Administrative history of the organisation

Originally called the London International Festival of Student Theatre, LIFT was formed in 1980 by Rose de Wend Fenton and Lucy Neal inspired by their participation in a student theatre festival in Portugal. LIFT became a registered charity in 1981 and in that year, along with another student, Simon Evans, Rose and Lucy organised the first London International Festival of Theatre which presented companies from Poland, France, Brazil, The Netherlands, Malaysia, West Germany, Japan, Peru, and the UK. Following the success of the first festival Rose and Lucy, along with a growing number of permanent and freelance employees, volunteers and placements, researched and organised another eleven festivals including one ‘Out of LIFT’ season especially for young people. In the early years LIFT had to overcome a number of funding problems including almost having to cease trading in 1983 and the abolition of the Greater London Council in 1986.

LIFT continued to present and commission work from all over the world; in the period 1981-2001 companies from over 60 countries participated in the festivals. LIFT presented theatre for a variety of audiences, both in conventional theatres and at unusual and different sites. Over the years work has been presented at places such as Bankside Power Station, the site for the LIFT ’93 Launch, Limehouse Basin, the site for Welfare State International’s ‘The Raising of the Titanic’ LIFT ’83, and Euston Tower, the site for Deborah Warner’s ‘The Tower Project’ in LIFT ’99. LIFT not only presented new theatre it also re-presented old or forgotten places in London.

In 1991 LIFT piloted an Education and Community Programme in order to devise a long term strategy for working in this sector in the future. An Education Officer, Tony Fegan, was employed in 1993 and produced LIFT’s first Education Programme for the 1993 festival called the BT LIFT Education Programme. By LIFT ’95 the Learning Programme was integrated into the main programme of festival events and has remained so ever since. Festivals presented many education and community projects including ‘Sang Song – River Crossing’ at LIFT ’93, ‘Sirk Uzay – Celestial Circus’ at LIFT ’95, and ‘Utshob’ in LIFT ’97.

From early on LIFT, realising the potential for debate and learning that existed in the coming together of different cultures and countries included workshops and discussions in the festivals. LIFT ’93 launched the first Daily Dialogues and each festival had lectures or forums in addition to the main programme of events.

Other projects grew out of LIFT’s passion for learning and participation. In 1996 Phakama, an international arts exchange project for young people, was born, the first Business Arts Forum took place in 1995 and the Teachers Forum began in 1999.

After twelve festivals LIFT decided to break with the traditional biennial festival format and enter the Enquiry period, a five-year venture to investigate theatre and present year round events.

The organisation changed its name to Lift in 2006.
Arrangement

FONDS

Creator Name: London International Festival of Theatre
Title: Records of the London International Festival of Theatre
Production Date: 1980-2001
Extent: Approximately 41 linear metres

System of Arrangement: Documents have been ordered into sub-fonds by festival year 1981-2001, with four further sub-fonds for administration and cross-festival records, Out of LIFT records, non-festival events, and LIFT Enquiry records, two series also hold Director’s Diaries and International Festival Programmes. All other media is separate from the documents, as it was when the archive was received for cataloguing, and it is arranged into six series: Photographs, Audio, Posters, Print, Video and Objects.

Repository reference number: GB 2603

Reference code: LIFT

SUB-FONDS:

LIFT/1981
LIFT/1983
LIFT/1985
LIFT/1987
LIFT/1989
LIFT/1991
LIFT/1993
LIFT/1995
LIFT/1997
LIFT/1999
LIFT/2001
LIFT/EN – LIFT Enquiry records
LIFT/NF – Non-festival events
LIFT/ADCF – Administration and cross-festival records
LIFT/OL – Out of LIFT records
LIFT/IF – International Festival Programmes
LIFT/D – Director’s records
LIFT/PH - Photographs
LIFT/AU - Audio
LIFT/PR - Print
LIFT/PO - Posters
LIFT/OB - Objects
LIFT/V - Video

Notes

Copyright: Copyright owned by Lift unless otherwise identified. Permission must be sought from Copyright holders prior to any reproduction of material in this collection.

History Note: The archive was kept in the Lift office until work began on surveying the material in 2005-6.

Archivist’s Note: Dates given after person names relate to their time with LIFT.
Inscription Language: The majority of records are in English, other languages are documented where appropriate.

Access Note: There is open access to the archive, some files are closed (subject to review) and some have restricted copies available in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Disposal Note: Weeding of the collection has taken place and the following appraisal criteria followed: duplicates or copies have been removed or destroyed, however some duplicates remain where it is not possible to distinguish the original location; drafts have been removed where a final copy exists (budgets or reports), unless the draft contains exceptionally different material from the final copy; mailing lists, contact lists and address books have been destroyed using a confidential destruction process; invoices, petty cash books/documents, and appointment or message books have been destroyed; routine documentation, including travel and accommodation documents, has been destroyed unless it demonstrates significant activity. Any major weeding will be documented at the appropriate level. For preservation purposes throughout the collection dividers have been replaced with archival quality paper and paperclips replaced with brass clips, newspaper and facsimiles have been photocopied and the originals destroyed.

Content Description: Records relate to the organisation and running of LIFT festivals and other events from 1981-2001 and include material about the companies that performed, planning documents, directors' notebooks, technical and artistic documents, and research and marketing material. Records exist here that also show the history of the company since its inception and include board papers and funding documents. The photograph and video series includes promotional material from companies and documentation of festival events, and spans 1981-2001, as does the audio collection which mainly includes recordings of LIFT talks and discussions. There are also some objects in the collection that are related to LIFT events. A large collection of international festival programmes also spans 1981-2001 and print material such as programmes, flyers, and posters exists for this period also.

Related Publication:


Catalogue
The catalogue is currently (September 2008) on Adlib, on a single pc in the Special Collections reading room. It will be transferred to CALM during the autumn term 2008.

To browse the whole archive on the catalogue, search by ‘reference number’ field and type LIFT.

3/9/2008 JC