



Theatre Collection



**Berta Freistadt:
A feminist life in theatre**

1 February –13 April 2018

Berta Freistadt: a feminist life in theatre

Our current exhibition celebrates the life and work of the lesbian feminist playwright, stage director and teacher Berta Freistadt, MA (1942-2009). The University of Bristol Theatre Collection holds the archive of this multi-talented practitioner whose work encompassed theatrical experiences ranging from creating and encouraging children's theatre and the regional repertory movement, to the intellectual concern with the history of women's theatre and promotion of feminist and LGBT+ theatre. This exhibition showcases a selection of material from this rich archive to mark LGBT+ month.

Wall above case

1. Poster for Saturday Shows for Children at the Tricycle Theatre, London, 10 January-14 March 1980 (BF/PB/95).
2. Poster for *Away From it All* by Debbie Horsfield, and *Poor Silly Bad* by Berta Freistadt, performed at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, 21 April-12 May 1982 (BF/PB/100).
3. Poster for *A Fine Undertaking, or, Closet Capers* by Berta Freistadt, performed by No Boundaries at the Oval House, London, 24-28 October 1984 (BF/PB/97),

Main case

4. Poster for *Out on the Floor* by Debbie Horsfield in repertoire with *Keeley's Mother* by Berta Freistadt. A co-production between the Theatre Royal, Stratford East and Theatre Venture, performed 6-24 October 1981 (BF/PB/98).
5. Programme for *Goodnight Mrs Puffin* by Arthur Lovegrove, performed with *The Corn is Green* by Emyln Williams by the Perth Theatre Company during their touring season 1963-1964. Like many young actors in the 1960s, Freistadt began her professional career working in repertory companies (BF/PB/2).
6. Berta Freistadt's personal scrapbook of performances and productions 1950s-1970s. These annotated pages cover some of

her first repertory appearances (BF/SB/1).

7. Script for *How the Vote Was Won*, an adaptation of original suffrage songs and plays by Julie Holledge, performed by the Sidewalk Theatre Company, c.1970s (BF/S/9).

8. Portrait photograph of Berta Freistadt. This is one of several portfolio images of the young actress (BF/P/1/6).

9. MA dissertation: *The Position of Women in British Theatre 1550-1650* by Berta Freistadt (BF/M/9).

Case drawers (left hand side):

10. School and College Productions:

Playscript for *Slow Sad Come Back* by Berta Freistadt, entered for the Junior Drama League Playwriting Competition 1953-4 (BF/S/1).

Programme for *Celebration of Kokura* by Berta Freistadt, performed at the Deanery High School for Girls, 16 July 1970 (BF/PG/34).

Handwritten biographical note by Berta Freistadt about *Slow Sad Come Back* (BF/S/1).

Biographical note about the 1969 *Love is Love* compilation show, written by Berta Freistadt in 2003 (BF/S/6/1a).

Playscript for *Love is Love*, an open evening involving music, dance and performance in collaboration with the West Ham College of Further Education at the Deanery High School for Girls, 17 July 1969 (BF/S/6/2).

11. Early Work in Repertory

Working schedule for the Perth Theatre company, Scotland, 1963-1964. Freistadt earned £15 per week with this company (BF/C/16).

Reverse of programme (5) for *Goodnight Mrs Puffin* by Arthur Lovegrove and *The Corn is Green* by Emyln Williams, featuring a photograph of cast member Berta Freistadt. The plays were performed by the Perth Theatre Company during their touring season 1963-1964 (BF/PB/2).

Press cuttings: a review of Berta Freistadt's performances in *Book of the Month* by Basil Thomas and *The Bride and the Batchelor* by Ronald Miller, both staged while she was working with Venture Productions during the summer season at Hunstanton in 1962 (BF/PC/2/8 and BF/PC/2/1).

List of accommodation in the City of Perth, used by Berta Freistadt whilst working for the Perth Theatre company, 1963-1964 (BF/C/17).

Portfolio portrait photograph of Berta Freistadt (BF/P/1/6).

Press cutting: review of Berta Freistadt's performance in *The Bride and the Batchelor* by Ronald Miller. Venture Productions summer season at Hunstanton, 7 August 1962 (BF/PC/2/5).

Press cutting: review of Venture Productions at Hunstanton, and featuring a profile of company actresses Berta Freistadt and Elizabeth Farrer, 1962 (BF/PC/2/11).

12. Work with young people

Annotated playscript for *The Talisman* by Berta Freistadt, West Ham College of Further Education, 1969-70 (BF/S/7/3).

Biographical note by Berta Freistadt about *The Talisman*, written in March 2003 (BF/S/7/1).

Typed playscript for *The Talisman* (BF/S/7/2).

Case drawers (right hand side):

13-15. Collection of materials from LGBT+ companies. Berta Freistadt not only retained materials connected to her own work but

also actively collected ephemera from other feminist and LGBT+ theatre companies.

13:

Playbill for the New Writing Showcase for the Women's Theatre Season at the York & Albany Theatre, Camden, 1-12 April 1981, which included the play *Chicken Licken* by Berta Freistadt (BF/PB/7/2).

Promotional leaflet for Women in Theatre in London performed across the Oval House Theatre, Kennington, the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, and the York & Albany Theatre, Camden 1 February-30 April 1981 (BF/PB/8/2).

Appeal letter from Freistadt to theatre companies staging LGBT+ plays, asking for materials for her archive collection (uncatalogued, Berta Freistadt Archive).

Poster for *Pulp: a Lesbian Thriller*, written by Tasha Fairbanks and presented by Siren Theatre Company, 1985 (BF/PB/90).

14:

Programme for *Somewhere over the Balcony* by Marie Jones. Performed by the Charabanc Theatre Company, Ulster Hall, Belfast, 1986 (BF/PG/69).

Letter from Katie at the Proud Cow Theatre Company to Berta Freistadt about their current venture at the Oval House Theatre, 20 November 1986, inviting her to see it and requesting advice on lesbian venues (BF/C/66).

Out at the Bush, an evening of readings and music by gay and lesbian artists, at the Bush Theatre, London 24 September 1990 (BF/PB/79).

Programme celebrating the work of Gay Sweatshop 1975-1987 (BF/C/54/3).

Programme for *Blood Relations* by Sharon Pollock, a European premiere, performed at the Playhouse, Derby 9 May-1 June 1985 (BF/PG/66).

15:

Programme for *The Dear Love of Comrades* (a picture of men from the Northern industrial towns, attempting to form relationships), by Noel Grieg and Drew Griffiths performed by Gay Sweatshop at Action Space Workshop, London 1979 (BF/PG/5/1).

Programme for *The Lucky Chance* by Aphra Behn, a Women's Playhouse Trust production with the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London 4 July 1984 (BF/PG/60).

Newsletter for *In the Pink*, September 1983, the First London Festival of Lesbian and Gay Arts (BF/C/65).

Side walls

16. Poster for *Out in Lambeth: Lesbian and Gay Summer Festival* at the Oval House Theatre and Brixton Art Gallery, London 17 June-12 July 1986 (BF/PB/86).

17. Poster for *Regina versus Vagina* by Berta Freistadt, as part of the Reclaim the Night Benefit Cabaret at the Women's Monthly Event, Caxton House, 21 April 1979 [80?] (BF/PB/96).

18. Poster advertisement by Gay Sweatshop for women artists performers and filmmakers to collaborate with various lesbian playwrights, including Berta Freistadt, on eight mixed-media works to be presented in January 1989 (BF/PB/99).

Costume Case

19. Sweatshirt for the Women in Entertainment Theatre Company (1970s-80s). Freistadt was a member of the company, both performing in productions and writing play scripts (BF/CO/4).

*Cover photograph: Berta Freistadt, portfolio portrait,
1960s. Photographer unidentified.
(BF/P/1/6)*

University of Bristol Theatre Collection,
Vandyck Building, Cantocks Close, Bristol BS8 1UP
Tel: 0117 3315045

Email: theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk
Website: www.bristol.ac.uk/theatrecollection

