



Capturing Creativity

An exhibition curated by History of Art MA students

5 May - Autumn 2017

Capturing Creativity showcases particular items from the Theatre Collection that reveal the hidden stories of the creative process that takes place before the curtain rises. The main figures in the exhibition are therefore the designers, composers, artists and directors, rather than the actors. Initial ideas are captured in sketches, annotations, doodles and designs. The crossings-out, amendments and sudden flashes of inspiration displayed across many of these items, trace the complex process of invention that is a part of every theatre production. For example, the mapping of a set design from the form of a rough storyboard into a finished drawing exemplifies the creative process of one designer. Through such objects, we have a glimpse into the thought processes of those whose creative skills are essential to the success of every production.

Creativity is revealed here through a variety of objects selected from a range of productions from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A costume reinvents an eighteenth-century coat, and costume designs by Wilhelm (William Charles John Pitcher), Julia Trevelyan Oman and Yolanda Sonnabend grant us an insight into both real and imagined sources of inspiration. The physical space of the theatre is also an important aspect of creativity, encompassing both the architecture of the space as well as set designs that transform the interior. Sketches of sets and set designs by Alan Tagg and John Elvery, and Welfare State International's Lanternhouse Diary have been chosen from the Theatre Collection to demonstrate how spaces can be envisioned. Finally, the theatre production itself is the outcome of many drafts and decisions, as exemplified in the promptbooks of John Moody, a music scores for *Julius Caesar*, and lyrics by

Joyce Grenfell. Scripts and scores are so integral to the creation of a theatrical soundscape but the process of revision is rarely on display. These elements are, however, the complex product of negotiation and redrafting for every production.

Capturing Creativity reveals how the performance itself is only the tip of the iceberg. The hidden histories of making, often witnessed only by those working within the theatre world are here brought into view for all. This exhibition offers visitors an insight into the riches of the Theatre Collection, and the manifold ways in which it documents the creativity that lies behind the onstage magic of the performance.

Costume Case

1. Waistcoat and coat worn by John Clayton as Joseph Surface in *The School for Scandal* at the Vaudeville Theatre, London, 1872. (MM/CO/24).

The highly detailed and embroidered gentleman's coat dates from 1760-1770 and would have originally been worn by a man of wealth and leisure. The waistcoat is of a later period (probably nineteenth century) and may have been made to match the coat as the border detail has been carefully copied. Here, an original item of clothing has been creatively reused as a theatre costume for the 1870s. However, there may be another, unrecorded layer of creative history for the coat. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, actors had to supply their own costumes, so, once the coat became unfashionable for its original owner, it may have later reappeared on the stage for any number of productions.

Wall above Main Case

2. Costume designs by Julia Trevelyan Oman for the characters of Richard Baxter Townsend and Lady Mary Lygon in the Royal Ballet production *Enigma Variations*, 1967. (JTO/11/35/4; JTO/11/35/15).

These designs, commissioned by Sir Frederick Ashton, are clearly at a later stage in the design process than those in Julia Trevelyan Oman's (1930-2003) sketchbook, which dates from the early 1950s (main case, below). These designs are much more detailed and refined, including a more careful use of line than the simpler, earlier watercolour.

3. Costume design by Yolanda Sonnabend for Spirit in *The Tempest*, 1979. (TCD/C/000137).

Yolanda Sonnabend (1935-2015) created this watercolour costume design for a film version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* directed by Derek Jarman in 1979. The loose and expressive brushstrokes introduce dynamism to the figure of a spirit and contrast in style to the other, more traditional techniques of Julia Trevelyan Oman and Wilhelm.

4. Set design for *Something's Afoot* (staircase) by John Elvery, Bristol Old Vic, 1982-1983. (TCD/S/000453).

This set design sketch by John Elvery (1939-1997) presents two divided parts of an architectural interior. While on the right side is a detailed coloured version, the left hand side is only sketched in pencil. It may be read as a demonstration of the design process with the contrast between the original pencil sketch and the finished coloured version.

Main Case

5. Play script of *Henry VIII*, 1892. (TCW/S/000019).

This play script is a version of Shakespeare's play as arranged for the stage by Henry Irving (1838-1905), who also played Cardinal Wolsey. It was staged at the Lyceum Theatre, London on 5th January 1892. This embroidery-covered version of the script is filled with ink drawings, believed to be by the costume designer, Seymour Lucas. Clearly, they are not finished designs, but rather capture the sense of how the designer might have envisaged his ideas working in performance. These pages show the procession of Queen Anne Boleyn entering the stage and Katherine of Aragon, mourning Wolsey's death.

6. Sketch book belonging to Julia Trevelyan Oman, containing costume designs for *Enigma Variations*, 1954. (JTO/002/067/03).

This sketchbook belonged to Julia Trevelyan Oman when she was a student at the Royal College of Art. It includes her original ideas for a ballet based on Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. Her tutor, Hugh Casson, encouraged her to send the designs to Ninette de Valois, Director of the Royal Ballet, but it was not until 1967 that a later Director, Frederick Ashton remembered the designs and commissioned Trevelyan Oman to design for his 1968 ballet.

The sketchbook contains initial sketches and watercolours; these costume designs of a preparatory style with figures that are not as accurately observed as Trevelyan Oman's more refined designs shown above. When commissioned in 1967, Trevelyan Oman insisted on creating new designs, rather than reusing those produced in 1953.

7. Paintbox belonging to Wilhelm, 1900s.
(TCO/M/000007/1).

William Charles John Pitcher (1858-1925), better known as Wilhelm, was a stage, scenery and costume designer. He was celebrated for his realistic, detailed style, evident in productions of Shakespeare, ballets, musical comedy and pantomime. He designed for almost 200 productions in all, and this paintbox contains his original oil paints used in the creation of his designs. It was given to the designer Herbert Norris by Wilhelm's sister, Emily Edye Barrett.

8. Egyptian costume design by Wilhelm, 1882.
(TCD/C/000148).

This costume design was produced for an unidentified production at the Prince's Theatre, Bristol in 1882-3. The handling of the paint is typical of Wilhelm's highly detailed, refined style and the hues of yellow and burnt sienna which embellish the costume correspond to the pigment on the paintbox palette. Unlike the historical authenticity achieved in using an eighteenth-century coat for a later production of *The School for Scandal*, Wilhelm's design is here based on an idealized view of the Orient that was typical of the Victorian period.

9. Lanternhouse Diary, Tanya Peixoto, Artist-in-Residence with Welfare State International, 1996-1997. (WSI/2007/028)

The Welfare State International collective of artists, exploring celebratory art and spectacle, won a National Lottery Bid to refurbish an old Victorian School in Ulverston and create the Lanternhouse arts centre, which opened in 1999. This diary, compiled by Artist-in-Residence Tanya Peixoto in collaboration with Welfare State International, records the decisions and processes made in the formation of

Lanternhouse. The volume is filled with sketches, rough ideas, newspaper cuttings, photographs and letters, capturing the creativity of all those involved in designing the arts centre. Welfare State International brought communities together to co-create alternative forms of theatre between 1968 and 2006.

Case Drawers

Please note: for each vertical set of drawers, only one drawer at a time can be opened. Please ensure that each drawer is fully closed before the next one is opened.

10. Promptbook for *Toad of Toad Hall*, 1944. (JM/000097).

Toad of Toad Hall by A.A. Milne was a play adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's novel *The Wind in the Willows*. This promptbook is from a production performed at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre during the 1944-1945 season. The book contains cast lists, a breakdown of scenes and lighting, and the play text, annotated by the Director John Moody (1906-1993). The pages on display show the director's rough sketches for a wooded scene and Badger's House and include details for props such as daffodils and a wooden door for Rat.

11. Promptbook for *Othello*, 1956. (JM/000245).

This version of Shakespeare's *Othello* was performed by the Bristol Old Vic Company, where John Moody held the position of Director between 1954 and 1959. The play text has been heavily edited by Moody who has crossed through sections and made amendments to the script. He has also detailed props such as map and candles and included lighting decisions, character blocking and instructions relating to

actors' performances. The pages really give an insight into the mind and creative engagement of a director.

12. Manuscript lyrics for *I'm Going to See You Today* by Joyce Grenfell, 1942. (JG/Mu/000001/1).

Joyce Grenfell (1910-1979) was a British comic actor who performed on stage, television and radio and was best known for her comic monologues. Grenfell was also a singer and lyricist and these music sheets are versions of the song *I'm Going to See You Today*. The handwritten lyrics on the left are Grenfell's own whilst on the right Grenfell's lyrics have been added to the original manuscript score composed by Richard Addinsell, with whom she often worked. The left-hand sheet reveals an annotation in pencil to make the lyrics fit better to the rhythm, as well as Grenfell's signature, showing the song in its final stages prior to publication.

13. Manuscript music for *Julius Caesar*, 1898. (HBT/000256).

This production of *Julius Caesar* was performed at Her Majesty's Theatre, London in April 1898, under the management of Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1853-1917). In this period, music scores were regularly added to theatre productions of drama and Shakespeare to provide mood, define character, and create dramatic tension. This original handwritten score, entitled *Prelude to Act 2, No. 11874*, was written by Raymond Roze specifically for Beerbohm Tree's production. It contains annotations which reveal the composer's revisions to the score.

14. Sketchbook for *Brief Lives*, belonging to Julia Trevelyan Oman, c.1966. (JTO/C/007/007).

The play of *Brief Lives* was based on antiquarian John Aubrey's book of the same title. It was adapted and directed

by Patrick Garland, designed by Julia Trevelyan Oman, and starred Roy Dotrice. The designs for *Brief Lives* reveal Trevelyan Oman's rigorous approach to set design, basing it on detailed historical research. The cluttered effect of Aubrey's study on stage included objects such as a human jaw as well as rotting apples (which could be smelt in the audience). These pages show a table and props from different angles and even include measurements, demonstrating Trevelyan Oman's consideration of every aspect of the set for which she won the *Plays and Players* Best Set award.

15. Shoe plot volume, *The Merchant of Venice*, 1907-1908. (HBT/D/000002/15-16).

This fascinating volume just contains the designs of shoes for this production, and includes swatches of proposed materials. The shoe plot was developed by B.J. Simmons and Co., costumiers, for Herbert Beerbohm Tree's production, which was performed at His Majesty's Theatre, London. This page shows a shoe design matched with a swatch of fabric and a piece of golden string. Above it is a watercolour sketch of a blue high heel and some additional notes.

Wall to right of main display case

16. Storyboard sketch designs by Alan Tagg for *The Entertainer*, 1957. (TCD/S/000279).

Alan Tagg (1928-2002) was a British theatre designer who literally set the scene for twentieth-century realism on stage. *The Entertainer* was written by John Osborne especially for Laurence Olivier in 1957. It was performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London just a year after Osborne's first radical play

Look Back in Anger, and it employed a similarly realistic style. This artwork includes nine original pencil sketches for *The Entertainer*, which demonstrate ideas for different sets and backcloths in the production, with annotated scene details. The sketch at the lower right-hand corner is effectively an initial version of the finished set design displayed at 17.

17. Set design by Alan Tagg for *The Entertainer*, 1957. (TCD/S/000276/3).

This is a final watercolour version of a set design for *The Entertainer*. A few modifications can be seen in contrast with the storyboard sketches, such as the position of the door, the placement of the chairs, and the adjustment of the lighting angles.

*Cover image: detail from paintbox belonging to Wilhelm
(William Charles John Pitcher), TCO/M/000007/1.*

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