**The Time of Our Lives:** Memories of leisure in the 1920s and 30s

Performed 1986/Second Production 1992

**Introduction**

This play was researched by Pam Schweitzer, Pauline Devaney and Pamela Lyne in 1986

The script was by Pauline Devaney and incorporated stories told by individuals and groups in south-east London. It was a slight departure from previous shows as it did not use the verbatim method, wherein all material is taken from words spoken in interview. Instead, the writer developed characters and plot and inspired by the stories.

As with all the shows, older people who gave their stories for “The Time of our Lives” were invited to performances and sometimes even came to rehearsals.

We asked people to tell us how they spent what little spare time they had when they were young, no longer at school and not yet married. Many said they did not have much leisure time as they were working on Saturdays and went to church on Sundays. However, they seem to have packed a lot into the free time they had. Going dancing and going to the pictures (cinema) were top favourites, but there were also lots of expeditions by cycle to the countryside or the seaside.

People shared stories of going out with groups of friends, always expected back home by 10 o’clock. There were many stories concerned with fashion and hairdo’s, going shopping for clothes and making dresses in the up-to-date style at home. There were sporting events and swimming in local pools. Very often the churches seem to have laid on social events and outings for younger members of their congregations. People spoke about courting days and the accepted notions of how to meet the right person and how to get rid of the wrong one.

It was very funny watching the characters battle with shyness and awkwardness. It was very well received and the after-show discussions with the audiences were full of the energy of the remembered youth.

The show “The Time of our Lives” toured nationally with very gifted actors in both productions. A book of the memories and photos given during the research period was published to go out with the show and is digitised on the website.

Credits:

Research: Pam Schweitzer, Pauline Devaney and Pam Lyne

Script: Pauline Devaney

Directors: Barrie Willmore and Pam Schweitzer

Musical Director: Peter Hayward

First Cast: Madeleine Cemm, Jeremy Brown, Christopher Downing,and Tegolin Knowland

Second cast: Jules Davidson Sophie Scarborough, Robin Pirongs and Simon Hu