

The play's the thing for Brit founder of Zuloo drama

Sam Riley

During a nomadic expat childhood, there was one constant for Zsuzsi Lindsay — her love of theater. But for this wanderer of the world's stages, the drama has not always been limited to the action taking place in the footlights.

Lindsay — who has continued her love of the theater by launching her own production company in Shanghai — unwittingly set off a national storm of controversy when she was a student in her home country of Britain.

The St Andrew's University student's decision to put on a production of Terrence McNally's controversial play "Corpus Christi" was vigorously protested by religious groups. It depicts Jesus and his apostles living as gay men in Texas.

There were demonstrations outside the theater, more than 500 people, and a media frenzy.

"We had the riot police on standby, we had news crews there and we had to get security," recalls the 27-year-old when recalling the controversy that engulfed a student production.

A performance was canceled because of safety concerns and the bomb squad was on standby.

"It was a massive event in our lives and a real kind of whirlwind experience," she says.

Lindsay eventually took the play to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2005, a considerable achievement for a student theater director.

The Briton's love of theater began as a six-year-old, when she first performed in her school play. Performing in school and community drama productions would be a constant when everything else in her life was constantly changing.

Lindsay's father worked in the steel industry and her early years were spent in France and the United States.

She returned to England and to the buttoned-up surrounds of an Anglican boarding school before returning to the US for a gap year when she directed and performed in a number of productions.

"From an early age, I always took drama classes and from then on I developed this passion for the theater," she says. "I ate and slept it, I wanted to do drama all the time, I was incredibly passionate about it."

Despite her love of theater, Lindsay decided to put her career goals first and study international relations at university.

The theater was never far from her mind, however, and it was the experience of auditioning and missing out on university productions that spurred her to start her own production company while still a student.

The budding director sought sponsorship from the local Indian restaurant and started putting on productions.



With a deep love of theater, Briton Zsuzsi Lindsay launches her own production company in Shanghai, Zuloo Theater Productions, which also organizes drama workshops, courses and camps for kids.

"My experience in theater is that if someone wants to get involved, then they are half the way there already," she says.

"You don't have to have done it for years to be a good actor. You don't need loads of things on your resume or need to have studied theater because it doesn't necessarily mean you will be a good actor, producer or director," she adds.

It was an approach that she was to continue when she arrived in Shanghai in April 2008.

"Theater is such a community-building activity and it makes people feel good and helps people feel confident," she says.

Soon after arriving in Shanghai, Lindsay resurrected the theater company she had set up while a student in Edinburgh — Zuloo Theater Productions.

The first Zuloo production was a pantomime performance of "Cinderella" in February last year. It involved adult actors and teachers as well as students from international school, Dulwich College. It raised more than 35,000 yuan (US\$5,118) for charity.

Lindsay has since then launched



projects including a theater-improvisation group that meets every Tuesday and a scripted play reading group that meets every Wednesday night at the JZ School on Wukang Road in Luwan District.

Lindsay also organizes drama workshops, courses and camps for kids. As well as holding acting

classes, Zuloo also holds dance and movement classes covering everything from classical Broadway dance to Italian commedia mask making.

For more information about Zuloo Productions, visit www.zuloo.co.uk or contact Lindsay at zsuzsi@zuloo.co.uk.

Editor's Note:

This weekly series focuses on individuals who have lived in China for a while and have a tale that's worth telling. Age, gender, nationality and race, all are unimportant in comparison with what adventures the subject has been up to, the experiences they can recount. Get in touch with a tip about a China story that deserves to be told. (features@shanghaidaily.com)

Zsuzsi Lindsay

▶ **Nationality:** British (Third Culture Kid)

Age: 27

Profession: Self-employed lovie

▶ Q&A

Self-description: Quirky, passionate, driven.

Favorite place: The British Bulldog on a Monday night for the Quiz.

Strangest sight: Someone beating a lamp post with an umbrella.

Worse experience: The overly aggressive mosquitoes.

Motto for life: Do as you would be done by.

Advice to newcomers: Don't despair. The homesickness will go away!



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