

Interview Transcript: Katy Manning



I was a baby when we moved to Streatham. We lived in Hillside Road in a beautiful old house there, with a minstrel's gallery. I think it's still there - I loved that house - and then we moved to Christchurch Road, and so I went as I got a little bit older, like you know, I went to ballet at the Robinson School of Dance and we had the beautiful Streatham [Hill] Theatre which was just gorgeous, because I think every area should have its theatre and we did at one point.

You can never take the history out of those walls, it's absolutely embedded in those walls, and you can feel it when you go into a theatre no matter what they've tried to do to it and theatre has become very popular again. I mean, I remember when I... my very, very first pantomime and I was a little very myopic child, so my memory is... when people say, oh what are your memories, I said well it was like, you know, a four-year-old or a three-year-old or whatever I was, you know, watching a lava lamp - because all I could see was like colour and then I could hear these voices, and everybody laughing, and it was the most exciting thing, and I remember that wonderful thing about theatre, you know, when you sit there and you don't know what's going to happen, and those velvet curtains go up, and the magic, and the orchestra starts to play, and you have no idea what's going to happen.

It's just so exciting and I think Streatham Hill was such a beautiful theatre for pantomime, you know. I will never forget, albeit like a big fuzzy lots of colours, it was still as exciting as anything else. And I think there's a huge catchment area here in Streatham, in all the surrounding areas, and I think people used to, people used to think for a while, there was this stage that people thought oh you know theatre's only for certain kind of people, you know, it was very elitist, shall we say.

Well, it's not anymore, and everybody knows that, you know. Gone are the days when you put your best gloves on, your best coat, and your hat, and go to the theatre. Now you can go in shorts and thongs. And I get that that flashback to my childhood you know every time I go past that theatre and actually, I get a little bit upset because of what has been allowed to happen to it.

You know, you have this extraordinary building in this, as I've said, catchment area of people now who realise that it isn't elitist anymore, and you think of all the touring companies, and the plays, and the musicals, and the pantomimes, that could go on there.

And I think it's very important to think a lot about children and bringing teenagers into the audience by bringing in plays that cover very difficult subjects, which is what theatre can do so brilliantly.

That theatre just makes me go ... and my little tummy, and my little memory, and I just smile hugely from within. And I quite often would take the bus a bit further down, just so I can walk around to the back of the theatre, you know, and just encompass that beautiful theatre, and I think it's so important. Don't let it become a ghastly shopping centre or block of, you know, overpriced flats.

Let's give the communities and the surrounding communities something wonderful for all age groups.

<http://streathamhilltheatre.org/katy-manning-reminisces-about-streatham-hill-theatre>