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CAMERA OPERATOR: Dean Whiskens
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Q: Could you tell us about your background before you came across Banner Theatre?

PB: I've always been political, I was in the Young Communists League when I was 14 and I come from a very left-wing family. My granny was a founding member of the Communist Party, so I've been raised and went along with and didn't rebel against a left-wing analysis of the world. I'd always been politically active. I studied music, dance and drama very briefly. I lived abroad after I finished my degree, I lived in Holland and studied there for a bit. Then I woke up in 1980 to realize that whilst I'd been busy studying music the world had been building nuclear weapons, and that was a shock. To emerge from the immersion that's necessary when you're studying the performing arts – everybody else has got lectures and we've got concerts, rehearsals, practise – and I was totally passionate about the anti-nuclear thing. I was at a big demo in Bohn in 1980 and that passion took me to join a group of people that were walking to Moscow. So I kind of stopped career number one and for 13 months walked across from, I joined them in Holland and walked through the countries that were in the eastern block at the time – East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet Union. I was often the negotiator so I had to go ahead and arrange visas and passports and then find the group wherever they were walking and join them. That was a cauldron of learning politically but also the fact that I could use my cultural work then, because all the languages, you'd play music. I wound up playing in Red Square with a violinist and a French horn player, and the people that came over then you would talk. It's always been a great opener. So for me, using my own skills. Instrumentally I'm a recorder player and a violinist really but when you're studying you also have to do piano and you can basically turn your hand to lots of instruments. I've always used those in the work. I came back to Colby, which is my home town, because my mother was really ill at the end of '83, and looked around and thought, you know what, I'm going to work with people wherever I am, why not bring back

my skills to my own town, because I know what the struggle is here. It was dreadful. It was four years after the closure of the steel works so you can imagine. Banner, obviously they'd done a show, they'd done Steel. I didn't know about that because that was when I was living abroad. But it was a really interesting time to be living here. I founded a women's centre and got very involved in women's rights and the lifestyle issues around domestic violence, unwanted pregnancy, all of those things. I was able to live from earning good money from teaching music, but I would do that half the week and it would give me enough money to then work for free at the women's centre. So I was still on the same wage as everybody but I was able to be active in a way that other people maybe wouldn't have those choices. There weren't that many people in Colby that wanted violin lessons. We're an amazing town of hardworking people but we've only now started getting a class mix. The headmaster's children really wouldn't live in Colby anyway, but they were the sort of people I had as pupils. So that's how I funded my life to start off with. I was also then teaching dance, and that became quite a big thing in terms of performances and developing performances that were involved in the community but in a very innocent way, those innocent days of the Teddy Bear's Picnic instead of something political. It wasn't working for me and I decided on May 1st, 1994... I actively follow Pagan traditions, so I'd been out watching the dawn, stayed out all night, and had the clarity that I needed to do something to stop the Tories. I couldn't bear it, I couldn't bear what was happening. I'd been in Colby for ten years. Part of the time I was a music lecturer in London as well, so I'd had all sorts of bits of work up and down, two days a week in London and coming back here and seeing the contradiction between people who were coming to have... It was Westminster where I worked, and that involved the palace. We had the queen's ladies in waiting coming to do macramé in the evenings, and I'd go from that to come back here. The contradiction did my head in. My dad, as I say, was very political, so I went to see him on May 1st, 1994 and said, I have to do something, I'm just going to go and work in a factory and get a union going. I've got to do something totally concrete. Then he said, Paula, that'll drive you mad. He said, you used to be in Burord, which is a Dutch political theatre company that I used to tour with in Holland. He said, that's more your sort of thing. He said, have you thought of anything like that? I said, ya but I don't know how that works here. That night I went to the Willow Room in the Colby Civic Theatre to listen to Tony Ben and listen to Banner Theatre, which was amazing. I believe you can manifest. I watched Dave Dale and Aiden and Dave Rogers do their thing and I thought

Aiden was gay. As a lesbian I thought, oh well, that's good, I can have a nice little conversation with him. The thing is the gay ? thing is a real truth, that you do spot people, but you can get it wrong. Then there's a code, there's a different language code. I remember approaching Aiden using all these nuanced ways of talking that completely went over his head, because I was wrong. But I said, I'm amazed by this, it's great, it's just like Burord, and can you tell me something about the company? We had a little chat and then he said, well what do you do? I said, well I'm a violinist and this that and the other. He said, well we've just interviewed with a new member. He said, it's a shame, because the closing date was yesterday. So I said, if I knew about that I'd have applied. He said, leave it with me. He went and had a word with both the Daves. I know from joining the company that we're not that black and white about things. So I put together the quickest audition tape thing. It was awful and I thought, oh my god. It was totally last minute. What could I do to show that I might be somebody they wanted to interview? Anyway, I was asked to come up to Birmingham. I've just segued into how I got involved with Banner, which isn't, should I just carry on on this flow? Alright then. So I went up to Birmingham and I remember it was one of the songs about coal that I'd been given and I had to write my own harmony and come up with some violin part. I went up there with all my recorders and the violin and did my thing. I loved it, I loved the audition. Dave had a migraine or a really bad headache. Does Dave suffer from migraines? He was very ill anyway, he was basically lying down with his eyes shut most of the time. It was quite difficult to perform interactively with somebody that was feeling so ill. Then I had to do the Story Time piece from Sweat Shop when, I can't remember her name now, but she was talking about breaking the looms and what have you. My granny was a textile worker so it was like telling my granny's story, so I really related to that thing. That was that, off I went. I remember your mom, sorry I'm looking at Sammy over here, had picked me up and ya, that was that. That was the beginning and end. I didn't hear anything and I thought, well that's a shame. I had a nice bit of feedback with whoever and then I went on holiday with my sister. I was reading a book about the suffragettes on a beach in Greece, getting really angry about the fact that, what has changed really? She said, whatever happened to that theatre company? I thought you were getting involved in political theatre. So I said, well I would've done but I didn't get in. She said, well I think you should get in touch with them, because maybe there's other things you could do with them. Anyway, I got back and the beginning of Sweat Shop and who was going to be in it. Dave

Dale was going to be in it, it wasn't yes no maybe they needed somebody, they didn't. There'd been all of that going on and I came back having spent from the May to the September planning my life meticulously, ready to start my new life with every balance, and I got the call. So I said, sorry new life that I've just got together – I'm off. It was very last minute and very sudden, but I really felt like I needed to do it, because I wouldn't ever know if I'd have said, well that was May, this is September. I remember walking to the bus stop with a friend of mine who'd gone off to Swansea, Judy Wood. I took my violin with me and played a jig to her as she was getting on the bus, to send her off. There was a letter in the pocket on the way back, and I read it, and it was one from Banner. It was meant to happen, but I wasn't obviously meant to do it just then. So that was me up to Birmingham, trying to find somewhere to live, which of course it's hard to just uproot yourself. But I was lucky that my friend Heather had a sister in Birmingham, and that's where I stayed overnight. They came with me and we looked around at some places in Perry Bar that were grunge awful. I'm from Colby so it wasn't that much of a shock, but it is a big city and there's a different feeling certainly when you don't know what the cultural mix is, what the norms are, what the safety places are. I remember Sandra, Heather's sister, said, what do you think? I said, oh it'll do. I'm not going to be here much, am I? We'll be at rehearsals and then we'll be on tour, so really it's just a bed for the night. Then she said, I can't let you be here. She said, this is terrible, come and stay at ours. So King Fief, I could walk to, where was it, Union Road, what was the, it begins with P. Parshall Road, there you go. I could walk across the park to work. I had a room in their house and I could make food if I wanted to, and I was like a lodger in somebody's house. So I never actually interacted with Birmingham at all. It would've been a completely different life if I'd have ended up living on my own in a house somewhere and had to make all of those links. So ya, that was me, that's how I got involved.

Q: What was the Banner show that you saw?

PB: It was like the First of May Band equivalent.

Q: What was it about it that resonated with you?

PB: It was like the same feeling I've had when I'm at Burord in Holland. It was people using music to sing about things that really mattered and things that mattered to me. To have then link then with Tony Ben doing his thing, I just thought this is how to get the message across. My dad's right, I need to do it using my own talents.

Q: What was the class makeup of Colby at the time?

PB: Well basically like now, it's basically a working-class town. There's very few private estates and very few middle class or richer people in Colby. There's a chart of towns with the highest number of working class residents, and we're up in the top five.

Q: What's the history there?

PB: Well Colby has a steelworks and when it closed, when the steelworks in Glasgow closed in the '30s a massive migration of Scottish people looking for work happened. One in five people were Scots at one point but they came down for the steelworks and all the associated industries. So it's been a town that people have come to for work, and the housing estates developed to house those people was very low cost housing. It's changing now, we're now more like a commuter, we're only an hour and 10 minutes from London. So there's a massive housing expansion, a lot of people are using it as a cheap overflow from London. But up until 10 years ago we were a solid working-class town with several industrial estates and factories.

Q: Was your involvement in Greenham before Banner?

PB: Yes it was, it was, it was that 10 years that I blithely skipped over for the walk to Moscow until 1994. When I was on the walk to Moscow we lived in a peace camp and I was just about to go to Northern Ireland because there was an Irish woman on the walk and she realized that she was busy walking to Moscow to prevent nuclear war, and there was a war in her own country. So I went with her. During that trip it coincided with the big 30,000 woman around the base of Greenham December '82. So I went to that on the way and had one of those lightbulb moments. I remember I had my little red, well it wasn't little, I had my

red rucksack. I'd hitched, as I did in those days, and arrived at Greenham and said to a woman who looked like she knew what she was doing, I remember because she had a witch's cape on and a hat, and she just looked in charge. I went over and said, hi, I've arrived, what do we do then? She said, why are you here? I said, well to embrace the base. She said, there's the base, get on with it. The walk to Moscow was all nonviolent direct action, autonomy, we were doing our own thing. But this was kind of like, okay this feels really different. It was an eyeopener, it really was. There are pictures, there's Greenham archive pictures, but there's one where there's a load of women blockading, and police horses galloping towards them. I saw that. It was like, I cannot believe what I'm watching, I cannot believe this is what is about to happen. Also the Gandhi film was out at the time, and there's a moment in that where there's a charge of police horses and somebody said, lie down, because the horses won't step on. Somebody did the same thing and all these women suddenly went flat. I was really shocked, because my whole political, the in depth political thing that was going on for me at the time was about nuclear weapons and about east and west and those politics. So I was a bit vague about what was going on in England, because the policemen in Scotland and Wales and Ireland are very different. This was kind of like Greenham was right in the centre of England. I had no idea that all of this police stuff had gone on. I have since, I know this is jumping ahead, but I have filled in the gaps in my own knowledge because I wrote a book called Women of Steel about the history of my home town, and that involved finding out about the steel strike. Knowing that the way the police were actually on the steel strike has all been missed because we think of the Battle of Orgrave, we think of the miners' strike. They practised here, and hearing about that was a real shock because it was before Greenham. I think it was actually the cauldron for a lot of policing, what happened in Colby during the steel strike. Then it was, right okay, we'll ratchet it up, ratchet it up, ratchet it up. Practise on the women at Greenham, then we all know what happened during the '84 miners' strike. Anyway that's an offshoot, Greenham. So yes I went up and down a lot, we went up and down a lot. We had a group, there was Colby Women for Peace, we took part in lots of the... Sorry, I'm laughing because I was thinking, how did we get there? Oh I know. I used to hire a minibus from the county council, telling them that we were going to Berkshire to study dialogue and accents. Oh dear, but ya, free minibus. It was very good. I think that the style of autonomous self organizing again, it was very similar to what had happened on the walk to Moscow, but that was a mixed

project, this was a women-only project. During that time as well I realized that my own sexuality was getting clear, and I came out in '88, which does remind me of the first time I actually saw Banner perform. Because I'd founded the women's centre I was very involved with women's issues. I was an ardent and strident feminist and I think a lot of people probably assumed for a lot longer that maybe I was a dyke, but I wasn't at the time. Actually that moment when you're not really sure, it's a very scary thing going on, a bit unsure. I was at Colby Trades and Labour Club, which my dad founded, and Banner were doing a show. I remember Julie McNamara was in it and she was playing the part of PC Elderton, who was the chief police constable from Manchester at the time, who had said some outrageously anti-gay things. She suddenly went into role as him – put her hat on and a trench coat and came stomping around the audience. She came over to me in my purple handmade leather boots and I remember I had a red hand knit jumper as well that somebody had made me on the walk to Moscow. I must have looked just the part. She picked me to say, oh we've got a likely one here, I think we should round this one up. I was mortified, because she was right and I was literally just about to come out, but I was mortified that people in that building would think that that meant that I was. We'd just been through all the unemployment stuff as well, Hands Across Britain, we'd had Hands Across Britain. I remember giving a speech at the, we used to have May Day rallies in Colby, and I remember being asked while we were walking through Colby, Paula, we haven't got a woman on the platform, will you speak? I was in a dilemma, should we point out that there wasn't a woman on the platform and expose yet again the ongoing sexism in the labour movement, or should I use it as an opportunity to get up there and say something? I was thinking, and I'm unprepared, so whatever I say is going to sound shit compared to them with their notes. Then we got to the labour club, which as I say, my dad had founded. I had my nephew, who I was helping to raise at the time, he was in the push chair. I'd said that I was literally of thinking, go on then Paula, you can get up and say something, even if what you say is, I've been asked to do this because they forgot to get a woman. Enough said, and sit down again. I thought, I can use it. But the man on the door said, you can't bring that in here. I said, that, are we referring to the child in the push chair, or the push chair? What are you talking about? He said, no kids allowed. I said, I think you'll find that this kid is allowed. This is the grandson of the founder and I'm the daughter of the founder, and we're going in. I thought, I'm on that platform, you're not stopping me. I made this speech and I'll never forget it. All the men were sitting

at the top table and to get to the mike I had to walk along, literally sitting on their knees, which was really physically uncomfortable to get to the mike. Then I made a speech. I said about how I got into the place, and childcare was obviously one of the things that was stopping women being involved, that was a big speech thing. I talked about the women's centre and I talked about the domestic violence and rape. I remember I said, I'm not saying this to any of you out there, but somebody out there is beating up their wives and daughters and girlfriends and what have you and somebody out there is raping them as well, so whoever it is it's all our jobs to find out and stop that happening. Oh and I also said about housework. It's so funny hearing this now because it's such an '80s, '90s agenda about doing domestic work as well. I said, we're not innately born knowing how to use a Hoover. But it was completely from a very informed point of view, and the gap between what I was saying and the way it was being received by the men was quite stark. But the women, I was getting lots of thumbs up and nods to husband, so there, going on. The next day was Hands Across Britain. We were all on a coach and we drove off to some part in the middle of nowhere where the coach stopped and we got out and everybody linked hands about unemployment. The women needed to go to the loo at some point, so we were being ferried from that point to somewhere where we could use the loo. I remember getting on the coach and lots of people nodding. I thought, I don't know these people. But you forget, if you've just given a speech then you were the one that everybody's seen. I thought, oh they're very friendly; it completely went over my head. Anyway, we're in the car on the way to the loos and this man said, very good speech you gave yesterday, love. So I said, oh thank you very much. Then his wife said, that'll be the last one you give. I said, what do you mean? She said, they won't let you speak again. Then he said, oh I don't know. She said, I do, I heard them talking afterwards. It was really funny. But that was kind of like the beginning of Paula is the mouthy one, so the left in Colby has always been quite scared of me and token, oh Paula's coming, we'd better all start minding our Ps and Qs. They still do it. We've just had the campaign now. We had a young woman standing, 24 maybe. I was canvassing with men saying, we've got a young girl standing, a young Colby lass; she's a nice young girl. Just to even have to do that now in 2017, no awareness at all that this was... Anyway we're talking about that instead of Banner, let's get back onto Banner.

Q: So you get recruited. Into what show?

PB: This was Sweat Shop. Sweat Shop had been researched in Colby. Aiden had been to Colby, that's how he ended up being at that event, because he had researched in some of the terrible factories in Colby. The perfume factory was one of the ones that we knew about because we were hearing about it at the women's centre as well, where they had to have a red badge if they were bleeding so they could go to the toilet more often. Perfume, the perfume factory, that one always sticks with me. We had lots of sweat shops and the reason was when the steelworks closed we could've completely gone under as a town, but we became an enterprise zone where there were lots of subsidized factory premises and lots of people coming in giving poorly paid jobs, then once the subsidy ran out they opted out. So people were made redundant five times in as many years. But they had work, low paid work, and we are still a low wage economy in this town, so much so that the latest Colby statistic is we are top of the loan tree. People take out loans in order to make ends meet in this town, and it's completely normal. That made The Guardian last week, front page. So we've never ever recovered from the steelworks, we just have lots and lots of really badly paid jobs, agency labour. So Sweat Shop, quite a lot of the research was done here by Aiden.

Q: Was the show written by the time you joined Banner?

PB: Ya by the time I got there the show was ready to be rehearsed, so I walked into day one of rehearsals, with Theresa as director. Theresa, redhead Theresa, young drama woman. She was more drama than politics. There was me. Helen MacDonald, she was in it as well, a black woman from Nottingham who was a jazz singer, fantastic voice. And Aiden, who obviously you know. Dave. That was the four of us. There was a woman technician at the time, Sam, and a Lesbian as well, not just a woman, so that was great for me. And obviously Amani was around and then...

Q: Sam what? Yates.

PB: That was part one of the tour anyway, I think you took over for part two.

Q: Did you have a musical director as well?

PB: No I don't think we did, I can't remember us having a musical director. I do remember that if we had had a musical director they would've realized that Helen was a superb musician and that Aiden was somebody that was learning. That was my first encounter with sexism and racism and classism, all rolled into one comment from Aiden Jolly. He was telling Helen how to play the jambay. This is Helen, who was Scottish on one side and I think she was Jamaican, a Jamaican Scottish mix. I've forgotten that detail, which I should remember. But she new about African drumming, I mean it was a bit obvious. I remember we were looking for somebody to accompany one part of the thing, and this totally patronizing lesson that Aiden was giving Helen. I thought, oh okay Paula, even though I was getting the vibe, because I do try to give people a chance. So I then had a conversation with Aiden about, oh so you're a musician then, you know like a properly trained musician, and having a conversation that didn't make any sense to me. No, Aiden was completely self taught but had the confidence to just try anything out, then when he had done that was it, he could do that, so he was then a specialist at that. I will now tell everybody, camera and history, that I do not play the electric bass guitar. However, I toured with Banner as a bass guitarist at one point throughout the Criminal Justice show, and I learned that from Aiden Jolly. So there we go. I know how to play the guitar. Did you hear that, I know how to play the guitar. He knew how to bang a drum. That doesn't make you a drummer, doesn't make you a guitarist. He was short of a bass line . . . I felt, I can do that. So I just said, ya well I play the bass, I could do that. You do? I got my Suzie Quatro bass with my rainbow strap, and every night in Criminal Justice I was the bass guitarist. So thank you, Aiden, for that. I could not believe this patronizing thing. Helen tried to tackle it all the way through that tour. In terms of what you learn, I learned so much about racism through touring with Helen. We went to Denmark on tour and we were late getting off the boat. She and I were in a cabin together and we were having a good old natter and we'd missed the call to get off. Did you come to Denmark? So they'd got off and we were getting off on foot rather than getting off on the van. As we approached, this is to come back into England, as we approached customs and the passport thing she started getting really antsy. What's the matter? She said, I've got to go through customs. I said ya well we all have, you've got your passport. I had no concept that every single time that woman went in and out of the country she was treated in the way that she was treated. They were horrible to her. That was a real eyeopener, as was performing in

Lancaster. My family are from Lancaster, my mom's family, so I had cousins and people in the audience. The audition piece that I'd done, the woman that, was she called Betty? I don't know, I can't remember now. Anyway, she basically talks about wrecking the machines. It was storytelling with a lot of physicalization of it and being angry. I had conversations with people at Lancaster about how it made them feel uncomfortable – an angry black woman. No, this is a story about the looms, this is a story about us breaking machines to give people jobs. All they could see was an angry black woman. You'd walk around afterwards, you know that thing, the lovely thing I loved about Banner shows is how you would interact with the audience and the audience tended to be, I don't mean preaching to the converted because there was a lot of education went on around the specific issues, but more or less you knew how you could converse with people. I would see that Helen was not included in those conversations. Lots of times people would talk and not talk to her, they would cut her out. Nobody went up to her afterwards and said, you have got the most amazing voice I've ever heard. Because she did have, she was a stunning singer. She was totally isolated. We went to the very white working-class areas, especially up north, and she was very often cut out of that loop. I didn't appreciate how difficult it was for her, or I gained an appreciation of it, let's put it that way.

Q: Wasn't the theme of the show imperialism and racism?

PB: I was going to say, it always is isn't it? It was about capitalism and what was wrong, and that you would think if we were the company that we said we were that there would be some living of the politics, not just talking about them or doing a show about them. But I didn't see much evidence of that. I think it took a lot of the tour for Helen to articulate it herself, because it was her lived daily experience of life. It wasn't any worse in Banner, but the fact that it could've been possible for her to be part of a company that took it seriously expected it, to know that further to being ? within the company to know that we were touring with a black woman that was going to be an issue that needed some support. That's what I would've liked to have seen. In fact, borrowing from that experience when we then went on tour with Redemption Song, so touring the same base with Leon and Ferman and then Nazneen, the whole show had, it was so obviously going to be coming up with some of those same things you'd have thought that again we would've learned. This is probably a

good moment to say my little paragraph really. Whether it is racism, sexuality, different religions, whatever it was, the thing about knowing the right things to say means that Banner often would feel like a comfortable place for anybody. There is a genuine warmth and a genuine acceptance and inclusivity, but it has to go beyond that. Unless you try and walk in the shoes of whoever it is that you're bringing in, then it's never going to be real. One of the things is we always were touring on the first week of July, the idea that having that Saturday off to go to Pride events for any of the gay and lesbian members of the company, for instance. If you think it through, if you say, okay, ya we accept everybody, we're a really lovely warm socialist company, international, lets all join hands and be happy and work together and struggle against imperialism and all of that. How do we need to do that differently for you is the bit that I think would often get missed off. For instance, I remember challenging that at one point and saying, as standard, what dates were there, if you've got a mixed company, mixed in lots of different ways, what dates would it be good to avoid gigs on? What dates really matter? I remember particularly we had Fred by this stage and I remember Dave, Fred and I were in Birmingham in between one gig and another, I can't remember. Oh maybe it was First of May Band. I've already said that I follow Pagan traditions, and there is within the black churches quite a lot of literally verbally anti-witch type stuff. We were sitting right next to a shop that had things in the window about what they were going to do to witches. It was within a black Christian context, and there's part of me intellectually that can understand that. Coming in here and we will exorcize, you know really heavy, quite scary words reminiscent of the witch burnings, in a window in Birmingham, and we were in a café next door. I was completely flummoxed by this. I was thinking, shit, you gotta be careful where you are. I don't really use those words particularly, but I just said, First of May, Pagan this, la la la. Have I now got to be careful in my own country of what I say about my religion because it rubs up against that? I remember being very scared, but I thought, I've got to settle this. Frank could see I was bothered and he said, what's the matter? We had a good chat and then he said, should we go in and talk to them? I said, well I would do, would you come with me? To actually go to their vicar or whatever and say, hello I'm a witch, I want you to know those words and in that context, in this country there's a tradition and that's rubbing against that –it's information sharing, it's something. It mattered to me a lot. Dave came in and short shrift is even too big a word for what we got. It was a complete nonissue, absolute nonissue, despite the evidence of

emotional disturbance that it was causing me. I had that on lots of occasions, and this is what I mean about going the extra thing. We were in Bristol, we'd broken down, we were on another gig. We got to Bristol and the comedian who was on before or after us, whichever way around it was, the introduction or the thank you Banner that was la la la, the summary of what we'd done or the introduction to us was the most sexist thing I've ever heard. I challenged that man right there and then onstage as the entertainer as the woman entertainer that was coming up, and I got a bollican. I got an actual bollican from Dave for that. How could I embarrass that man?

Q: On stage?

PB: As soon as we went off. I was what are you doing, you're representing Banner. It's kind of like, no no, I'm a woman who has just had a very sexist thing.

Q: It was at a conference.

PB: Conference was it? That's right, it was the after conference entertainment thing. He was really genuinely pissed off with me because I'd embarrassed people. I remember my first encounter with the sea of testosterone that can be a Banner tour, and it was the FBU gig up in Sheffield, which was great. I loved the gig, it was the Sweat Shop gig. Dave said right at the beginning, blah blah, it's Banner here and we've got a new member, which got everybody laughing about there being a new member. Then he said, Paula has come to play with us. The one comment followed by the other had all of this raucous la la la and I said something like, enough already with your willy jokes. I said, I was brought up in the rugby club so there's nothing you can throw at me that will throw me off. I felt completely one of the lads at home, I am not actually sensitive to a lot of that stuff because it goes over my head and this was clearly, as I say, a sea of testosterone. You can swim in that if you need to. But what that man did was very different, and I wasn't having that. I think it might've been, apart from it being a sexist thing that he was saying, it was something about our material. Can you remember? Whether it was a comment about political correctness or something, or now we've ticked all the boxes and done all the right things, just something that was completely fuck off, I'm not having this. I know I'm an outspoken person but I actually

thought it was alright in Banner. It was, oops sorry, am I meant to keep my mouth shut? I think my version of what activism and inclusivity is in drawing people from different cultures in is different, and it might be because obviously as a woman, as a lesbian, I'm already several notches down in that hierarchy. The other example of this is Leon and Ferman were obviously, I don't know, let's think of it as hierarchy for a minute. They are black African men, they are asylum seekers. There's lots of things in there. Where did I sit above or below anybody? Nazneen was very well to do, she was Muslim and from a very well to do family. Her belief of where she sat in the hierarchy was certainly above these men, and she would speak to them as if they were her servants. She would not share a dressing room with me because I wasn't a real woman, quote unquote. So of course we would arrive at a place and there would be the female and the male separated spaces, which for her she wouldn't have me in there; I was only half a woman. It's absolutely ridiculous to have that going on in the company. So she had her expectation of where she would be placed, watching Leon try to overturn that, and how can I be put down by this woman. But she was so absolutely sure of her place in the world, poo-pooed the idea of racism. Somehow she'd managed to get by without being on the end of it, and well if people call you names they're just ignorant. No idea of structural racism. We were directed by Armani with an awareness of all of those issues and power frickin analysis of everything. That was mind-blowing in terms of how we all fitted into the, well I'll go back to hierarchy, but you know how all of those issues, including veganism, because he was vegan, I was vegan, but the food issues and how all of that works was fascinating. When Nazneen left in the middle of the tour and we ended up with a Nigerian woman, Fumi, instantly the thing with men was completely different. She was physically a very strong, beautiful tourer to Leon it didn't make any bloody difference because they treated her, both Leon and Ferman, had a way of treating her as an African woman that was way lower down. She just used to ignore it. But the sexism that was coming from them towards her was appalling all the time. She said, well at school you try walking across the lunch, from the queue where you're get your dinner to where you're sitting. She said, the cat calling, the sexual comments all the time, and she'd become inured to it, but for me it was a complete shock. Then of course what did we do, we toured the same place again. So now we've got Fumi. I remember Grindleford in Darbyshire, I remember we got out, we were going to Sheffield for a gig and we stopped between Manchester and Sheffield for a walk. She walked from Surprise View down Paddley Gorge over all these rocks with her

rucksack on her head. That was her way of carrying things. I just thought, embracing of the cultures and including them in what we're doing is great. But that is one of my images, that's how different her culture was. Their dynamic was exclusive to them, we couldn't affect it whatever we said, because they had set ways of working. Then the ultimate in how we weren't really appreciating how different people were is when Leon went to dinner with Dave and Joyce. I don't know if you know this story, but anyway the tape won't know the story so I'll tell it. Leon didn't look at Joyce once. Joyce was most upset about this. But in Leon's culture that's the equivalent of the chief's wife, and you certainly don't, I mean that would be against all of the rules. But Katherine in Leon's culture would be the daughter of the chief and would be offered. So Leon's expectation is that he was going to be introduced to at least Dave's daughter and that this would be part of the deal. I remember this conversation with Leon and saying, Leon, it doesn't work like that here, and having to just try and make some sense of these expectations. Ferman, because he was married to somebody for some time and had lived in Norwich, he had realized that there were whole sways of expectations coming from his culture that weren't working here. Leon hadn't actually done a whole lot of that unpacking at this stage. But that was all on tour, all of that going on. Then we would go on stage and we would do the show, and of course it was very real because it was about asylum seekers. My job at the end of Act I was to say, we have two people in the company who are both asylum seekers and we're trying to raise the funding for la la la, and that breaking the fourth wall thing, this is real and these people are real asylum seekers. I thought in my head, and apart from being asylum seekers there's all this stuff going on. Fascinating.

Q: What show was that?

PB: That was Redemption Song.

Q: Leon and Ferman from refugees from the Ivory Coast, Fumi was from Nigeria, and before that Nazneen was British born.

PB: Yes.

Q: Was there a space at all to talk about that?

PB: I was the rehearsal manager on tour, so we had...

Q: What was a rehearsal manger?

PB: Well keeping the show working on tour, so rewriting it if somebody couldn't come, all sorts of things like that. There were performances when one or another of the characters wouldn't turn up, so then we had to adapt it. I'd be in the bus writing it differently; and then last night Nazneen was singing out of tune, right okay, well we need to practise that song. Nazneen was always singing out of tune, which is part of the reason we were quite glad when she left. But anyway, coming up with devices for keeping the show accurate, I had the book backstage so as we were going through, if something went wrong you'd make a note of it there and then, because by the end of the show you might've forgotten. Then we'd look at it and say, ya you forgot to do that didn't you, that bit didn't work. So when we'd got in we'd be ready to do a bit of rehearsal and know what we needed to be keeping fresh. And the tour manager bit involved in arrival checking in with whoever the person was who had booked us, and what the parameters were for refreshments were, etc., and who was staying where; that kind of billeting thing all needed to be arranged each time. So at some point during that we may or may not have times when we could all sit together. I don't think there was a dedicated space, there might've been opportunities to have some conversations. But it was very much, I always felt on tour that we were a family, whoever the people in that group were at the time. There was a new dynamic each time and you had to make it work one way or another. But I don't ever remember having a proper sit-down meeting as such, it was more survival meetings. I can't remember ever bringing this. This is my post-Banner analysis. That thing I've just told you I don't think I've, did I maybe write it, I may have written a letter. I might've written a letter, because there was the Banner women's group as well at some point when I was there. I did try and raise some of these issues, and it led to there being some meetings with the other women in Banner at the time. Ya I think it was letters. Whether or not I said the race things and stuff as well, I don't know. But I've said them now, so there you go.

Q: Have we spoken about three different shows?

PB: No. At the end of Sweat Shop I then did Criminal Justice and I was involved in researching for that one as well. Then after that it was Redemption Song.

Q: With all these issues that you were talking about.

PB: Ya.

Q: When you talk about hierarchy, are you talking about a sort of power hierarchy?

PB: I think when I say hierarchy I mean I think I'm kind of referencing the idea that a white middle-class able bodied heterosexual man is at the top of that hierarchy, and a black lesbian asylum seeker would be at the bottom, especially if she had a disability. The intersectionality of all those things really – class, race, ability, sexuality. In Banner the hierarchy in Banner, while we're talking hierarchies, I experienced a creative hierarchy, which is one of the things that, I mean my own personal journey as an artist through Banner is different and came up against that hierarchy, so that's probably an interesting thing to bring in. But I haven't answered the question, have I?

Q: I'm going to ask for a quick break – my computer's frozen. . . .

You talked about being a tour manager and rehearsal manager. Did that function exist in ever show you were involved in?

PB: Ya basically. Once you're out, somebody has to be the liaison between the touring company and who you are going to – the route and the practicalities of where you're performing and where you're staying, and be in touch with the office as well because if there's changes to the gigs or they've been canceled. – so that home base and where you're going. When Dave was on tour, which he wasn't in Redemption Song, so that was a very interesting thing because he was busy doing the next show at the time, getting stuff ready for whether it was Free For All, but he had that tour out. Then of course after Redemption Song there was the making of the CD, so that happened before Free For All and I was

involved in that. I probably did what Dave would have done on the other shows. With Criminal Justice and Sweat Shop, I wasn't aware of those functions because I was not it.

Q: This is the first I've heard of someone in the show who would go over things and rewrite if necessary.

PB: You never know, it might have been just a Paula thing, because basically I was in charge. What do you do if Ferman's not going to arrive? So I had quite a few different versions of Redemption Song.

Q: Were there other shows where performers didn't turn up?

PB: I don't think so. But like if there was nobody to introduce, like with Redemption Song obviously Ferman's character as the African storyteller, if you haven't got that what's the premise that we've got here? So it was, okay right, well we'll say, hello, this is a story about la la la. There were all sorts of things that needed redone actually.

Q: How did that work with the actuality and the videos. Did you have videos or slides?

PB: Video was Free For All, but prior to that it was slides. We just sorted it, didn't we, ya. By then the technology was pretty nifty. Sweat Shop was carousels but by Redemption Song...

Q: We had slides as well.

PB: But with computer control of that, whereas Sweat Shop it was almost turning them, press a button, this is now where you click it. Well you had to adapt.

Q: So the shows were redemptable.

PB: That show was. I wouldn't have thought of canceling because a performer didn't turn up, that's just not in my lexicon. It's a brand new thought right now, is that was I was meant

to do? But I'd spend the journey working out how to do it, which is great because for me that was another cauldron and what I've done since – the show must go on.

Q: Could you talk about how the shows were put together?

PB: Sweat Shop had happened by the time I got there, so I was just presented with the script and that was that. That was a scripted show to learn and reproduce. Criminal Justice, I was one of the researchers with Stuart and Dave. I was really excited to be involved in developing that show and to be part of this collective process. The three of us sat and decided which of the groups that were affected under the Criminal Justice Act we would do. I had my training on how to use the whatever it was; it wasn't a reel-to-reel but, I'm just thinking, because I've got a Tascam now and you have to keep learning the new kit, don't you. But it was a black dats tape recorder. We had the list of things: there were squatters, there were homeless, there were animal rights protesters, there was the Exodus collective, there was trade unionists, there were Irish people who'd been affected by the PTA, there were reclaim the street people, there were football supporters, gypsies, loads and loads, an amazing array of groups. So who are we going to do? We definitely tried to give one another things that would be outside our comfort zone deliberately, and I loved that. That was probably when I got completely hooked on the interview thing, and I know since then it doesn't matter what I'm going, sometimes it's been so long since I did the interviews when I'm doing my own shows now I'll think, I am not in the least bit interested in this subject anymore. Then I'll listen to the interviews and it all comes back and it's just great. I love actuality and that whole really hearing people's stories. I did the gypsies, so I went off to meet Peter Mercer, who had a gypsy council, at his site in Peterborough. I was in his caravan and he told me loads and loads of fascinating stuff about the lifestyle of the gypsies. Then I said, would it be possible to speak to your wife? I'd got a nod when I came in but there'd not been a word uttered by his wife. They'd given me a cup of coffee when I arrived, and I'd put it down on the floor and sorted the bits out of how we do it, unobtrusive, this that and the other. Then he talked to her and she said she'd talk to me. So then she said, we'll have to throw that away when you've gone. I thought, what's she talking about? She said, your hygiene is terrible, she said; the floor is for animals. I'd just put the coffee cup on the floor. She just opened up and said loads of stuff. I just was personally interested, regardless of

whether things got in the show or not. I loved the interviews. I went to a homelessness hostel in London at one point and met two lads from Colby who'd been living in packing containers up in the Black Hills up behind the factories, which I didn't know, but there was a whole load of people living up there. I felt very at home in any of the kind of peace campy type environments, animal rights people. I didn't get to do the football supporters, although that was meant to come to me but somebody else did it in the end. I was down in London and I had a couple of days' interviews with all sorts, from the lighthouse people to the homeless centre to the road protesters who went out to Wanstead and met the lollypop lady from Wanstead, Jean, she was amazing woman. I was completely passionate about every single subject and came back and thought, this is all going to get in, this is great. Then it's all Dave's stuff, it's Dave's stuff, because he's completely and utterly passionate about all his stuff and he makes the choices. I remember having a battle of wills – there were several of those, which I'm sure several of you will have witnessed – but this one to get the lollypop lady from Wanstead. I'd even written a song, I'd been allowed to write a song. [sings] It was a ballad about her, didn't get in. I was mortified. We had to sing, sweet standing chestnut tree and sing about the bloody tree instead of the woman that got these kids out of school and marched them to the chestnut tree and surrounded the chestnut tree with these kids from a junior school. They made a big circle around the tree, and I thought that was much more important. But anyway, I remember the battle and thinking, I've done all of this and where are these interviews going? Is there anything at all? But actually I now understand that the small print is, this is my company and I'll do what I want. That's fine, it's his company – he's built it up, he's done it. We are all players, we are all accessories to his desire. If that was written in big, this is my thing, you can come and play and if there's something I don't want to do you can't do it, I'd be fine about that. But because it wasn't big print I never got that, so I got quite frustrated during Criminal Justice. The songs are wonderful, I really rate Dave as a songwriter. I did yesterday in trying to find him from arts and what have you come across a song he'd written for Ailin Curdy and was moved by the lyrics and completely unmoved by the music, because it's the same. When you are a musician, I'm a different sort of musician and I think that there is what I would've wanted for Dave in his own development would've been musical development so that he could take this amazing creative energy that he's got and do something different with it. And it didn't and doesn't, apparently well it's the same now. Even now I've managed to work out that for

Banner it is a suitable medium for singing the sorts of songs that are sung. It doesn't interfere with the words that are being sung, and it creates a mood and an atmosphere on which a ballad telling important lyrics can be conveyed. Therefore it works, so therefore why change it? But it was frustrating as a musician because the other thing is, okay I accepted that creatively this was Dave's thing. Stuart was meant to be writing Criminal Justice so actually it was Stuart who should've been in a way choosing what got in and what didn't. But my experience of working with Stuart was that he understood the big print, so he would always take second place or follow Dave's creative lead or know what he was being told to do. But it was a fascinating show, that one, and it had moments of absolute meaning that have never left me. I played Anette McNulty at one point and she was sitting on the front row at one of the gigs. I'm welling up now thinking about it. There was a scene where I was wearing a white all-in-one prison outfit. The Ballad of Anette McNulty I think is one of the brilliant versions of exactly what I'm talking about, the simplicity of the accompaniment to allow this brilliant ballad to be sung, and was very effective. But in rehearsal Dave Dale was incapable of intimidating anybody. He's the nicest person, we all know this, you could ever wish to meet. I had to teach the man how to intimidate me, which was really funny, because I don't have a problem with intimidating people. So we'd spent ages in rehearsal with me trying to be scared while they intimidated me. But the positive aspect of the sexist Banner is that they take those things seriously, so they don't want to be horrible to the women. So helping them be horrible to me was quite fun, showing them how to be horrid. But in the actual performances, a bit like Leon would get really upset doing the show, I would have to debrief from that all the time. In order to convey the emotion of fear and intimidation that I was experiencing I had to let myself do that, then sit in a van to go to wherever you were going with the person that had made you feel like that. For me it was one of the most real in terms of acting. My acting training, a lot of the time it would be storytelling with Banner, so there were moments when you became an actress as opposed to a storyteller, and that was one of them. This particular night we were at the British Legion somewhere in Birmingham and terrorists were next door having their meeting, gathering, what have you. The nods from you three mean you were all there. I was absolutely locked in that fear because it suddenly started happening. There was the shouting and all the rest of it and that moment of a company being real and the bloke undoing the speakers and then somebody like Dave and Kevin and what have you calmly plugging them all back in, and we carried on as if

nothing had happened. That's really scary stuff. I really ? Banner, I think it's wonderful, I think all these topics that have been done needed done and needed exposed. The prevention of terrorism now, listening to all of this rewrite of what can we do to defeat terrorism and knowing I can hear the actuality of its not known, it should be known that the Irish people were blah blah blah, the bit that goes on the CD before the Anette McNulty thing. We were there, we did it, we've been part of a real movement that has really tried to bring things out and challenge things. That for me was one of those moments, as was the anti-gypsy feelings all the way, every bit. You'd be there in a room and the joy of the criminal justice act was because we have such a vast breadth of people represented in that you might have trade unionists sitting next to gypsies sitting next to football supporters, who would not normally be in a room together, all being targeted by that one act and having to make common cause with each other, which they wouldn't do. They'd watch the show, tick tick tick, ya ya ya, oh well I think that about gypsies anyway. You could feel the up and down of the audience responses. I remember doing the bakers' union and it was Sweat Show, and Sweat Shop had one message so you could tell when a whole audience, and that's what I love about touring trade union audiences, they have something in common. All those firefighters have something in common and tended to react in bulk. Everybody would laugh or nobody would laugh. I remember one in Norwich that was an ordinary theatre, so it was members of the public. I couldn't perform because there was no response coming back. There'd be the odd person who found something funny or was touched by something, and the vibe coming back from the audience was so different than what we were used to. But with Criminal Justice, because you would have people from all those groups, it's almost like I've got a picture here of coloured lines going up the screen. You'd know where the gypsies were sitting because they'd react to that bit, and the trade unionists. It was like this the whole time and quite difficult to perform in. As usual, I was polyfiller, I have always been polyfiller and always will be – every show I do, I do a million things. I started as, good evening ladies and gentlemen, and I'd demonstrate the police officer. Then I'd go backstage and change and I was on and off like a yoyo the whole time with lots of different things. Very often other people would have one set character all the way through or one set role. Because of being a multi-instrumentalist, there was that going on as well. That's when I realized that polyfiller is Paula filler. Criminal Justice act was a fascinating show to be part of on tour.

Q: How long did it tour for?

PB: I think most of them toured for half a year. There'd be half a year preparing it and half a year touring it. But there may have been lots to it, I think there was part one and part two.

Q: One of the reasons for doing this project is that I think we've all been creators in some capacity or other. I understand about the creative hierarchy, I understand how much people have kicked against it and not felt that they were going anywhere. But I think there needs to be recognition of the role of everybody in either an overtly creative form or in facilitation form to allow those shows to go out. Those shows would've have happened without the whole army of people. Some of the battles were quite great and quite difficult and quite vocal and quite open, like you researching and not being able to use that material in the way that you thought politically or creatively was necessary. That's part of the motivation for me.

PB: Being aware of that army, there was always a solid admin base. I did tour organizing actually, I think I probably did tour organizing for that show. I'm thinking about it now. But that in itself is a really tricky thing and matching then all of those bits together. One thing about the creative process is that I took until the end of Criminal Justice to realize... I'll just say it. I thought when I moved to Birmingham to do Sweat Shop, that was it. I went very quickly so I hadn't got a chance to wind things up here and all the rest of it. You were living here at the time, weren't you? But was it going to be a permanent move or not was not really on the agenda, because it was just go and get on with the show. But then of course you do the tour and that's it. I have, to my detriment, I wasn't aware of that. The thing about paying national insurance, the years that I was with Banner are not counted towards my pension, and I can't do anything about it. I've just found out. Basically my whole life was Banner but because there were these moments when you were paid, when I was doing the research for Criminal Justice I was paid then, but then you wait while it's being written, then you go on tour, then you're being paid again. They want complete years for national insurance, so they don't count. I was so pissed off when I heard that. I was really, really pissed off, because they don't tell you. So anybody who's not quite there yet, check it out. If

it's within the previous however many years you can actually make it up, but they're way too long ago for me to be able to count them. The difficulty of, it's not, I've been self employed since 1998 when I left Banner and I know the ropes. I think it fell somewhere in between, so just as an employer I think there are some things that possibly I don't think we were all learning together actually. Going up to Birmingham for meetings when I was on the steering group or whatever you call it, core group for a while as well, there was a management hierarchy. Also, the way that having a voice makes you believe you've got one. Then when you find you haven't, because that happened, there were other examples of the same thing. I thought I had a say in the visual thing but actually Kevin was doing that. Kevin, with his ability to be last minute, which we're all good at but I think he, there were knock-ons. I remember we, I don't know how we ever managed to speak again, because we completely clashed about the cover for the Redemption Song CD. I thought I was the creative, I mean I was the musical director on the, I was making sure that the actual quality of the product that we're recording was right. I would expect to have some say in what it's going to be wrapped in. I actually had the conversation and there was no feedback about the conversation because it was, it's not your decision to make. That thing I found on several occasions in Banner. There's a disjunct between, it's the same thing. You're all welcome, actually that's not true. We are all welcome but there is a set pecking order in lots of things, and if that was not as hidden then life would be much better. Maybe I'm saying something that other people have said. So that was one of the things that you did ask at some point was about how it worked politically at the time. I remember feeling that Criminal Justice was a very current show, particularly with the Exodus collective. One of the most hilarious moments was going to raves with Dave. I just absolutely loved the fact that we were all completely transported into this other world. Where did that all go? How could a massive scene like that just disappear?

Q: It's still there, it's part of the ? circuit.

PB: Oh thank god for that. But to suddenly be visibly part of that. The time that led to one of the songs in the show was the red banner van song. It was absolutely true, every single bit of that. I went past there the other week, I was traveling and I went past there and thought, oh my god, this is where we led the bloody convoy. Then the Banner van got stuck

in the mud at one of the raves, remember? Dave in his maroon shirt, I can just see him. Neotenist, I remember that word on the way to Denmark. Neoteny is the ability to continue to be childlike throughout your life. I remember we were doing drama games at the side of the road and having fun, and I think he's still like that. That's the essence of being a creative person. But we must've been completely, we must've stuck out like sore thumbs really, yet stepping into this other world and being able to make political sense of it. The conversations with the people down in Luton that had taken over that old people's home and were living in it, they accepted us. That was what was really great. We were part of articulating that struggle, and they could see that. I loved it. It was the same with the road protest people. It was a great time, I loved that. I can see us all on the, we went on a reclaim the streets thing in Birmingham, and the speakers arrived and it all kicked off; I remember that. Also there was the jubilee campaign, the pay back the debt thing. I remember going with Leon and Ferman and we just sang stuff in the streets basically as part of that. That and Campsfield detention centre, I remember going. Because of the show we were doing, your awareness of those things is absolutely huge. I can think of times standing in a queue and hearing people talk bollocks about immigration and asylum, and just not being able to keep my mouth shut. To be able to say, I'm actually in a show at the moment, la la la, and back it up with facts, was great. I miss that. As soon as you step away you're not actually there. There you go. Criminal Justice. Redemption Song was different, we talked a bit about Redemption Song. The making of the CD was a huge thing. Having to become a different Paula and work with Aiden in the recording studio was fascinating. I learned absolutely loads from that. There was a huge power struggle during that that I have still never recovered from. I was in the Redemption Song piece, we'd worked with Maria Tolly, who was another fabulous creative influence. We'd done loads and loads of work on the music and loads of work on the singing. I used to open the show with an a cappella piece. I can sing; I'm not a singer. Dave is a singer. We were in the middle of putting the Redemption CD song together and we were including other songs to fill it out, so it included songs from Criminal Justice as well and Women on the Line and a few other things. I was informed that I wasn't going to be singing that song. There was no discussion about it. I've never recovered from that, never. Dave hadn't been part of Redemption Song, he was barely part of the CD. He needed to be doing some stuff, and singing that particular song suited his voice. But actually I had done it at 60 gigs, I'd opened that show. Now I'm sorry, I may not be the world's best singer, but I could

sing that song. I remember a conversation with Stuart that just put the knockers on it, and he kind of intimated that it was a very weak opening to the show. I would never let anybody go out if that was what was happening. I actually know that I have lots of different people, and I'm not exaggerating that, would come up and say, that must have been a difficult opening to the show, well done. On tour when you do that every night, my voice was fine actually, it was a strong enough voice to do that and it suited the story of the piece. But it felt like we'd done something, a whole bunch of us had done something, that he wasn't part of directly and Stuart wasn't part of, and this wresting back the control over something. There were all sorts of battles but I have still not managed to rub out the, oh well I shouldn't sing solo. Which is crazy, because the other thing is I was permanently as a vocalist at a disadvantage in Banner, because I am a tenor and Dave would always sing in the key that suits him, too high all the time. Any woman who's got a voice that, it would be a disadvantage if you were an alto or lower. There was no room for manoeuvre on that. There's a lot of songs where I would be singing low harmony, which is fine and that's how I did it. I am a good harmony singer. But if you then had a piece where, there was a couple of songs in Free For All. Dave and I did the first part of Free For All before it became the final product; we did a short tour with that. I can feel it as I'm talking now, it was always singing across my break, and that is not a way to feel confident. That's what I mean about the musical development. The other thing is, and I noticed this in the Allan Curdy piece, exactly the same, the phrase will carry on until Dave decides he wants to go on to the next one. When you're trying to play along with that, it's impossible. Time after time after time I would look like a prat because I'd be ready with the bit that fits in between the lines, and the new line would come in. That happened on numerous occasions. It was never comfortable to be part of it musically or vocally if it was with Dave, and there was no room for maneuver on it. I just think some people are dead to a thing, you cannot get that particular point across. I think that's a great shame because I do think, I mean it isn't just Dave. I've been working, I've recently had to do stuff and Barb Younger has been involved in it. She will only appear if you say, internationally acclaimed jazz singer Barb Younger, before her name. You cannot have a musical conversation with her. She'll describe things in very vague terms and say, oh I'd like something that's a bit this, a bit that, a bit the other. There's no sense of phrase length or rhythms. He's not alone, but it was a frustration for me. I had a clash with Dave Dale at one point when we were doing Avante Pablo at one point, that was

part of Criminal Justice. There were protest songs at one point, just little short clips from them. A chord is a chord is a chord, and you can do them different ways, as we know. But at the end of the thing da da ta da is an absolute, and it was going the wrong way around. I remember saying, you need it to be a G there or a D, and I've never heard Dave Dale do that ? thing but he did, and I remember then going into complete meltdown. We were with Cindy that time, Cindy was the director. I don't think Cindy has ever been used. She was a drama person; she wasn't political either. Dark hair, quite chubby, very well spoken. Cindy.

Q: On what show?

PB: Criminal Justice. We got to choose who we wanted as director, and it was her. I remember Dave Dale saying, I feel we'll be in a safe pair of hands. On this day I couldn't play it because if he was going to play that chord what I was doing would not make sense. I tried to say, try again from a different angle, and it broke down into chaos. I remember having a tizzy, which were notorious by then no doubt, Paula's tizzies. I remember having a go at the director and saying, you're the director, you're meant to sort these sorts of things out. She just carried on talking to the men. Then I was pissed off because I thought, this is that other thing about women will get emotional. I'm a performer, this is a performer getting emotional. Whether I'm a woman or a man, I'm not premenstrual, this is because this is fucking wrong and you're in charge, and can you not do something to sort this out? I remember having a little go at her. Then there was the fabulous tizzy in the back of the red van. I had a back that went out on various occasions. The problem with the Criminal Justice tour was those big boxes. We had massive 6 foot by 6 foot boxes that we had all of the stuff in, and they were very heavy on the get-in and the get-out, and the loading was always a bit of an issue, as we can all remember. But I would take stuff that I could, if I had five journeys with just a mike stand in each hand, and that was as much a contribution. But you have to feel like you're contributing, it's a really difficult moment. I remember one place and Dave handed me the equivalent of a cigarette packet and said, here you go, take that. He was being kind, it was Dave Dale being kind, but it wasn't right. If was now and I'm 60 and there was an expectation that I might not be quite as fit and up for it as everybody else, but it was you know. So anyway Dave Rogers tried to sort of the squiggle between us, which I do think he does that stuff well actually, I think he's good at that. He found me. I was lying on the

seat actually having a tantrum. The only way as a performer I had to move through that to be ready to be in the right mood to go onstage and do whatever I had to do. So I was lying there actually with my legs in the air and having a good old scream when he came to say, Paula I don't think Dave really meant it like that. Oh dear me, we did have some laughs. Anyway there we go, the dynamics on tour.

Q: Were you in Free for All?

PB: Yes, there were two versions of Free for All. The first one was basically me and Dave. We'd started doing the interviews and I interviewed Tony Ben, which was one of my abiding memories. We went to his house in Holling Park and I remember he took this piece of paper and he said, have a look at this. I had a look and said, what's this? He said, that's what I'm allowed to say today. I said, what do you mean? He said, that's from labour party head office, so if any of my constituents get in touch with me about any of these things, that's what I'm allowed to say. Then he on film actually ripped it up and put it in the bin, got his pipe and, now what did you want to talk about? It was wonderful. I remember thinking at that moment, this is brilliant. I was at some union think afterwards and Tony Ben was there, and to be able to go up to him and say, hello. He was always interested in Banner, he really genuinely knew Banner and what we were on about. It was difficult, the first bit. A woman called Maggie that I'd met in Darbyshire...

Q: Maggie Ford.

PB: Maggie Ford, there we go, was directing that. There was a change of government in the middle of it so I went from having to be Tessa Jowell to being somebody else, some important person on whichever side it was. I remember having to change from a red to a blue or whatever way around it was, I can't remember which way. Oh it would be '96 wouldn't it when Labour got in, '97, Tony Blair.

Q: We were on the Sweat Shop tour when that happened, and we saw the headlines when we got off the ferry from Denmark.

PB: Did we already? Something had changed anyway, maybe it was within the parties or what have you. But I remember I had to change character. Also the one that I do remember with this is we went down to Unison, we had to do a sketch. I think it was something that had been written. Dave was playing, he sang Sauce Pan ?, I remember that, and he was being Nye Bevan. It was a conversation between Nye Bevan and Tessa Jowell or whoever I was being. It was just a little quirky thing that we were in. We were rewriting it on the train on the way down because Unison wouldn't let us say anything not very nice about Rodney Bickerstaffe. You couldn't do this thing without referencing the various whatevers, changes in policy or what have you. Then when we got there we actually went on with scripts in the end because they even vetoed what we'd rewritten it as. It was ridiculous. I remember thinking then, oh my god, belly of the beast, we really are in the belly of the beast here. Whatever we may be portraying as this socialist utopia, of course within it there's all the infighting and all the power struggles and all the rest of it. So that was one of the things. And interviewing my own dad for Free for All about the founding of the NHS, and him as a pharmacist, he'd become a pharmacist because of seeing the poverty and stuff when he was a delivery boy for a pharmacy, and that was what made him decide to be that. His stuff was included in one of the songs, which I liked. I did get to write a song in that as well – now I'm looking at my piano, because that's where the Dave songbook is – about the care workers. We're Not Going Back was part of that thing. It's acknowledged in there. I remember sitting up in Dave's attic and I'd finally got through to him that the melodic limitations of the songs did nothing to endear me to the music. I said I could have ten of those melodies every five minutes. You're using three chords, there are more exciting things you can do. He heard me, he actually heard me and said, well go on then, you write it. So I did, and that was that, done. There was another lovely moment of acknowledgement that I was maybe bringing something different to it was Dave and I also together we did the dockers gig when the Liverpool dockers went on strike. They were on the waterfront and invited us up to Liverpool. Dave and I went with the Banner van with all the stuff loaded in for whatever show we were touring at the time, which was probably Criminal Justice if it was '96. We had worked on the Liverpool dockers song using my answer phone. Dave rung up and said, can I sing it to you what I've got? He sang his song and then he said, I can hear wild fiddle in the background, can you do something? Based on that phone message I did something, so we did it by answer phone. I love that when I think about it now. It was kind of like, my part

your part, together it makes good stuff. There were moments like that that really worked. That song we played, it was the anniversary of the dock strike and there was a mass at the pier head. Were you on the decks? I think you were. I can remember playing my violin and thinking, is this being heard? Then somebody said, oh I couldn't hear the violin, and I had a tizzy. I remember having a go at you, and depending where you'd stand, you could hear the violin. But this person hadn't heard it, and it terrified me that when there's such a massive space to fill and you're playing what you can, and if it's not being picked up. So I remember that. We ended up getting arrested because basically we'd done whatever the gig was and we were all sitting at the pub and Dave and I were talking to the dockers' wives, the women at the waterfront. Somebody came in and the reclaim the streets people were there as well. They had actually squatted a factory, and that's where all of the people were staying. There was a lovely moment at the rally where the dockers were there, very smart, trade unionists, proud of the way they looked. Then the reclaim the streets people, and I remember one bloke with a pink tutu and hair in lots of different colours spiking up and what have you. The dockers' families coming along, and this was the refreshment store and they could have organic apple juice and a vegeburger, that's all there was. This lovely scouser accent saying, what have you got, and then this London accent saying, we've got this. Then him saying, do you want one love, do you want one love? Then this bloke behind him said, if that's what powers them to climb up those cranes I'll have three. It was lovely. That was one of the worlds colliding, which was what I experienced a lot during Criminal Justice, the set left and the crazy anarchist factions around it. That had gone on and I had been sworn to prevent Dave doing anything too radical because we had a gig and Joyce had said, don't let him get into trouble or what have you. We had gone on the picket the next day and there was just Dave with his guitar and we'd done some songs. We were walking away from the dock, the bit where everybody was amassed, and it looked as if quite a lot of the dockers were walking away from where the women had the big banner out and what have you; it looked like they were giving up and leaving. I remember looking at Dave and thinking, that's not right. Basically somebody had managed to saw through some of the railings and they were about to do a sit-in. In an absolute flick of a switch the railings went and all these dockers piled in and the reclaim the streets people piled in as well, and people started running as quickly as they could because they were going to go and take over places and climb things and basically have a sit-in. What do you think Dave did? It was, oh fuck, Dave, and he was in

before I could stop him. I mean it wasn't my responsibility really to stop him, but then I managed to, we can't get involved here, we cannot, let's get out of here. But what I did see, and I wrote about this in my book, was the riot police. We were just near a van and gloves on, run, and it was horrible. It was really scary. I'd seen them at Molesworth years before, but it was all these, the TSG, what do you call them, the screw turning on policing. They were up for a fight. That was nothing to do with, are these people breaking the law or what have you, it was fisticuffs. It was seeing these gloves going on, it's like torture devices – stick, gloves, and in they went. Horrible. Anyway, we somehow managed to curtail Dave's enthusiasm for getting any closer to the action. We were in the pub chatting about it all and somebody came in and said, the police are clearing the factory where they'd squatted. There was all sorts of people saying, oh do they need help? The reclaim the streets people have come to help the dockers, so there should've been a bit of, ya well I'll help. Some people just went dashing off. Well again Dave's instinct was to go to it. Well do you know where it is? No. Well we're not going to be much good then, are we? Does anybody know where it is? This bloke said, I do. Then Dave said, well I've got a van, if anybody wants to be taken we'll drive you there. So Dave and I plus this person who knew where it was and a couple of others went. The van was loaded so actually there's not an awful lot anybody could've done but being where the action was. The dockers' wives meanwhile just sat there and, what's yours, half a lager, can you get another round Mary? I left there thinking, is that it then, is that solidarity is it? Well I'm not impressed. I was a bit pissed off, actually, because they didn't even raise an eyebrow. Anyway we went, we drove around, this bloke didn't know where he was going and we didn't get to the action, and decided to give up and come back. Dave at the time was driving with screwdrivers the gear stick. We got back to just by the pub and we were arrested, not for any great climbing the tower, not for any saving people from being whatever, because the van was unfit for driving. We're at the police station and meanwhile back at the pub, by the time all of the histrionics had finished, the dockers' wives had managed calmly to find places for all the people to stay. So that's what they did, they did the work without the histrionics, which was brilliant. We were meanwhile down at the police station where the van was impounded and all the goods in the van. Dave and I got separated and the thing I was most worried about is my violin was at the time being fixed and I'd borrowed my ex violin teacher's priceless violin. I was thinking, there's no way I'm letting this out of my sight. So I had this violin like stuck to me, sitting in the cop

shop. Dave was doing a list of all the things that were in the van. We couldn't speak, because he was on one side of the thing and I was on the other. Then I watched the police being complete and utter bastards. I know they are, I have no doubt, never have I had any doubt, but what I witnessed then was the worst example of deliberate policing. They were absolutely horrible to all of us that were sitting waiting. They were obstructive. I asked to go to the loo at one point and they wouldn't even tell me where a loo was. I was trying to remember from all my legal training for nonviolent direct action or what your rights are and all the rest of it, and in the end I did the periods thing that we've done loads of times – well I'll just have to bleed everywhere then. Have you got a WPC, I need to see a WPC, I need access to a toilet. I mean I wasn't bleeding at all but you can often use that. They were absolutely being vindictive with anybody that was sitting there. We were all just waiting for vehicles to be processed and what have you. What they did is they were actually letting the tires down on these various vehicles, the kind of coaches, the reclaim the streets people have got all adapted vehicles. Loads of them had them tampered with so they couldn't even drive away, which was actually then they were getting into more trouble. It was horrible. Anyway then Dave appeared and, can we go now? He said, well now I've got to get all the stuff back. The bloke gave him the list and it was not our list. So a complete Banner van full of all the gear, no it wasn't that, it was I don't know, two chickens and a canary in a cage or what have you. No, this isn't ours. Yes it is, no it isn't, yes it is. It went on and on and on, deliberately misadventuring things. In the end we were told we could have it all back if we promised to leave Liverpool. We said, what do you mean, promise to leave Liverpool? We'll be going at some point. No no, you two are a threat and there is a threat of breach of peace from you. They'd actually heard us at the pier head. These are people that are making music, it was me and Dave, a guitar and a violin. But we had then a police escort out of Liverpool. It was completely nuts. Then you come back home, you come to Colby and try and tell anybody about that and it doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

Q: Did you have a lot of that happen?

PB: I think that's the one that I remember. It's quite a nice little story isn't it, one way or another. We were there, weren't we, on quite a few of the things. Campsfield, I do remember being at Campsfield and singing some of the songs from the Redemption Song

show. We are here because... across the fence at people on the inside, and somebody throwing a paper airplane over with, can you get into it for this person? That sort of stuff, just little moments of that. Also the hunger strikers. We were doing the Redemption Song show and they had just come off from their strike at Yelswood and they were in the front row. That's when you know you are in the real world.

Q: Given the contradictions that you witnessed and experienced in Banner, given all the difficulties and conflicts, what positive stuff did you take away?

PB: Creatively and training wise I have built the rest of my artistic practise on what I learned from Banner. I am a documentary activist and I use whatever form. It's been mainly drama, it's been mainly writing plays, and more recently doing that with music, as in the piece I mentioned earlier where I interviewed people and asked them for their musical memories. But that is my practise and I know that I learned it from Banner. So all of that went to form me. The reason I left Banner was because I had sweets in a pencil case. It probably makes no sense to anybody, but I had just a small cloth pencil case with me that had bits and pieces in. It was in between running up to the Free for All tour and I found a packet of sweets in my pencil case. I thought, I don't eat sweets, this doesn't make any sense. Then I suddenly had all of those times that we were at motorway services eating shite whilst on an endless interminable journey which would then end with an interminable get-in and an interminable get-out at the end, and the amount that you're actually doing your craft as a performer is that much, the rest of it is a lifestyle that is unhealthy. That pencil case with the sweets in was like the lightbulb when I thought, how long are you going to do this, Paula? You're not developing creatively. You are involved in politically something that you are very passionate about, but the other thing that frustrated me, I remember Dundee and the Timex workers during the Sweat Shop tour, and meeting those women. I remember talking to a man who'd never been to the theatre, and I loved the creating of theatres in working men's clubs that we did, how we would convert a building into a theatre experience for people who would, oh my god, if this is going to the theatre I would do it every week; why has nobody told me about this? I remember that at the Timex Dundee thing was when I was aware of that. But then I never knew, because we moved on, what impact we had. I remember that with Burord, and Burord means to stir up. The Dutch theatre company I'd been with did shows

about Nicaragua and Chile and what have you. You'd have massive halls full of refugees and the vibe would be there and everybody would be getting excited. You could see that you were having that impact right there and then. But what change did it make long term? So I decided on the back of my experience with Banner to come back to Colby and do something in one place. I formed Shout Youth Theatre and Colby Women's Stage Group, so I had two companies ever since. All of them documentary, all of them started with interview, and I've done probably about 70 plays that have all been performed, either about women's issues or about young people. The thing about it has been, because it's been here in my town, I've been able to see the impact and build up a name and a legacy. That's all Banner. In my CD I put who I was trained by, and I am proud to be part of that tradition. I think as a company, I mean I'm looking at you Dean, I'm looking at you Sammy, the fact that in the olden days people got into theatre through rap, by being there, sweeping up, making the tea, for Banner to have provided that way in for young people is just immense. That's one of the things, you just don't get it anywhere. The other thing is I wrote down some words here that I got this morning. Trainees, there you go, comrades, family and auditions. Right comrades, you two walked in and I gave you some soup and within five minutes it's real. The active existence of a bunch of people who understand socialism and are doing something within that world is amazing. I remember through the time of it knowing that I had a bunch of comrades somewhere. The family bit was from on tour there would be all these different families that we kept creating. Those bonds are you can't erase them, they are absolutely permanent. I don't think I've replicated it anywhere. I know all of the people in any company that I put together for any of the shows that I do. Shout has got that glue, but it isn't the same. What Banner had was a political analysis; however flawed, however it needed to be polished, it came from that world. Watching a political process and a creative process that works means that I actually used Dave as a mentor for a play I wrote called About Her, and that was payback, that was to be able to say thank you, but also for the arts council to be able to say, listen, I know Banner's had money from the arts council but as a company we've been a company that gets on and does. We're not bothered about accolades from the art for art's sake world. But to be able to bring those together and say out of all the people on this planet who I would want to speak to about honing my craft as a documentary theatre maker, I want to speak to Dave Rogers. That's how important it is really. I think the bit about hearing about your company is just, there's legacy straight away

that there is work to be done in community with culture and the way that it carries on. I work with Sammy sometimes now and we've got our own artistic background but I know we've got the Banner thing as well, and you know it's possible. It is possible to do real stuff about lifechanging matters against the political tide, against the political current, and get funded for it and make space for it in the world of the arts. If Banner can do a show about that, I can do a show about this and get money for it. So as an inspirational beam, that's what I got from Banner, a light shining. Musically for me to be a multi-instrumentalist and play everything from doing the First of May, I loved doing the First of May when I did that, because I think that the songs, I think it's important to have decent material and I get sick of what we listen to on the radio. I also think it's important that Dave is a song maker. I know there's others involved, but particularly him. When you look at Leon Russelson or Billy Bragg or any of the others that have bothered about getting a name for themselves, they weren't there on the dockers rally, they weren't there. The thing that makes Banner real is it's there, and that's what matters. Saltley Gate, I learned about Saltley Gate through the song; I wasn't there. But hearing it and hearing the reality, because if they weren't there they knew people that were there, because of documentary. Anybody can sit and write a song about anything, but if you've met a person, if you are only one or two steps removed from it, then you might as well have been there. I think that's the other Banner legacy that I've got from Banner. Organizing skills, models of organizing, the core group, all of that. I had a lot of that ways of organizing things because of all my nonviolent direct action history around the walk to Moscow and Greenham and all of that stuff, and women's organizing is very often like that. But seeing things like the core group and trying to do equal management. And I say trying to, I don't know that it ever worked, but that you can run a company differently, that's what I probably mean. You don't have to do it in the set way. The other bit is I'm now thinking who's going to listen to this. An act of translation that happens when you know that what you want to do is not what society would want you to be doing, and that you have a right to that money and you have the audacity to write it in code so that you get the money. That is why we got three quarters of a million pounds for the women's centre. I put that down to Banner, because that was one of the funding things that I did after Banner. I knew that what we wanted to do with the women's centre is not quite what the lottery community grant would want, so translated it. You can do that. The problem was that in translating it that became the reality. I remember feeling it's almost like creating a

Frankenstein, because this monster took over. No no that's not what we are, that's what we had to say we were in order to get the money to be this. But this is what we are. So I don't know if Banner has managed to retain its purity – Banner and purity doesn't go in the same sentence, does it – authenticity whilst having to fit into a world that tell us that we've got to be different. But I learned that from Banner as well. Also there was training from people around Banner, like I learned stuff from you. I remember coming on, what on earth were we having? There was some facilitation or something, all sorts of doing things differently. Banner, apart from creatively, is a massive skill base, the technical crew. Look at the amazing skills there are in that, and the visual stuff, the Kevin stuff, and then all the spinoffs. Telling Tales, I had some work with them at some point as well, and finding other musicians you might want to play with. It's a huge whirlpool of fascinating talents and it's a network that keeps together. I think holding onto contacts is a very important thing that I also learned from Banner. You don't forget these things. Archiving is the other bit, and you're doing it right now. To be able to say to Dave, have you got a tape of the steel show, when I was writing Women in Steel, and he found one eventually. That's really important. That's honouring art and culture as part of creativity, creativity is part of shaping society. And knowing that we're cultural workers, I know that from Banner. It probably shaped my career, in fact it did shape my career.

Q: What do you think Banner learnt from you?

PB: God, what did Banner learn from me? I don't know.

Q: Women's group, women's politics?

PB: Yes but you said learned, and I don't know that anything was learned. I probably affected Banner. I think I muddied the waters. I'm doing it with my hands again, this is Paula the dancer. But I think I upset the calm and was probably a thorn in there for the time that I was there, because as a lesbian and as a feminist I couldn't exist if I didn't go, hang on a minute. You have to be able to be as big as you are in order to perform. I think that I might've provoked some conversations that hopefully led to other conversations. Whether changes were then made as a result of it, I don't know, but there was an awareness raised

possibly during the time that I was there around women's issues. I don't really think that the lesbian thing raised any issues about gay agendas generally.

Q: You didn't just raise awareness, you also gave a momentum, impetus, encouragement to people like me who continued working within the company that was predominantly male dominated. Those conversations did continue, but they can't continue in a vacuum and they can't continue if you lose courage as an individual. I'd say that influence was enormous.

PB: Oh well that's good to hear.

Q: It's influence, it's encouragement, it's affirmation that you're not bonkers and that you're not a troublemaker. We still talk about those workshops, I still think about those two days that you managed to set up. That wasn't the women's group, that was to discuss sexism within the company and its implications in relation to the wider world.

PB: I'd forgotten that, but then I forget.

Q: There are minutes in the archives. I suspect you having those roles that you were describing that I hadn't quite, that awareness on tour, it must've been an enormous support and contribution to the company. Without the resources, without those people ready to do that, without people on tour having those capacities, it's very tough now I'm sure, very tough.

PB: I was just thinking, I think the other thing that might've been learned is that when you work with a classical musician it's different and that there is something about not all musicians are the same. I think that probably got learned. I know that the other experience I had with Banner, and I remember you being at auditions as well when we recruited new people, and developing those skills. That's huge to be able to say I've been on an interview panel and have listened to x number of people and choosing and honing your own artistic choice. I remember when we took Fred on and knowing that he represented a hugely different musical tradition. I think it's fantastic that he's still with the company. But it was one that it was easier to get your head around than my particular musical tradition.

Obviously, I've always been a folk musician so there is that, but it's very difficult when you also have those skills when you're working with folk musicians who don't necessarily want to have those skills. There was a bit of snobbery in as if you're trying to bourgeoisie blah blah blah over the proletariat blah blah blah, which is actually bollocks. It's a skill and if you learn it you can do it quicker and write more songs better. That thing. So I think that was probably something that was learned. And I have to say, because I am drama trained, that was different as well. My expectation around rehearsal, my expectation around content and putting it over, that conveying of an emotion. I remember struggling with that because the first one was storytelling and learning about storytelling and that you aren't being the character, you are describing something. Then when you get to parts of the Criminal Justice it had to be acting; we couldn't have told about Ed McNulty, it had to be properly acted. So I think being able to bring my performing arts training to the company might not have had any legacy but I think it certainly at the time raised some pointers.

Q: Anything else you want to tell us?

PB: I'll just had a look. [reads through list] Louise Williams, there's a woman. Louise Williams, she was one of those that got in. She's still around, I've got her number. . . . I've said all of this. It's clever this, you write down stuff in words on a bit of paper and then it's all in there. . . The only think I didn't mention that's written down here is the links with international groups.

Q: And the wonder bra.

PB: Okay I'll tell you about the wonder bra. The Turkish Kurdish workers in Dulston, I mean the interviews that we did. I remember going out when we did the interviews for the Ivory Coast and I remember doing gigs with the Kurdish workers. I know that my sense of international politics, I've got posters on my wall from them. Banner was a doorway into a world of international politics, and I've followed up several of those links. I went with a woman called Maya who was making a film and I took her there and we made another film based on contacts I'd made through Banner. The other thing is there's no preciousness about the contacts. Any work I've done since, people come to this town and they say, oh

well we need to get in touch with the community. Well go and see Paula. I'm expected to hand over all the contacts that I've made through restricting my life by choosing to work in Colby, and there's absolutely nothing comes back. They do a piece of work funded by the arts council and get well known for it, and they wouldn't have been able to do it if they hadn't actually had the community contacts. Somebody then said to me, start charging £10 for every contact you give them; that's how you do it. It just, I can't make myself do it. I have done it sometimes. I've said, what's your budget for these meetings? What do you mean? I said, well the people who you are drawing from in order to do your piece, what do they get out of it? Have you got a budget for that? Why should it be free? I would never have thought about that with Banner, and it's a different type of doing. But it did make me think one day, maybe I should get back to Banner. Did we ever think about should we be giving something or paying something or giving vouchers to or a book or whatever to whoever we interviewed? Apart from having their stories taken and told, especially the ones whose stories don't get in there, what do they get? I think that what I do now, because of those thoughts, is I always have a huge bit of the budget that is vouchers, and then I'll give vouchers of 20 quid or whatever to whoever I've taken their time up, because I value people's time. The wonder bra was just Theresa, it was when wonder bras had just come in, and a sign of women's liberation was the wonder bra. Joyce was very taken with them at the time, so the wonder bra got into the song. That was all. But I do remember the wonder bra line.

[END]