

## School Plays – Chris Williams

As a relative newcomer to the school in September 1965 I hadn't realised that the 'house play' was supposed to provide a showcase for extracts from classical dramas and in my three years in the Sixth Form wrote two playlets / sketches based on contemporary world events and jokes. Rumour at the time even suggested the pioneering first one might have been banned as being against the school ethos . However, the school censor was lenient.

The 'humour' was lifted from radio shows like 'I'm sorry I'll read that again' and comedians such as Brian Rix, Ken Dodd and Les Dawson, but also from fellow Sixth Formers whose spontaneity and wit were spectacular at times. I even have the notebook with the 'gags' and the names of their perpetrators, a sad example of severe hoarding if ever there was one, but also a great insight into what made us laugh at the time. Offerings from school students included Carol Springford, Lynne Morgan, Sue Ritter, Alan Milnes, Nick Marshall and Tim Rothwell, the latter's contribution including the following, typical of hundreds more in the two sketches:

A: I've got holes in my head.

B: Why?

A: I don't know. I've got a memory like a sieve.

The late years of the 1960's were a very different world to today's in which social media are so dominant and instant. The internet was two decades away. Budget airlines hadn't been invented. Our horizons were narrow. Holidays abroad were rare. My own first international flight was from all the way from Lydd to Le Touquet in 1969. At the time the non-European locations in the two playlets seemed very exotic, and perhaps they still are. They owed more than a little to the glamour and mystery exuded from Saltcote whose residents seem to have travelled to all parts of the globe through their parents' careers in the military, diplomatic service or business. I don't think anyone ever told me exactly who did what or where. The real '007s' might just have been Saltcote parents. Did the Official Secrets Act hold sway up the hill as the Berlin Wall went up and the Cold War carried on?

50 years on I hesitate to scan the original scripts of these playlets for a twenty-first century audience. One reason is the overt plagiarism, although perhaps the writing might now count as 'research' because of the use of multiple sources? Another reason for restraint would be changing cultural norms. What was acceptable on Morecambe and Wise in the mid-1970's might now be seen as distasteful and excessive stereotyping. Would it be seen as political incorrectness in today's terms, and probably inappropriate for a school archive. Maybe the storylines and humour would be just too embarrassing for anyone who was involved. However, the scripts were written, the shows were staged and the productions seemed to have been enjoyed by actors and the audiences alike

On the content, suffice it to say that the 1966 production "Some funny things happened to me on my way to independence" was set in Aden, now part of Yemen, as the British were moving out. The title was derived from a Stephen Sondheim musical "A funny thing happened to me on my way to the Forum". Frankie Howard starred in the London production. The cast list and character names say the rest.

Eden without Eve

or

Some funny things happened to me on my way to independence.

A satire written by Chris Williams

and first performed by Sanders House

at Rye Grammar School on December 15, 1966

Dramatis Personae

Henry, Governor of Eden	Colin Bourne
Carruthers, of the F.O.	Jim Philips
Hassan, retainer to Henry	Chris Williams
Abdul, retainer to Henry	Digby Hobson
A boy	Kevin Alford
A dirty Arab	Geoff Wickenden
Vladimir Protopopov	Digby Hobson
Billy G. Finklater	Peter Ewart
Maud, wife to Henry	Carol Springford
Fatima, wife to Hassan	Gill Winterbottom
A girl	Loretta Hodd
Gdina Laskolnikova	Lynne Morgan
Annigone Middleditch	Pat Binge
Lynda B. Johnson	Mary Philips

Assisted by

Stage Management and Prompting	Tony Harwood
	Heather Williams
Lighting	Norma Beaney
	Peter Chapman

The ~~play~~ play was produced by Sue Ritter

If anyone has a photo, this would be great addition

The following year the focus moved to the Far East in a piece titled "Recounted from Wrong Song". This title was derived from "A countess from Hong Kong" (1967) written and directed by Charlie Chaplin. More silliness, but lots of fun too

Recounted from Wrong Song 29

A satire written by Chris Williams :

First performance by Sanders House  
at Rye Grammar School , Rye , Sussex  
on December 14 th 1967

Dramatis Personae 17

Admiral George Fitzloosely	Peter Ewart
Lady Daphne Fitzloosely	Katie Bell
The Honorable Fiona Fitzloosely	Carol Springford
The Honorable Josephine Fitzloosely	Noelle Kirby
Commander Charles Cohen	Digby Hobson
W.R.E.N. Elsie Goodslip	Marianne Reed
King Fred of Monte Carlo	Berry Fuller
The Dowager Baroness of Brighton	Heather Murrell
Jack Straw	Chess Chessur
Miss Lottie Moor	Joanna Pike
Sergeant Pepper	Simon Ritter
Wong ,	Chris Williams
Wong Tu	Geoff Boxall
Morning Glory	Mary Phillips
Chop Chop	Pete Barnett
Lotus Blossom	Marianne Reed
Madame Butterfly	Joanna Pike
Hi Pong	Berry Fuller
Thi Hi	Heather Murrell
The announcers:Ed Morrow	Chris Williams
Penella Fielding	Carol Springford

Assisted by

Maureen Adams : Chief Stenographer and Prompter  
Richard Parkes : Lighting and Special Effects  
Carol Springford : Censor and Cultural Adviser  
Chris Williams : Producer

The Producer and Cultural Adviser would like to thank the staff of the Chinese Legation : without their co-operation this production could not have been achieved .



Those were the days, my friend” (Mary Hopkin’s version produced by one Paul McCartney in 1968)

*Chris Williams 1965-1968*