

I would like to say Doreen Cannon was a remarkable person.

I recall, it was an autumn afternoon, maybe 1pm, the sun was shining hot, high, down the back where the windows looked out over the parked cars. The large cast was gathering and preparing for rehearsal. Doreen was directing our second year production of *The Servant of Two Masters*. This was held in the makeshift ground floor rehearsal room at RADA's then newly acquired Chenies Street building, the room where the library is now. This long room had a number of doors in and out, including one to the back car port with steps down to where Doreen parked her Mini.

Your mum entered the room by this door usually knocking on a window for us to let her in. This time though she heaved herself slowly up the steps. Something was wrong. She couldn't put weight on her foot, her ankle or leg. What had happened?

I have to say at this point, I don't remember much about the dialogue, other than I think she said she had fallen, I may be wrong. There was insistence from some of us that this was serious enough to warrant medical attention. The look on Doreen's face and the colour or rather lack of it called for urgency instinctively. I remember her wanting us to not make a fuss and to get rehearsal underway, but the immediacy of the accident forced us all to face the obvious. Something had to be done, we couldn't rehearse. A decision had to be made. The A&E hospital was 300 metres way. Call an Ambulance! What happened next though is a bit blurry. Doreen was going to drive there. Insisted as much. Now for some reason I drove her in her Mini the short route to A&E, while the other guys set about telling RADA what was happening. We drove to the main doors of A&E, we got out and she went in alone, insisting absolutely so. I parked up her Mini and went back to A&E. She was not seen by a medic straight away. We sat and passed time for quite a while. We talked, asked questions and listened. Doreen talked about things acting, theatre, films and actors. Quite some time had passed and I think she suggested I leave as a member of your family would be on their way to see her. How could that be? This was 1991 pre mobile phone time. Did I take the Mini back to RADA? Maybe. From that occasion I recall Doreen talking about Olivier acting on stage, Brando in *Streetcar*, Uta Hagan teaching, Harold Clurman's passion, and Judy Dench's stage presence.

I am so glad I worked with Doreen as much as I did, I treasure those moments, she is a remarkable person to me, an inspiration. I feel honoured to have to have been one of her students.

Doreen is indelibly imprinted in my minds eye. I remember her clearly, fondly and with great affection. I don't ever remember her wasting time with me. She was always precise. She encouraged me. Pushed me, to reach out, to move on, to ask questions of myself, the text and others, to discover, to find what could be...

I miss her very much!

Tim Bennett