New Accessions

Recent highlights include:

- Graham Barlow Archive additions—design archive [donated by Priscilla Barlow]
- Bristol Hippodrome material
  Including posters, [donated by John Lamus]
- Terry Hallett Collection
  [donated by Greer Hallett - see details on Page 3]
- NRLA 2010 Footage
  [Commissioned by the Theatre Collection]
- Phyllida Garth Archive
  [donated by Lesley Trotter]

Forthcoming Events

Friends Event
The Crucible: talk & show

Tuesday 15th June
£13 - includes the show and a post-show discussion with the director Sue Wilson

Exhibition Opening
The Ingram bequest: Leslie Hurry Designs

Friday 11th June, 6pm
Please contact the Theatre Collection to book your place

Volunteer Sessions:
Preservation preparation in the Theatre Collection

Wednesday 9th June
10am - 12pm
Wednesday 7th July
2pm - 4pm

Phone Jo, Bex or Heather on 0117 33 15086 or email theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk
Tea and biscuits provided!

THEATRE COLLECTION MAILINGS

Please note: if you have received this newsletter by mail it means that your name and address are stored on the Theatre Collection mailing list. These details may be used by the Theatre Collection, and also more widely by the University of Bristol. Should you wish your details to be removed from the mailing list, please contact us.

The Director, University of Bristol Theatre Collection,
Department of Drama, Cantocks Close, Bristol BS8 1UP
Tel: 0117 33 15086 Email: theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk
Website: www.bristol.ac.uk/theatrecollection

THE NRLA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS!

The NRLA reached a very special landmark when it celebrated its 30th Anniversary in March 2010.
In the past three decades the festival has hosted work from some of the most adventurous artists from all over the world. It has travelled to Nottingham and London, but has always returned to roost in Glasgow. It has featured performances that have lasted moments, and others for 97 hours. Audiences have watched paper launched into the Glasgow night sky on helium balloons, been soaked by upturned hoses, and washed their hands with soap made from the fat of an artist's stomach.
The NRLA has hosted artists who have screamed, wept, whirled, slept and drawn blood, and to celebrate its long and colourful history, more than a hundred artists were invited back to present new work. The line-up was nothing short of extraordinary, including work from such live art luminaries as Ron Athey, Neil Bartlett, Julia Bardsley, Alastair MacLennan, La Ribot, Lee Wen and Kira O’Reilly.
The Theatre Collection commissioned the video documentation of the festival by a specialist camera team. A full list of the archived footage from the 2010 Festival is available at http://www.bris.ac.uk/theatrecollection/liveart/liveart_NRLA.html and is available to view by appointment.
2MP Project

Professor of Medieval Studies, Pamela King, in partnership with the Bristol University Theatre Collection, has secured funding from the Worldwide Universities Network to progress their project "Medieval Plays in Modern Performance" (http://www.wun.ac.uk/research/2mp).

The funding will enable an international team of theatre scholars, led by Bristol, to track all known archival traces of twentieth-century revivals, reconstructions, and adaptations of English drama from the Middle Ages.

The project wants to uncover previously unknown archival traces in order to create a central hub of information. It is expected that the archives will reveal the work of pioneering producers who defied the censors to bring God to the stage for the first time since the reign of Elizabeth I.

The 1951 Festival of Britain saw an explosion of interest in activity which had begun 50 years earlier with William Poel’s production of "Everyman".

Bristol University Drama Department, the first of its kind in the UK, helped drive this forward with such seminal productions as the Cornish "Ordinalia" (1969).

The project seeks to ensure that these unique archives are preserved for, and made accessible to, future generations. Owners and custodians of relevant material are invited to contact the project partners about the material they hold.

For more information contact the Theatre Collection on 0117 331 5086 or theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk.

2MP Project

Ted Hughes and Shakespeare

This year’s Wickham lecture, in conjunction with the Society for Theatre Research, was given by Jonathan Bate on 4th May. A leading Shakespeare scholar, Bate’s lecture focussed on the subject of Bate’s current research for his book on the literary life of Hughes.

Ted Hughes was passionate about Shakespeare, an obsession that culminated in his book Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being. Derided by professional Shakespeareans on its publication, it now looks prophetic of the turn towards an interest in religion in much recent work on Shakespeare.

Shakespeare expert Jonathan Bate, reassesses the poet as a reader of Shakespeare, while also showing how this publication gives us more of an insight into Hughes’ life and personality than that of Shakespeare.

The lecture was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Wickham Lecture 2010

Legacies

By leaving a gift in your will to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection you can help it to grow and ensure the best care for our collections, so enabling students to access this unique resource.

Regardless of its size, your legacy will live on forever, and it will make a significant impact on Bristol University generation after generation.

For further information please contact Jo Elsworth.

New Procedures

A Reminder ….

It is vital that we keep a record of people using the Theatre Collection Therefore, in October 2009, the Theatre Collection introduced a new system where all external researchers (including those only using the library) will be asked to complete a researcher’s form. A visitor’s pass will then be issued and must be produced when signing in each day.
Gog Theatre Company

Gog Theatre was initially formed from a three month theatre training and performance Youth Opportunities Programme, sponsored by a Manpower Services scheme, in 1981.

The name, Gog, was suggested by a member of the theatre group as there are two 1000 year old trees at the foot of Glastonbury Tor called Gog and Magog. It was said in the Druids time that these trees were the beginning of a sacred tree avenue that let up to the Tor. The tree is also the logo of the Gog Theatre.

Gog Theatre worked with primary and secondary schools, colleges, youth and community centres by way of performance tours, workshop programmes in theatre, dance, video and circus, alongside a commitment to multi-cultural education within the country.

As well as touring schools, Gog has also devised and performed other plays aimed at adult audiences and toured them to various venues in England, including the Edinburgh Festival.

Gog also undertook work on an international scale. In November 1985 Gog travelled to Cameroon, West Africa for a three month performance and workshop tour. From this visit evolved two productions, A Comin’ Home and Into Africa.

Following this, in September 1989, Gog travelled to Tbilisi, Georgia USSR for the first part of a unique cultural exchange project with the Rustaveli Young Company. Gog premiered a new play called Birdman based on the story of Bladud, an ancient King of Britain, who wanted to fly. In May 1990 Gog Theatre hosted the Rustaveli Young Company in England, with a national tour of The Stepmother.

This archive is currently being catalogued by a volunteer and oral history interviews are being undertaken with the original members.

New Archives

The Terry Hallett Collection

Donated by his wife, Greer, the Theatre Collection has recently acquired the Terry Hallett archive. The author of Bristol’s Forgotten Empire: the History of the Empire Theatre, Hallett was involved in many local history and theatre history projects, and was a keen cinema and theatre-goer.

Amongst his papers are programmes, playbills, photographs, books and research notes relating to Bristol Theatre and Music Hall.

Cinema related material from this collection has been donated to the Bill Douglas Centre at the University of Exeter.

Obituary

Rodney West (1943—2010)

It is with sadness that we report the death of Rodney West.

Following his undergraduate degree at Leeds, Rodney undertook a postgraduate course at Bristol University Drama Dept. He joined the Bristol Old Vic Company as Assistant Theatre Manager in 1967, as a student placement. When, in May 1968 he took up position as Theatre Manager he did so as ‘the youngest Theatre Manager in the oldest theatre’. He later founded London Arts Discovery.

Rodney was an established committee member of the Friends of the Theatre Collection. He will be missed by all who knew him.

A memorial service is to be held at St. Paul’s Church, Covent Garden, London on 25th September 2010, 11am.
successes in the West End including War and Peace, A Severed Head, and Fiorello.

By 1966 Barlow had developed an ambition to direct. So he matriculated at Bristol to read for the combined degree in English, Drama and History of European Art. During these three years he remained intermitently at the service of the Bristol Old Vic and naturally of the Drama Department where he enjoyed a happy collaboration with Professor Glynn Wickham on many productions.

On graduating he applied for an academic post at the recently established Drama Department at the University of Glasgow. His postgraduate study led to his becoming a recognized authority on 16th and 17th century theatre architecture. His doctoral thesis, From Tennis Court to Opera House became a seminal study in this field.

In 1983, Barlow set up home with his second wife on the Isle of Skye but continued to commute and teach. He retired early in 1993.

He bequeathed his archives to the Theatre Collection in his will and following his death in 2003 first his academic papers, and more recently his designs are now held here.
Desperate Men

30th Anniversary

2010 sees the 30th anniversary of Bristol-based internationally renowned theatre company, Desperate Men. Desperate Men are one of the UK’s longest-running Street Theatre Companies. Founded in Amsterdam in 1980 by Richie Smith and Jon Beedell, the company combines contemporary themes with an anarchic, passionate style.

Since 1980 Desperate Men have produced eight indoor shows; over thirty street shows, animations and community events in the UK and abroad; performed countless cabarets, led dozens of workshops, produced videos for Channel 4, and invented their own language, “Desperanto”. They have appeared from Edinburgh to Athens, Sligo to Berlin.

On 15th—17th October there will be a series of events taking place in Bristol to celebrate the 30th anniversary, aptly named ‘The Festival of Desperation’.

One aspect is the ‘Acts of Desperation’ project with new and emerging Bristol based performers (funded by Bristol City Council).

There will also be an exhibition which is to be curated by and mounted in the Theatre Collection foyer, charting the history of the Desperate Men and their iconic work.

It is also planned that the archives will be transferred to the Theatre Collection during this year, to be preserved and catalogued. A postgraduate student is currently working on the material to sort and appraise it before transfer takes place.

For more information see: http://www.desperatemen.com/.

Working with Students

The Theatre Collection is continuing to be involved in the teaching of the Drama Dept and more widely across the Faculty of Arts.

This term first year undergraduates have been working with the archives in various ways in their Approaches 2 module. At the beginning of the module they had to create a timeline, choosing a 50 year period and then selecting 2 historic and 3 theatrical key events in that period. They were to use the library and the archives to find these events – and were NOT allowed to use the internet at all!

The culmination of this same module, saw the students creating a performance, using items from the archives as inspiration. Items including a make-up box, scenic grooves from Bristol Old Vic, a Victorian court sword, and Franko B’s collar were used.

The Theatre Collection has also established a new Independent Study postgraduate module within History of Art entitled ‘Curating the Theatre Collection’. The unit aims to give MA students extra curatorial experience, which is particularly important for those wanting to go on to work in museums and galleries. Students will acquire practical experience of curatorial processes, and expert knowledge of the subject-matter of the exhibition. They will develop techniques of independent research as well as enhancing their ability to work in a team. The task of preparing texts for the catalogue and display will enhance their research and writing skills.

Sophie, a postgraduate on the MA Performance Research course, is basing her dissertation on the Berta Freistadt archive, recent additions to which were reported in the last newsletter. She will be cataloguing the new material as part of this work.

Eleanor, a third-year undergraduate, used the Theatre Collection and museum processes as inspiration for her final year performance. It involved the audience writing down memories concerning their body, snippets of which were written on Eleanor’s body in the archive. She then committed herself to the archive as a commentary on ‘the body as archive’. All the items created by the performance were donated to the Theatre Collection, completing the circle.
As part of the 30th Anniversary of the NRLA, the Live Art Archives were delighted to collaborate with TRACE Collective on a new performance piece.

TRACE Collective: André Stitt, Eddie Ladd, Holly Davey, Philip Babot and Tim Freeman

TRACE is dedicated to the research, investigation, dissemination and discourse of performance art. The group’s aim is to focus on the investigation and exploration of living performance activity and its discourse and dissemination through process, documentation and archiving.

For the 30th anniversary of the NRLA, through a durational performance, the Trace Collective reviewed the history of the National Review of Live Art as post-

historical-cluster-f***. This instantaneous documenting of live work took the form of collating and recycling past events through existing historical documents over a two-day period. Through access to the archives of the NRLA, TRACE photocopied existing performance photo documents, catalogues, posters, flyers, and programmes of past performances and events produced by the NRLA since 1979.

During the live performances the artists processed this documentation by continuously photocopying images of past performances on a series of photocopy machines. They further insinuated their own physical presence into the archive by photocopying their own bodies. The photocopies were shredded, with the shredded material being placed in recycled bags for redistribution. The public had full access throughout to experience the ‘live’ activity and the resulting installation/evidence and residual traces.

The Crucible: Performance and post-show talk

Tuesday 15th June 2010

Andrew Stocker, Chair of the Friends Association, has arranged for a post-show talk by director Sue Wilson, prior to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School’s production of Miller’s The Crucible at the Theatre Royal, Bristol. Sue will talk about this production and her experiences of working with the Theatre School.

Please note: this event is open to Friends of the Theatre Collection only.
Cost £13.
To book your place, please contact Jo, Heather or Bex on 0117 331 5086 or theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk

Friends Event

This project looks to record the memories of those involved in the theatre, whose memories may otherwise be lost forever, and aims to:

• Build up an oral history archive to compliment the collections held here;
• Provide an enhanced research resource;
• Provide an alternative way for our supporters to contribute to the development of the Theatre Collection.

Want to get involved?

We need help to conduct interviews, transcribe recordings, or even financially sponsor an interview. We are also keen to interview those involved in the theatre in any way.

More details can be found at www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/oral_history_leaflet.html.
Raymond Ingram was an enthusiast of the theatre, his love for drama influencing much of his life. Having worked as a drama teacher in Wolverhampton and Taunton, he later went on to lecture on the subject at the University of Winchester, in due course becoming the Head of the Drama Department.

During his earlier years studying at King’s College he became acquainted with the artist and set designer Leslie Hurry, who was to become a lifelong friend. Ingram collected many of Hurry’s designs, soon becoming the leading authority on his work.

This exhibition is in com-
Volunteer News

The number of Theatre Collection Volunteers has grown recently, with a number of new Volunteers taking on individual projects.

Some projects are: **Eleanor J** is helping to curate the next Theatre Collection exhibition, based on the Raymond Ingram Bequest of Leslie Hurry designs (see page 10 for more details).

**Eleanor F**, a third year Drama student has been listing the recently acquired Rosemary Vercoe/Patrick Robertson design archive, which was reported in the last newsletter.

**Anne** is gaining museum experience by making statistical sense of the Theatre Collection environmental monitoring forms - essential for preventing any potential problems for the collection.

**Caroline** has started the mammoth task of indexing the Ingram scrapbooks to make these useful research items accessible.

**Sophie** is working with Desperate Men theatre company to appraise and organise their archive before it is donated to the Theatre Collection. She is also undertaking Oral History interviews with the members of the company. See page 12 for more information.

Volunteer Sessions

**Preservation Work**

A new project for 2010 - preservation of the John Vickers glass plate negatives, creating specialist storage for this archive

**Wednesday 9th June**

10am-12pm

**Wednesday 7th July**

2pm-4pm

Phone Jo, Bex or Heather on 0117 33 15086 or email theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk

Friends News

Dear Friends of the Theatre Collection,

Thank you so much for inviting me to join your AGM before Christmas. It’s always a treat to spend time talking about our beautiful theatre with like minded souls!

I would like to tell you a little about the temporary changes that we’ve made to the Theatre Royal auditorium for our production of Juliet and Her Romeo, which Tom is directing.

We’ve been trying out some of the ideas that are driving our planned for capital development with a fairly simple ambition in mind; that the audience should get a better view of the stage and a little more leg room.

We’ve put the stage back to its original thrust format, as we did last year for Uncle Vanya.

We’ve opened up the stage left box to make an actor’s entrance, whilst sitting in the stage right one puts you within thrilling touching distance of the performance.

In the stalls we’ve raised the floor level to give a better view of the extended stage and, most strikingly, we’ve got rid of the central aisle, filling the best positions in the house with seats, rather than empty space. The seats themselves are different, borrowed for the duration of the run so that we can test them out for comfort and style.

Moving up to the dress circle, we’ve started to combat one of our biggest obstacles; the beautiful pillars that both help define our auditorium, and block the view of many of our patrons. By losing the central aisle we’ve been able to create entrances where there were once restricted view seats and, vice versa, seats where the aisle once was; the central, raised, best view in the house.

There are different seats here too, and we think they’re pretty comfy.

In the gallery you’ll notice something different: each seat gives you a full view of the stage, achieved by raising the benches just a little. This area is now unreserved, so if you get in first and grab the front row then you really will have one of the best spots in the theatre for a fraction of the price of the stalls.

We’d love to know what you think. Please drop me a line on emma@bristol-old-vic.co.uk, or write to me at the theatre.

Emma

(Emma Stenning, Executive Director, BOV)