

EX-STAGE DIRECTOR IS SENT TO PRISON

AFTER pleading guilty to a serious offence involving a 16-year-old boy, a former stage director with the former Devonshire Park Theatre Company, [redacted] aged 33, of Victoria Drive, was sent to prison for 12 months at Sussex Assizes on Tuesday.

A 50-year-old baker, [redacted] of Vines Cross, Heathfield, was remanded in custody for medical reports after pleading guilty to two serious offences involving the same boy.

Mr Geoffrey Lovegrove, prosecuting, said that both men met the boy for the first time at Devonshire Park Theatre at a private birthday party given for one of the actresses.

The boy asked [redacted] for a lift home and the first of Harriott's offences was committed in the car. The second took place some time later at his Vines Cross home.

About two weeks after the party, said Mr Lovegrove, [redacted] met the boy again when the boy turned up at Devonshire Park Theatre and asked for a couple of theatre tickets. Jones gave

him the tickets, but there was no suggestion that this was in any way an inducement to the boy. The offence was committed later in [redacted] dressing room.

Detective Sergeant David Stepney said that there was no suggestion of any element of corruption of the boy in the case. It was likely that the boy had made the approaches and he had previous experience of such conduct with other boys.

DS Stepney said that [redacted] was a man of previously good character with his own bakery business in Heathfield. [redacted] had two previous convictions for similar offences, one in 1954 and another in 1962.

He said [redacted] had joined a repertory company as an actor in Teignmouth in 1956 and stayed there for three years. He

worked in various parts of the country in the theatre for the next four years and went to Eastbourne in January, 1963, as stage director at Devonshire Park Theatre.

He was dismissed after the offence before the court.

Mr Justice Thompson observed, "The boy is not before me, but I would like to know what is happening to him. From your point of view he is inciting people to break the law?"

"Yes, sir," said DS Stepney. "That really is what your evidence comes to?"

"Yes, sir."

Hard worker

Mr John McManus, for [redacted], said that his client had been an "extremely good" man before this misfortune. The impression in his village was that they just could not believe he had got into that sort of trouble.

Mr Richard Burnett, of Clifford-road, Bexhill, managing director of Theatre South East, said that [redacted] work as stage director with the former Devonshire Park Theatre Company was extremely good. He was hard working, had accepted a considerable amount of responsibility in his job and carried out his work very well.

He agreed with Mr Rodger Bell, for [redacted] that he had written a reference for [redacted] since [redacted] dismissal when he was seeking another employer.

Mr Bell said that [redacted] had lived more easily with his weakness as a homosexual since last year's legislation, but the approaches had been made by the boy and he had succumbed.

After remanding Harriott for medical reports, Mr Justice Thompson told [redacted] "Although it was the same boy in this case and I accept that he was the inciter and I accept that you recognise you have homosexual tendencies, I think I have to pass a sentence on you that makes it clear to homosexuals that you must leave young boys alone."

He asked for a report to be prepared on the boy.