

CHAPTER 1

You left that for this ?

Jaws drop. Eyes widen. The breathing may even pause for a nanosecond.

“You left that to do this?”

Pure shock.

This was the usual reaction to my explanation of what I did before joining the Covenant Players, an international itinerant repertory theatre company. I gave up being a lawyer and diplomat in order to travel around Europe in an old van, live in other people’s homes and perform plays. What sensible person would do that, wondered these Western Europeans. Did her parents know? Or even approve? Apparently it didn’t matter that I was evidently over 18, over 25 and in fact in my early 30s.

“Why?” they asked.

My simple immediate answer was “To do something different”. (Think the British comedy series *Monty Python*- “And now for something completely different”)

And what a different life it was.

This book contains highlights drawn from personal journal entries and regular email updates shared with family and friends of my two

and a half year sojourn with the Covenant Players, from January 2005 to June 2007. I toured with teams covering France, Spain, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden, performed in over 1200 live shows, 5 languages, over 200 different roles, and before audiences ranging in age from 7 to 90 years and in size from 3 to 5,000 people in any one performance. As part of an international community comprising Americans, Canadians, Norwegians, Germans, Swedes, French, Poles, English, Welsh, a Swiss, an Australian, and a Hungarian, we lived together, cooked, cleaned floors, babysat, drove thousands of miles, cried, got angry, prayed, sang and acted in plays together. It was an unforgettable experience, a rewarding journey and worth the risk taken. I hope that you'll find these stories a treasure chest of insights and perspectives on experiencing life.

CHAPTER 2

Travel light

Four eyes stared at the large bulging canvas suitcase resting on the ground, then at the empty trunk of the van, then back at the suitcase.

“So,” said the young lady standing next to me, breaking the silence, “how do you think we’re going to fit this...with uh... everything else.” She smacked her lips and looked at me.

I pulled on a well used answer. “No problem man. It’ll work”.

Her eyebrows slowly reached for the heavens. Everything we needed for the next five months was to travel with us in our van, ‘Esther’, a nine-seater 1994 Renault Espace the last row of seats having been removed in order to make space for the scripts, administrative papers and brochure boxes, a small prop bag, our sleeping bags, personal belongings and - us. I could not say that I had not been warned. In fact, prior to arriving at the European Continental Office (ECO) of the Covenant Players located in Untergruppenbach, south Germany, where all the members touring in Europe meet for training and preparation before being assigned into teams or ‘Units’ and deployed, I had been provided with a suggested list of what to bring as ‘the essentials’. The list appeared to me, to be too light for surviving