

you create your own!

Seek and You Shall Find . . .

The true life adventures of an audio book publisher.

Ten years ago I had a problem.

I had created four wonderful fairy tales to share with the children of the world—so I sincerely still believe—but I wanted to present them to my audience in sound as well as in word. Being a former teacher, I fondly imagined these stories and tapes being read and listened to in the classroom—in classrooms the world over if possible.

"And even the seemingly impossible must start off with a dream."

But what did I know about sound recording? Even less than I knew about self publishing at the time—in other words, nought. But life in the 20th century still offers a modicum of magic. Enter the Yellow Pages. Skimming through its list of local recording studios...AABBBCCC...I made a total of three calls. The first responded with a busy signal. The second promised to call me back within the hour. The third was Jezz Wright, boy genius and sole proprietor of 'blockhouse studios,' London, UK. His enthusiasm, talent and energy seduced me over the phone line. Early that evening, I was sitting in his mystically equipped studio warren—located within a converted industrial shed in Stratford, East London—discussing how he would help me to realize my dream.

I needed a professional narrating voice, I needed incidental music and sound effects, I needed a boy Merlin like Jezz to weave it all together, employing the technological equipment I had seen ranged around his studio, leaving me mystified, like Stone age man—okay, Stone age woman—catapulted, via time capsule, into the third Millennium.

Our sublime adventure lasted eight months until all four of the FUNLIT SERIES tapes/CDs had been successfully recorded. None of us could have known that Jezz would suspend his activities at the studio, having been snapped up by BBC Radio literally days after our last recording session was over. Blessed fortune? Synchronicity? Coincidence. You be the judge.

At any rate, we were on a tremendous 'roll' in those early days. I purchased a few cassette tapes of mediaeval music to formulate some idea of what I wanted. I hunted down a suitable musician, again via the Yellow Pages but, in the end, after stumbling down a few blind alleys, it was Jezz I turned to, and he offered to create both music and sound effects for all four tapes. And the results were destined to be extraordinary!

I still needed to find a competent narrator for the text. It turned out to be veteran stage and screen actress, Paola Dionisotti, who surfaced—I believe through the undercurrents of combined magic we were all busily

creating but—ostensibly via a Canadian friend of mine who happened to know her well. Gracious Paola agreed to read the text but advised me from the outset that she would decline the project altogether if she didn't care for the stories. I waited, both in trepidation and confidence. A few days later, she returned her positive verdict. And, the rest, as they say, is history.

A shower of creative sparks—suggestions, alterations, artistic disagreements—flew around the 'blockhouse' studio from time to time as we ploughed together through each story. Paola, a genuine professional, offered keen insights into the phrasing, diction and dramatic pacing of the whole. Well in advance, she studied the storytext and rehearsed the roles and 'voices' she was required to perform. Each recording session took up the entire day, for the fairy tales are, on average, over six thousand words in length.

Jezz set up his state of the art equipment and performed his sound checks. Paola entered the soundproof studio and donned a headset. I sat in an armchair, text in hand, checking each word as it was being recorded. Throughout the day, we halted and re recorded whenever the pronunciation of a word, the correct pacing or sound level failed. The entire adventure from start to finish was a labour of love, of dedication, of talent and of exactitude, generating—in me, the neophyte, at least—a sense of exhilaration similar to that of embarking on a journey to Planet Mars.

As I sat in the studio during those final days, auditing Jezz's brilliant arrangement of 'The Northern Isle of Dreams,' I shed a few tears—with Jezz scrutinizing me anxiously, taken aback, not realizing what it was all about. 'Tears of joy.' So now I know what it means, although I can't remember having felt any such thing—either before or since. A decade later, I continue to be grateful to Jezz and to Paola. Fusing their considerable talents, they have created a new dimension to my silent, brain locked stories, just as Samantha Thomson, my illustration artist, was later also able to do. ♦

by Christina Manolescu

Christina Manolescu has taught for over 23 years in primary schools, adult education institutes, colleges, as well as the Provincial Government and Canadian Military, both in the province of Quebec and overseas.

Her original fairy tale, *The Northern Isle of Dreams*, was published by "Three Trees Press"

in Toronto, Canada and favourably reviewed in the children's literature section of the Montreal Gazette. She has also published feature articles, editorial comment and book reviews in various newspapers and specialist journals. Her illustrated poetry and short fiction have appeared under the imprint, Prince Chameleon Press.

As an active member of the Small Press Group of Britain, she helped organise the 1994 Annual Small Press Fair in Westminster, London, UK. She has also visited primary schools both in Canada and the UK to stage readings and answer questions about writing and publishing. Excerpts from her two unpublished novels were short-listed for the East Side Stories Competition, London, UK, in 1995 and 1998.



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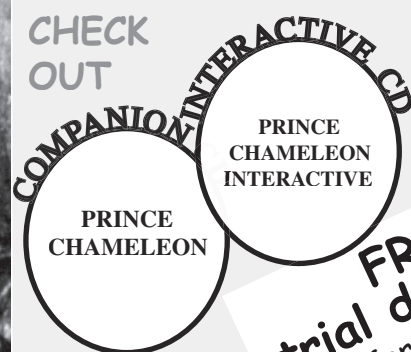
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