

1993

PATRICK CAULFIELD – RICHARD WILSON – LAKE DISTRICT
– RADIO SUSSEX – BERLIN – RIVERSIDE STUDIOS – *MESMER*
– PETER SELLARS' *THE PERSIANS*, SALZBURG – NEIL
KINNOCK – VIENNA – STEVE REICH – *SLEEPLESS IN*
SEATTLE – VIENNA – *MESMER* – BERLIN – HUNGARY –
PARIS – ARTS RALLY – FELIX AWARDS – CARIBBEAN

13 June

Quiet pleasure of preparing food for friends.

1pm Michael G., Christopher and Laura Hampton, Danny & Leila Webb, Jane and Mark and Rima and Lily.

The sun emerged and we spilled into the garden.

20 June

Patrick Caulfield [English painter] who says he hates painting but it's how he earns a living. 'The horror of walking into this small room. Important to do something. Doesn't matter what. Just something.'

21 June

Arrive home, switch on BBC2 – Pina Bausch.* *The Real Thing*. (After reading another article in *The Face* about Hot Young Things.) She has such a graceful determined truthfulness. And Robert Lepage† pays homage. Of course.

* German dancer and choreographer (1940–2009)

† Canadian playwright (1957–)

23 June

12ish Midland Bank to talk of possible house purchase.

1ish David Coppard [A.R.'s accountant] – movies, taxes, arrangements, expenses. How does he retain his charm?

4ish Belinda Lang & [her husband] Hugh Fraser – Lily's birthday. But she's sick. Apparently I upset Elaine Paige on Election Day. My casual cruelty again.

24 June

Finish Christopher Hampton's *Nostromo* script. How do you cram that book into a movie? Maybe he has . . . I don't know.

A morning on the phone – How few real conversations there are. Mainly a desire to present a moving target.

12 Gym. I'm not sure about all this.

4 Take Mum to Goldsborough Apartments. She's a brave soul. Feel myself *persuading* her. It's probably not the real answer.

25 June

→ The gym.

This is hard work.

pm Talk to Christopher of *Nostromo*, *Sunset Blvd* – Andrew Lloyd-Webber in tears some days ago. 'I'll postpone 6 months and bring in Hal Prince.' Trevor Nunn says I need 30 secs of dialogue in this scene. 'What about?' 'I don't mind.'

26 June

6pm Coliseum. *Macbeth* . . . A strange mixture of Argentinian Fascism & *Dr Finlay's Casebook*.

Peter Jonas,* David Pountney [opera director] & Mark Elder [conductor] all saying *au revoir* [to English National Opera]. A world I know little about, sitting among fanatical applauding Tories. Jonas made speech about the Arts & NHS. I wanted to cheer. The audience went a bit quiet. The quiet of dissent.

28 June

A race against time. Reading scripts before lunch w. Belinda and Hugh – traumatised because their nanny has given notice, but typically, Belinda puts a delicious lunch on the table, immaculately, on time, being told

* British arts administrator and opera company director (1946–2020)

at 11.30ish it's 12.30 lunch not 1pm. She's been ill and in the studio and looks \$1m.

10.30 *Sleepless in Seattle* – Halfway through I think 'I was in this movie.'^{*}

1 July

Dinner with Richard Wilson – wonderful food at L'Accento – *Something's* certain.

Carol Todd calls . . . Delicate stages on Riverside.

Roger[†] calls. He's, shall we say, not hopeful.

2 July

3.40am Awake trying to locate one worthwhile, nameable emotion that deserves this sleeplessness. The dream was of walking down one's own corridor at night, in the dark, trying to work out the geography only with my hands – finding doors that should have been locked, not.

(NB Hand this to the nearest amateur psychiatrist.)

4 July

am Driving through the Lake District to Ruskin's house.

5ish – Ferry back across the lake.

6.58 to Euston.

Really good to see Roger & Charlotte Glossop[‡] again and now their wonderful, loving children.

They had a real, simple, generous, open attitude to work and life. Not a single deception or selfishness. They've built their dream and are living it. And giving it to others. Such an antidote to the shenanigans of this week.

5 July

12 Juliet Stevenson arrives – a flurry of lost keys, inability to get men on the phone etc. – in other words, as ever, late.

But it's fun to work through the show with two bright lights like these.

Juliet has, of course, been clamped.

* He wasn't.

† Roger Spottiswoode, British film director (1945–)

‡ Husband and wife Roger Glossop and Charlotte Scott, owners of the Old Laundry Theatre, Bowness

6 July

3.30 Interview for Radio Sussex – this is why I don't want to do them any more. A man who talks of 'paddies' and thinks one-person shows are the salvation of British theatre.

8 July

3.30 Flight to Berlin.

Lance [W. Reynolds, producer] on the flight, Wieland [Schulz-Keil, producer] drives me to the hotel and then to the restaurant – I can't let go with them; I'm pulling on the reins all the time until they sign.

9 July

Fittings with Birgit [Hutter, costume designer] – instantly an angel full of the right ideas. Wigs & make-up need to be shown.

5.05 Flight to London.

7ish – script to Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Pat O'Connor* wants to party; but for some strange reason they're off to Ireland for a week (they only just got here).

14 July

It seems sometimes to be in the stars that some days are peaceful and some are manic.

9am David comes to deliver a bookcase and mend a cupboard, Steve comes to fix the stereo, Janet comes to clean, Ruby [Wax] to show some outtakes and the phone rings and rings and rings.

If it isn't the Riverside lunch; it's not a Riverside lunch it's a dinner; did I read the Rudkin script?† Can we go to Stroud? Who can come, who can't?

8pm Supper with Louise Krakower [film director].

9.50 *Groundhog Day*.

Nearly. Not quite Capra. But a relief.

15 July

A day which led to Riverside shenanigans. And a 7pm dash with the proposal. Jane [Hackworth-Young] screwed up or screwed us in a big

* Irish theatre director (1943–)

† David Rudkin, English playwright and screenwriter (1936–)

way. What's underneath this? If it turns out to be Jules Wright I shall screw *her* to every sticking place I can find.*

16 July

As for Riverside we wait and see. Ditto *Mesmer*.

I think Deborah Warner[†] has the right idea. Only do what you want to, make yourself a unique entity – then you get invited to Salzburg & Bruno Ganz. 200 extras and five horses to do *Coriolanus*.

18 July

Home to phone message saying Jules Wright has been given Riverside and then a call from Roger Spottiswoode telling me the latest *Mesmer* horror stories. Is this a big test? What sense can one make of the Riverside situation? I am writing this not angry (yet – that will arrive in a big way if we discover anything untoward) just numb from the endless pursuit and advancement of the mediocre in this country.

19 July

Most of today picking up the telephone receiver.

Mesmer seems to be breathing again. A cheque has been sent – was it signed? Misspelt? Something must delay it, surely.

Jules Wright has Riverside, no she doesn't, yes she does, were we read? Maybe not. Is [Jane] H.-Y. a traitor or innocent stroke power-mad? At all events it's not coming to us although we don't know if there's any money to run the place.

* In the summer of 1993, Alan, together with theatre producer Thelma Holt and Catherine Bailey, a film producer whom he had known since RADA, attempted to take over the running of Riverside Studios in West London, which was in financial difficulties. Alan, as the most high-profile of the three, bore the brunt of the media coverage. Jules Wright, an Australian theatre entrepreneur who ran the Women's Playhouse Trust and had been a member of the Riverside board, made a rival proposal. According to *Time Out*, London's listing magazine, she had been offered the role of artistic director. What became known, inevitably, as 'Rivergate' grew increasingly contentious, culminating in a feisty encounter between Alan and Wright (28 November 1993). In the end, the ambitious bid by Alan and associates was rejected, Wright withdrew hers, and William Burdett-Coutts, who made his name running the Assembly Rooms at the Edinburgh Fringe, was appointed director of Riverside Studios, a position he held for twenty-seven years.

† British theatre director (1959–)

20 July

Maybe today a corner was turned and for that I guess I'm grateful in the middle of all this shite.

Malcolm & Sweet Pea [assistants to Thelma Holt] were so practical and focused – it was very moving – they'd laugh if I said so to their faces.

Somehow we got through it all – all those letters without mentioning Jules Wright by name – as yet. Then Thelma returned and the room is filled with humanity and good humour.

Returning home I discover that J.W.'s proposal is all of 4 pages. 'Put-up job' says Rima without a pause. Her certainty is often hilarious.

10.30ish – Billboard Cafe. Juliet [Stevenson], Mary McGowan, Lindsay Duncan & [her husband] Hilton McRae. Acquainting them of the day's facts creates focus, strength & purpose. We'll see, we'll see, we'll see.

Somewhere in here *Mesmer* careers crazily on. Faxes, phone calls, entreaties, promises, demands. Questions. Somehow no answers. Plus I'm offered £50,000 a week to do *Slice of Sat Night** in West End. MAD MAD MAD.

21 July

More phone calls.

Letters being answered.

Thelma got tough.

Time Out continues to ferret.

Michael Owen† backs off.

Andreas [A.R.'s personal trainer] shows me a daunting new regime for the gym.

22 July

To the gym and then take Arwen to lunch – Café Tempo, King's Road. Can't really begin to deal with how easy it is for me and how hard for her to walk up a flight of stairs. The image of her flat on her face on the floor of the taxi will stay with both of us. Thank God she, me and the taxi driver could laugh.

* *A Slice of Saturday Night*, musical by the Heather Brothers

† Arts Editor, *Evening Standard*

23 July

Diaries – funny things. Having to record people as a collection of initials. For the record J.W. = Jules Wright; a dangerous, manipulative person.

26 July

And Riverside brews on . . .

A letter from a friend of J.W. in the *Standard*. Write the reply on the plane. Just shows how quickly it can be done. The prospect of seeing Peter Sellars* production of *The Persians*, a sudden ‘yes’, some phone calls and I’m out the door with a hold-all and on the way. To Salzburg.

The journey to Heathrow really is the best.

Then to Munich, and cool hi-tech airport. 100 miles of corridor later and there is a driver. £100 later and I’m in Salzburg for the last ½ hour of *The Persians*. Now I’m mentally photographing every second to make it count. Fifi [Fiona Shaw] is there at the end. It’s always good to see her. She’s one great Yes to life.

27 July

To Festspielhaus for *Coriolan*. Staggering venue. Hildegard’s† model now full, unbelievable size. A sudden strange desire to be in it. And we almost are, in the 3rd row. 200 extras, horses, flames; epic but ambiguous too. Bruno Ganz is the one for me. Seems not to be an actor at all. At the party I meet him. Shy, courteous, quiet, slight. Of course. Peter Stein‡ – a whole ball game of his own. As Deborah found. Brave show. Cowardly audience.

28 July

Deborah and Fiona Shaw have certainly found their power. But there’s a sense of panic somewhere – what do they do with it? Stories of Stein’s abrasiveness when confronted by Deborah’s self-sufficiency.

Sod the diet – Bratwurst, potatoes & sauerkraut for lunch. Mozart museum – the girl playing the instruments pretends to speak French badly in order to surprise us how *well* she speaks it. And English.

Find Fifi & Deborah at the theatre. Have tea. F. worrying about her production of *Hamlet*, her film career, our agent, the play she’s due to

* American theatre director (1957–)

† Hildegard Bechtler, German set and costume designer (1951–), wife of Bill Paterson

‡ German theatre director (1937–)

do at the National Theatre. I can see reasons for all the concerns but what a waste of her extraordinary energy. Talk of this and more with Catherine Bailey on the plane. A remarkable woman. Hits the ball smack in the middle of the bat, but all heart too. Home. Did that all happen?

29 July

Back home to articles in *Time Out* and the *Evening Standard*. All very energising and focusing. If all the energy and focus can shift to the other side of the river then, great. Keep talking.

Jurassic Park – what the hell is the plot? Great dinosaurs.

→ 8pm *Lust* w. Denis Lawson. Reminded me a lot of *Lock Up Your Daughters* in 1974. Even *less* direction here.

30 July

Spoke with Stephen Tate – *Observer*. Talking with journalists always leaves me feeling uneasy and a little like those tribes who don't like having photos taken because they're giving away their souls. But today there is a strong sense of colliding with one's destiny.

31 July

Woke up from a dream where Rima and I are going for a week's holiday in a remote country cottage. To get there first we have to tramp through a muddy field to a farmhouse – on the right there is a kind of hen coop. Our instructions are to shoo the hens off the mattress they are running around on, shake it & take it off to the cottage. As we approach, we can hear après-sex giggling. We peer in. There in the straw are a pair of 75-year-olds, dressed, but lying amongst the eggs and hens, grinning.

Work with Tara Hugo [American singer and actor] for her New York opening. I do love transforming things like this – or maybe it's just pointing a spotlight on a fine talent with more accuracy. At all events the process is a mystery to me. Where does the insight come from? Part of it is cumulative, but most of it is a gift still shrouded in mist.

1 August

Riverside report in *Observer* – lazy journalism so the points are more bluntly made than they should have been.

3 August

10.30 To ICM [talent agency] to sign deal memo. I wish these things were more about common sense – it's embarrassing to think that discussions have to take place about the size of one's name, whether they'll pay for the laundry, how many bottles of Evian water et bloody-cetra. Of course, if they try to rip me off . . .

Then Rima and I go shopping for her Jamaica trip. Keep feeding her and obtaining regular cups of coffee and it's fun in Knightsbridge.

5 August

Kristin Milward [old friend of A.R.'s from RADA] comes for lunch. Now I think it's time for something drastic. If there's no magic pill, then maybe she should work in another country. England does not recognise or reward her qualities.

8 August

At home watch last part of *Kinnock*. Neil is wrong to feel such failure. With the same instinct which told me too that he would lose the April 9th election I also know that this country had developed such a meanness of spirit – a refusal, however unspoken, to think of others' problems, that the balance was tipped and he could have done *nothing* more. He has made it possible for others to win by the hugest personal sacrifice.

Livingstone,* Skinner† et al. are wrong because they spend their lives so consumed by politics they cannot put their fingers *truly* to the wind. Their professionalism makes them lose touch with their innocence.

9 August

4pm to Thelma's office for preliminary chat about Riverside before N.N. arrives. Present – Thelma, me, Claire, Margaret Heffernan,‡ and after a while Catherine Bailey. We discuss avenues of approach and Margaret is her always blindingly clear self. Doorbells ring, people enter and leave without seeing each other, which is clearly the object, if not the plan. N.N. is basically saying – take Riverside off our hands and it's yours – if you can manage without funding and at a peppercorn rent. He's an accountant. Theatre stories (Thelma!) don't resonate. At one point we are sitting plotting around an invisible cauldron as Ian

* Ken Livingstone, British politician (1945–)

† Dennis Skinner, Member of Parliament for nearly half a century (1932–)

‡ American entrepreneur (1955–)

McKellen stops at the door. Thelma immediately enlists him and nearly says too much too soon.

10 August

To Vienna for costume fittings and I didn't even argue. I should have.

Coffee and lemon cake in famous Austrian or Viennese coffee house.

Back to London.

12 August

Damning and fairly unprecedented report in *Standard* re Riverside. Talk about things fudging.

3 Roger & Gillian* to talk of the movie script. [Dennis] Potter reluctant to rewrite.

15 August

All afternoon – the simple but back-breaking pleasure of creating a flower-bed.

16 August

7.45 *Gormenghast* – Lyric Theatre.

Wonderful things, but no wonder I never read the book. For fans.

17 August

3pm Doctor for film insurance check-up. Ironic, with this streaming cold. He throws me by asking which character I would choose above all others to play. There's no answer, because as ever, it all depends on the script.

19 August

A phone call from Peter James [theatre director] wanting some assurances for the Riverside board meeting tomorrow. Strange not being able to say everything to an old friend.

20 August

9.30 Royal Festival Hall with Belinda Lang and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio for Steve Reich concert. Almost dreading some esoteric wank – it turns out to be real food for thought on many levels. Of how many pieces of music can it be said 'it has genuinely clarified the Middle East conflict for me'?

* English actor Gillian Barge (1940–2003), playing Frau Mesmer

Belinda had come prepared with a mental list of things to think about if it had been dreadful.

21 August

8 → Lindsay Duncan & Hilton McRae with R. & Robin Ellis* & Caroline Holdaway [designer] & Fatima[h Namdar, photographer]. I guess we must have had a wonderful evening – because when we left after eating great food, talking, talking and standing round the piano singing Dylan etc. together it was 3am.

22 August

Walking out of the Caprice to find a cab, cat and mouse with a photographer who clearly wants a ‘pissed off’ picture. He certainly has a ‘pissed off’ back of my head.

23 August

am – and now it’s William Burdett-Coutts for Riverside. He wants to talk. OK, but at this point – about what, whilst that board is still in place . . .

Pat O’Connor comes over – I’ve spoken with Christopher Hampton again about *Carrington* and I really don’t know whether or not to do it.

8pm to Hampstead for *Marvin’s Room* with Allan Corduner† and Dalia.‡ Another of those American plays which *insist* that you feel something. I don’t think anger & frustration is what they had in mind. My mind feels totally shut down by the experience. Alison [Steadman] & other fine actors compromised by atrocious direction.

24 August

1pm Patio, lunch with Diana Hawkins & Sue D’Arcy re press for *Mesmer*. This side of it, I’m told, is necessary. It is also, finally, humiliating. Not their fault – actors as product.

30 August

10am-ish because of the [Notting Hill] carnival barricades and no taxis → Kensington Hilton and first rehearsal of *Mesmer* . . . Script obstacles to be overcome but encouraging to see how often Potter is on the button.

* British actor (1942–)

† British actor (1950–)

‡ Dalia Ibelhauptaitė, Lithuanian film and opera director (1967–)