a good show of its sort. And we danced like crazy, and it was long before there had been a ballet company on tour ever. And

Dolin insisted on wearing tights. We thought that was a bit dangerous. And he said well if they're going to see ballet, they must see it as it is. They must see what to expect. There is no good us doing it all differently. So incidentally, we did dances to Gershwin and music like that. But still. Monday night and Friday night the factory people used to come in. And I know in one of the waltz thing, I think I was 13, something like that, 14 perhaps. And I ran on the stage and looked out right and then I ran over to the left and looked out left. And a voice from the gallery shouted out don't worry deary he's right behind you.

So Anton, who wasn't a sir then, stamped his foot and looked up at the gallery very crossly thinking he would tame them with his personality. And another voice shouted oh grandma, what big eyes you've got. And he was so upset he rushed off the stage and I had to finish the dance in tears all by myself which at that age you are upset. Older you wouldn't mind a bit but I really was upset. Those are my two experiences of getting the bird.

LW: That was the kind of thing I was thinking about when I was talking about stresses

WT: Yes, but think of going into a board meeting and facing all those faces, that must be pretty terrifying too.

LW: Who has been major influences in your career and helped you in your career

WT: Well they are two different things, aren't they, the influence and the help. I suppose a great influence must have been Cocteau because I just loved his films so much and I suppose his imagination interested me. I think the great dancer Pavlova when I was a little girl, and Kasavana, the dancer. Dolin, of course. There are so many people really. Because Komisarevsky who was a director in the 30s and was one of Peggy Ashcroft's husbands, I saw a production of his at Stratford on Avon. I can't remember the year but it was in the 20s and it was Much Ado About Nothing and it was as updated as anything is updated nowadays. All the men wore bowler hats and it was an eye opener to me. It was the first production I had seen like that, probably the first production anyone had seen like that over here. And he was a tremendous influence. But of course all the people that I've seen really. Peggy Ashcroft who I worked with in The Golden Toy. Gielgud, Olivier, I think I've been influenced by anybody and everybody I've seen.

On the other hand the people who have helped, Ian Dalrymple was one of the greatest, Donald Wilson who I think we talked about him before who did that great series on television, The Forsyte

Saga and he helped me enormously. And all the producers I worked for, Korda particularly. In the theatre Cochrane. XXX who I directed for who was a big musical review man, and of course George Black I suppose most of all. Because I worked with him when I was about 17 or 18 doing all the dances in his shows and I learned an awful lot about shear theatre from him. And he had a marvelous production manager who knew just everything about the theatre.

I know I've left out so many people that I shouldn't have done, Bob Nesbitt, Robert Nesbitt whom I worked for for years and he was an immaculate producer of things in the theatre. And he was the first person that I know of, I think he was the first person who used a very different overhead lighting, which is used everywhere and has been now for 30 or 40 years but he brought it over I think from America. His great gift was in brilliant lighting and I learned a lot from him. I learned an awful lot from working with the magic lantern, you know the magica lanterna people. Lanterna magica I think it was called in Czechoslovakia. And Milos Forman was one of their directors. I can't really say influenced because in a funny way I've never been able to make use excepting On On the Level the stuff they said please use this, but they had such incredible techniques that I would love to be able to do something with them again. Or in that kind of style.

LW: The only film we didn't really discuss was We Joined the Navy and that was about 5 years after you made the previous film.

WT: There was a five year gap. I don't know what I was doing in those years, I must have been doing a lot of things in the theatre I think anyway. But it was a fun film to do it really was, because it is always lovely to work with Kenny More, it always was. And Lloyd Nolan was such an excellent actor.

We had a strange experience with Mischa Auer about that. Because I had always thought he would be wonderful as one of the dictators. And we were told that he wasn't alive, so we didn't go on with that. Didn't press on with that. But while we were on location I said to Danny Angel that I had seen a big bill up in Villefrange where our hotel was and it had Mischa Auer's name on it. And it was called Bal Taberan. Now whether it was a review or whether it was a film, or whether it was this year or ten years ago, one couldn't tell from this bill. So Danny Angel had a letter written to every single studio all over the world. Because being so many different nationalities, Mischa could have been anywhere in the world if he was still alive. And we eventually got a letter back saying he would love to come and see us about the film, and he was alive.

So he came over to England and not long before that he had been in a play called, what is the song called Mersey dotes and daisy dotes and little something ivy, he had been in a play with that sort of title, so he came to see us and he was this lovely morose man and he was so good in the film, played the part so beautifully that we made him be the other dictator as his own twin brother. And he was a big success in it and it started his career again and he was always very grateful to me having taken the trouble, because he was in retirement. So don't always believe people say they're dead.

But we made a lot of the film on the flagship, the American flagship. And we spent I think 3 weeks on the ship. And the very first day I went out on the admiral's launch, the admiral sent his launch for us and I went out with Lloyd Nolan dressed as an admiral. And so when we got to the ship the sailors and crew and everybody saw this boat arriving with a lady on it and another admiral, so they piped him abroad and there was great confusion. But it was the admiral's little joke. He had wanted to do this. So Lloyd Nolan quite correctly took the salute.

And we used to eat on those funny little seats that you can't move, that you have to swing round on in the mess on ship. We all ate there. And we spent three weeks on board, it was very interesting indeed. But the second half of the film turned into something else really. The first half was the boys being at Dartmouth and then being accepted for the navy and taking their various jobs and being, they became the three midshipmen. And all that worked splendidly. And the second half it became a sort of, ther wa a sort of civil war going on in a country and it all took a funny turn and it became a bit political and by that time the mood of the film was comedy and it just, I don't think it worked really.

But it was the most fantastic cast. I've got a book upstairs which the casting director gave me with all the people who were in it. It is unbelievable the folk who were in it, including Dirk Bogarde, who really did it as a favour to Danny Angel and Kenny More, played a small part in it. He was wonderful. I remember thinking there's an utter professional. He came down, he only had had one very short scene to do, there were lots and lots of little cameo parts. And he never put a foot wrong, never had to have another tape, just came in and did it and had gone in about half an hour.

LW: Because he was quite a major star by that time, you wouldn't expect him to have a bit part

WT: Very sweet of him.

I learned something from Kenny, I don't know if it was that film or Raising a Riot, but I found out there are two types of leading actors. Or any actor really, but when you're playing small parts people aren't quite so indulgent to you. But there is either the actor who likes to go on talking right to the very last moment before they do a shot or the actor who likes to be very quiet and have a think. And I think a director's job in some cases is marrying these two kind of actors together so one you say right Kenny off we go, and he goes straight into the set and starts. And the other one you say five minutes before, we'll be ready in about 5 minutes and he can go away in a corner and get ready and think and be ready at the same time as Kenny. It is quite difficult adjusting them if you've got three or four on the set and they like to behave differently, it's quite tricky.

LW: You must have occasionally choreographed for people who were not dancers, what problems did that create

WT: It doesn't create for me because I find out what they can do and let them do it. And a lot of people I've worked with have said thank god it's you, because sometime they get a choreographer who is so determined that the choreography should go this way or that way, and the poor darlings can't coordinate, can't do it. And they do it in the end, but it is such a struggle and it is so hard for them. And I think those choreographers are quite right to stretch them probably, but I feel that if it is somebody like that it is usually to find out what they can do, what they can do best. Like with Anna Neagle, she was a delightful mover, if that's the right word, a good dancer in the things she could do and not at all a good dancer in the things she couldn't do.

LW: What were the things she couldn't do

WT: She wasn't a jazzy girl, she wasn't in any senes, she didn't have a beat rhythm and she wouldn't do that sort of thing but she was very graceful. And one thing I had to do some things for her that were rather rhythmic and it was still better to let her do what she found easiest than trying to push her, press her into something that was more difficult. And you see in our musicals, we didn't have these weeks and weeks and weeks of rehearsals that they used to in American wen they had somebody like Jack Cole who was the master of all that thing. He had his own company and he would rehearse for weeks before a film was even starting to be shot. We had to fit rehearsals in between times, or had to. And therefore they had so much to think about as well. I remember Paddy Stone telling me, because he did nearly all the films with

Julie Andrews, and absolutely worshiped her, and Blake Edwards directed always. And I think it was Victor Victoria, they rehearsed quite a lot before the film, but on the day of the film they hadn't really made up their mind exactly how she should make her entrance, how she should walk down the stairs, what it should be. And it was all done off the cuff, it was wonderful, it was very good indeed. I think it is a terrific film.

And I remember Jessie Matthews, It's a Boy, which was the same film, same story anyway. And I taped it the other day, I haven't had time to look at it yet, but it will be interesting to see them close to each other. But I think an awful lot has to be done off the cuff in films and nothing is ever done off the cuff in the theatre because people, an actor will try something during a performance but it is not like doing something absolutely that hasn't been tried before, you have to in films sometimes. But I think I did mention before I was very lucky, nearly always I persuaded them to let me have some rehearsal time beforehand with the cast.

DR: It's a shame no one has done a film about Jessie Matthew's life

WT: They've been trying for some while to get it together, because she is so, I think she wants to do it herself, she is a wonderul dancer. Her singing we all know is terrific but I think people have forgotten a bit what a terrific dancer she is. She was a dancer really before she was a singer. And I know they've tried to do it and it would be quite an interesting life. I don't know how they would get over the thing with Evelyn Laye. Who is still alive and not very happy about it and I don't think would cooperate. That maybe one of the reasons why they haven't got it together yet.

LW: You did a couple of shows about Noel Coward, did you ever work with him

WT: Yes, I worked with him on Sigh no More and he didn't work with us on Cowardly Custard. I went over to see him about it and stayed with them, but he said no, no, I'm not going to come and interfere, I'm pleased with the material that you've all chosen, because Alan Strachan wrote it. And Bernard, son in law, or ex son in law, the three of us wrote it, and he said no, I'll just come over and see the first night and get a nice surprise I hope. Which is apparently what he did. He was pleased with it. But it came about because of his 70th birthday party which a lot of us got together to do. And it was such an enormous success that Bernard Myles, bless his soul, and rest his soul, thought it would be an idea to get something together, to put it on in the

theatre. Because in the birthday party we had every star in the firmament, you can imagine, from cliff Richards, upwards and downwards and in and out. So it had to be a different sort of thing for the Mermaid Theatre, but it was he, he said to me. I suspect it's a story you've heard but he did actually say it to me, anyway we were sitting in the stalls and it was the dress rehearsal of Sigh No More and three young men dashed onto the stage to start with, rather balletically, Graham Pane jumped onto the stage looking gorgeous in his tights as a harlequin. And then Tommy Lindon, dashed from the other side looking great, and then this lovely little young man who was actually Bea Lillie's adopted son called Grant Tyler, who I don't think had ever been on the stage before, and he sprung across the stage and got into a position and Noel turned to me and said Wendy, go round and see Grant Tyler and tell him to take that Rockingham tea service out of his tights. Obviously the boys hadn't helped him in any way, what people wear under tights when they're dancing ballet. And he did actually say it to me and I think it was off the cuff. I don't think he'd ever said it before.

But he was a remarkable man. He was like Cochrane in that he had his finger on everything really, he knew what he wanted in every way in any of his plays and it was a real joy to work with him. And he was very kind. And again he was a huge influence on me, so was Cochrane too. I don't think I've mentioned Cochrane before. Cochrane was the biggest influence of all because he gave me my first job as a director. So I owe him a lot. But Noel was extraordinary, in that he was one of those people like Ray Cooney is now, that he knew exactly which lines would get laughs, what you had to do to get them. And he was always right and that is entirely different sort of gift. A lot of people have an instinct for comedy, but Noel and I believe Ray Cooney, I've never had the pleasure of working with or for Ray Cooney but I think he has that same gift. Everybody tells me so.

LW: You get people who seem to fit their times perfectly, as was the case with Coward and the mid30s to mid 40s

WT: I think he made the time really. I think he invented it. But isn't it sad in a way that although he was popular, terrifically popular and very popular with the classy folk in a way, but he never got the critical credit he should have got. He is getting it now. Now everybody thinks he is wonderful. He was just as wonderful then of course, his work has lasted. But he got very bad criticisms. I think he was too clever, that's it. In this country they're a little bit inclined to let people to go just so far with their popularity and then think no don't let them get too big headed. And maybe they thought Noel was a bit too clever, master, don't know. Miss him very much. I miss Anton Dolin very

much.

And I had great pleasure working not long ago with a man called Maxim Masunda, whose dead now, and he was a very very interesting writer. And I went to Canada to do a play and it was called, I can't remember the title of it now but it was about Oscar Wilde, Jesus Christ and Galileo. And it was something I was very proud of doing. It was written by Maxim Masunda who is so talented and died far too young, and Eric Bentley, that great author. And I was just very proud to have done it, I'd love to do it over here some time. I've been lucky in the work I've done abroad because I worked in Turkey, I did the Mikado in Turkish, in Turkey, with two broken feet, and crouch lavatories. Pretty tricky that was. And then I did Kiss Me Kate in Danish which was very interesting . And it's been fun working abroad, I like it.

LW: How do people get hold of your name.

WT: I think the British Council sent me out to do that. I think they wanted somebody, they asked for somebody and Denmark, the man who was running the theatre at that time had heard about me. Knew of me as a director. And wanted me to go and do it. And their actors are very capable of singing, very good singers as well as very good actors. Ours are too now. I mean they're getting much more used to singing and acting as one whole which is very good. It started with West Side Story which was a long way back of course, they were mainly dancers but they could act and sing. And there is some very good dancing actors in Matador, which is a musical which is on at the moment. Some very good people in it.

LW: Which is your favourite medium, film , television or theatre

WT: I think television is the most difficult of all of them, because all the problems of all of them and none of the good points. When you have an audience I think it is disaster on television. And if you don't have an audience you don't get any feed back. You have that terrible time in the box when you're actually doing it when you can hardly hear anything unless you're very, very used to it. I suppose it becomes second nature to

WENDY TOYE

SIDE 5, TAPE 3

WT: It must come a second nature when people direct television a lot, to cut out all the noises that aren't necessary. But doing it so spasmodically as I have done, I found it a terrifying, always a terrifying experience, but very satisfactory because then nowadays you have it on tape if you want to keep it. When I was mostly doing television there wasn't such a thing as tape so nothing I did was kept really. But I think in the end it would be theatre. I think if I had to say that I wasn't going to work in any medium again I think I would be most sorry if it was not the theatre. I haven't worked in films for ages anyway. I think the theatre probably is my first love

LW: Your career has covered the most enormous range of material

WT: I have been very lucky to have all the opportunities I've had and I think one has helped another. I think having done a lot of comedy it has helped me whenever I've had any drama to do. What I've found in working on drama and comedy funnily enough is that comedy is a very serious business and you mustn't have too many jokes when you're doing it, because it can get dangerous. But with drama the more you can joke around the better. And I found most actors feel that too. They like the release from heavy drama, in being light-hearted between things, between rehearsals, between takes. But I have been lucky because I've done opera, I had a lot to do with the ballet, and choreography. I've done comedy in all media really. I've done variety and review and I was associate producer on the Torvill and Dean World Iceskating Show. I didn't direct any of it and I didn't choreograph any of it. But I was there to put my 10 pence work in it and it was very interesting. And I've done everything really. Except circus, which I wouldn't want to do anyway.

LW: Do you think a career of that range would be possible today when people are more pigeon-holed.

WT: I don't think they're pigeon-holed at all, when you think of Trevor Nunn and Peter Hall. I was one of the few people doing

opera as well as doing review in those days. Nowadays are very much freer. I think I was lucky to get out of the pigeon hole in my day. Because you really were stuck. I was one of the first persons who really wasn't pigeon-holed.

I think it is a problem too for me, because nobody thinks I belong to their area. I don't really belong in anywhere anymore. And when I go to any ballet dos, because it's been Dame Alicia, that is another one who influenced me, Dame Alicia Markova, my goodness me, absolutely, tremendously because I did a ballet for her when I was quite young. And because I was making dance for her it made me dance in a different way myself. And all that sort of thing happened.

I think I was so lucky because when I now go to any ballet reunions or as I was saying, Alicia's 80th birthday, I really feel at home, that feels like home to me. Even now. Whereas I'm not really anything to do with the film world. Of course I would be accepted and I know people in the film world, I've got great friends in the film world. I am in the theatre world still. But the television world is quite different now to the world I used to know, although I still know a lot of people who work in it. I think probably if I'd stuck to one thing, maybe if I'd stuck to opera I'd have had a more satisfactory career. I don't really know. I wouldn't know what to advise anybody. I think I would advise them to stick to one line. It has been interesting for me, but I'm so convinced that one gets another chance in life, I absolutely believe in reincarnation, I think this is only a fourth dress rehearsal. I hope I get another chance.

LW: I think you've done pretty well.

WT: I don't know, with the luck that I've had, I'm not sure that, having no real ambition is a problem, it is a real problem. I think people who have got fired with ambition do what they want. I don't think I've really done what I wanted to, never achieved what I would have like to have done but it's my own fault. I haven't got that burning passion.

LW: Given that you've achieved a lot what is that you feel that you haven't achieved

WT: I don't think I've ever done anything really very good, what I call very good, and I would have loved the opportunity. I think I've done everything that I've done well. I don't think I've ever done anything badly. I've never done anything half heartedly. I've never done anything with lack of absolutely commitment to it. But I think I've done things as well as they could be done, not only as well I could do them, I mean as well they could be

done. But I just think, I'm just not satisfied with myself. But I don't think many people are.

It must be extraordinary to be a painter or a sculptor because there is only a certain way, with that bit canvas or bit of whatever you're working on. And if you haven't made it very good, it's your fault. We've got so many excuses, haven't we. All the people we work with, you can always put the blame onto somebody else. I don't think we do but it is so much a group thing isn't it. The credit goes to the group and so does the blame.

DR: The thing that amazes me about your career is the way you're able to change direction, from choreography, to film, live television direction. It is amazing, most people stay in one particular area of entertainment.

WT: It is odd. I think I have got my mother to thank for that, the fact that she was so interested in theatre as a whole and Dame Ninette always says when I meet her, pity your mother wouldn't let you stay with the ballet. You should have done. And I think she would have liked me to have joined the company permanently. But I think my mother wanted me to learn every aspect of the theatre when I could. And I don't say I do know every aspect of the theatre by a long chalk. But I know about it

DR: How about your father

WT: My father never even came to see anything, he wasn't interested in the theatre at all, he had a billiard table at home, and that was his great love. Billiards and snooker. And he encouraged me and he never stopped me going, he never stopped my mother coming on tour with me, which she did for a long months on end. I can't say my mother was an influence on me because I never had a chance for it to be an influence, I was just told what to do. And I loved it but I was 3 years old when I was taken to dancing class, and three and a half when I first performed at the Albert Hall. It does make me laugh sometimes when I see some of these 7 and 8 year olds doing a little dance. I think my god I really was very, very good. Very musical and exact, I know I was. So I suppose I had got the gift from her because she always wanted to do it herself but never had the opportunity. I think Francis Toye and Geoffrey Toye are very vaguely related, Geoffrey Toye wrote The Haunted Ballroom and one or two other books. And Francis Toye was the great opera, great authority. And he I never met but Geoffrey, I knew well. But whether we were related hasn't really been proved yet, they seem to think that we're once removed somewhere.

DR: The amazing thing is that you went from purely an art form,

ballet to technical

WT: Remember, Dave I did so many dances in films, lots of them lost forgotten and I can't even remember the titles. But I was in and out of the film studios all the time, and because I was interested in it technically and I watched so much, because I had been to films a lot, and just used to go to the editing room and that's really where I learnt about things. And they were very generous, and let me just sit in there and watch. And I don't think I could have done it otherwise, because I wouldn't have known technically where you have to look.

We had a very difficult scene, one of the dreaded scenes, where you have to have the editor on the floor with you all the time, I can't remember which film it was in now, but it was practically circular table, and it was who looks camera left, and who looks camera right. Even the editor sometimes got it wrong, I'm glad to say. But because I knew so little and because I was doing something new, if you could see my scripts you could see how hard I worked, I really did work hard at it, I'm not saying how I scripted it ever went onto the screen but at least I knew at home what I ought to do to make it work and that was real hard work.

DR: The other thing that makes amazes me that you were able to go straight into the gallery of a tv studio and direct a live television production, you must have had some training, you must can't go straight in

WT: I didn't have any at all and I begged them. You can ask Donald Wilson, when you talk to him, you ask Donald Wilson and on the first night, the only night, the night we did it, as I think I told you the sound doing went wrong and I'd rehearsed it all at home, with the script, saying all the words I had to say, cue this, cue that, because I knew with all that other noise going on that I wasn't used to, but it was, I mean it was really terrifying, absolutely terrifying.

DR: It must have taken some nerve to do it, suppose half way through

WT: I can't do this any more. I mean it's live. It wasn't on tape in those days. I do think I had a certain amount of courage or foolhardiness, I don't know which it was. But it was a good show, I'm ever so sorry there is nothing of it left, it was very interesting.

LW: It's sad that there is so much from the early days of television which hasn't been kept

WT: I have a book here, I think it is of 1938, and it is the book which is the best in the theatre and television of that year, and I'm in it twice. There's a dance I did called the Blue Madonna which is me dancing. And then there is another ballet that I did, and both these photographs are in this book. It is lovely to have been acknowledged in that sort of way, it was very nice.

But it is funny when I think of the amount I've done, I think goodness me I ought to know more than I do. I don't feel I know anything yet. I feel it's all kind of been luck

LW: It's a bit more than luck, because you related how initially with your first television programme you froze, but then you came back again

WT: Because I rehearsed it so well, and there is no reason why you can't rehearse so that if something goes wrong you have to do it off the cuff, but you know the script as well as the actors know it. But sometimes, particularly nowadays when cameras are so agile that a director will see a shot on one camera that he hadn't planned for. And particularly in shows like the Wogan show, that must be done off the cuff. But I wouldn't have liked to have tried to do that in those days. The only reason I could do it was because I'd rehearsed it so well myself, which I'm sure would make most directors laugh their heads off nowadays. But I'm sure it is the only way I could have got through it.

And it was the same when I did Orpheus, and Orpheus was even more difficult, because Orpheus I think there were 60 people in the chorus and to keep them covered and to get the right camera on the right person for the right line with very little rehearsal, that was very nerve racking. But at least we did it in three acts and there was a little pause after one act and I could have a breather and we rushed to another studio and did the second act in another studio.

LW: Orpheus was a television version of something you'd done for the stage. Did you find that when you came to film it for television, there were things that you had to change.

WT: Yes, I wanted to alter all of it. Absolutely. Because where you've been looking at something straight on, you direct it for something straight on if it's a proscenium arch. But for the television you want to get round behind the clouds, you want to see him coming down this way and going round the other way. And when the balloon went up, you wanted to go up with it. Yes, it was all very different.

LW: Did the artists have problems with that, because then they

did certain things almost automatically.

WT: You're absolutely right, but we did have a lot of rehearsal time. I've got some rehearsal photographs of it, and I'd marked the floor out completely where the cameras were going to be. Because going the piece I could go into rehearsal and decide where the camera should be anyway. And we did a lot of planning with Granada for it. But I've got a lot of photographs and I did in fact put little dots for them to walk, because they were so used to walking straight to the front, this way, and they had to walk to the camera there, that I anticipated all that. But they loved it. They hadn't done all that amount of television in those days so they enjoyed it very much. And I think I told you earlier, we did actually prerecord it, which saved them a lot of dust on the lungs.

I think opera on television works wonderfully when it is a well directed piece for television on camera. I think it looks great, I really do. And I think that the Carmen which is film not television, is one of the best examples of Carmen, you could possibly see.

I do think that, and this is the trouble with the videos that they stick up in theatres now, they put two or three videos up and they can edit to a certain extent. But it is not the same as actually making a movie of a film, or a movie of an opera, or a stage show – should be done completely differently. And ballets too. I think they are filming ballets wonderfully now. It has taken them a long while to learn the technique but it's really good. Up to 5 years ago

You saw Swan Lake on television the other night. I didn't like that ballet at all, I loved the same man's Giselle, that was terrific. But I thought this he was just a cod version of Swan Lake and I thought it was awful. But Giselle he had tackled from a completely different approach. I thought that was brilliant. But there is the most exquisite photography going on

DR: Yes, they've learned how to use tv cameras with ballet now.

WT: They have. I suppose it is the difference in the lenses as much as anything, because before you were either too far away or too close. But now they've got it to such a fine art.

LW: What are the major changes that you've witnessed in the course of your career

WT: I couldn't begin. It is so utterly different. And I think different for the better. I think the feeling of camaraderie

amongst everybody. There were, great as the people were, and friendly as they were, and helpful as they were there were two classes weren't there. There were the stars and there were the people. I guess it is probably the same still in America. But here it is much more of the group, it is much more, you see people like Peggy, Dame Peg always liked to work as group. And I think Olivier always liked to work as a group, and that's why they formed the National Theatre. But other folk who were big stars of the theatre and the cinema, they were big stars weren't they. And I think now everybody respects everybody else much more. I think that's what it is. I think the people who are playing the major responsibility, I think they appreciate the people who have lesser responsibility. And I think the people who have the small parts, respect the people genuinely other than just being in awe of them. I think there is a general camaraderie which is nicer in every part of the profession now.

I still think there is as much discipline. I know a lot of people think there is a lack of discipline in the younger people, I don't find that and I have quite a lot to do with the Academies and the drama schools. I think there is tremendous discipline still. And I think the young people are remarkable, very talented, very versatile, I think everything is very good. I think it is a pity that the commercial theatre is having such a hard time because I really do feel there room for everything. It is great that the National and the Royal Shakespeare get the subsidy that they get, so long as it's well used, but I think there is room for the commercial theatre and the things that the National and the Royal Shakespeare wouldn't even consider doing. There is a public that wants to see those bits of entertainment. I think the commercial theatre is having a very hard time of it at the moment. And the film business is having a very hard time and that's all really sad. Because I think if there was the money around that there was in the 60s, the wonderful things that people would do with it nowadays, as far as filming is concerned. It is a great loss that that isn't happening

DR: Do you feel that the government ought to subsidise film like they do abroad, or are you happy with the free enterprise situation

WT: I think it is such a struggle, free enterprise, isn't it. I'm really not bright enough to know what the government can afford, because I think they should be subsidising everything. So I'm wrong because they can't. But it seems to me that they should be paying teachers more or seeing that they got more somehow, should be subsidising them in some way. Because it seems to me if the children aren't educated properly we haven't any future at all. It seems to me that so many things should be subsidised. Of

course films should be subsidised, good work should be subsidised everywhere.

Another thing that I think, I don’t say it should be done, because as I say I’m not bright enough to know how you can balance things. But it seems to me fairly absurd the greediness of the big, big stars now. It seems to me that they get so much money. Fine they can sell a film on them, but it does seems such a lot of money to pay for a relatively short time of work and while those fees go up and up and up, that makes it extremely difficult to budget films sensibly. It seems to me as it the whole thing has gone a bit haywire. But as I say, I only think this.