ONE FROM THE ARCHIVE ..... 

Swagger Stick Top

The Theatre Collection has acquired a silver top, believed to have broken off the end of a swagger stick.

The top is inscribed ‘Kings Theatre Hammersmith 25 November 1918’ and lists the names of 13 women. The purchase was funded by our Friends Association and a little further research by a volunteer discovered that it relates to a performance by the Selfridge’s Staff Dramatic Society of The Shop Girl, given for the benefit of the Belgravia War Hospital Supply Depot in 1918.

THEATRE COLLECTION MAILINGS

Please note: if you have received this newsletter 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.

In line with our Green Impact Policy, we aim to send our newsletter out digitally to as many people as possible - if you have received a hardcopy newsletter but would be happy to receive it electronically in the future please let us know.

In 2013 the Theatre Collection was awarded funding by the National Cataloguing Grant Scheme to catalogue the Reference Boxes in the Mander & Mitchenson Collection. In June 2014 our project cataloguer Amie completed this mammoth task and all 1,495 Reference Boxes are now catalogued to file level.

All cataloguing has been completed. However, as the catalogue is very large, for ease of use it has been split into different sections which reflect the original order of the arrangement of the Reference Boxes. The catalogue entries are being converted and uploaded to our website in these sections and will appear as they are completed.

Currently, searchable lists can be found online at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatrecollection/search.html for Theatres (Inner London, Greater London and Regional) and Actors.

Researchers are already using the new lists with very positive results. Look out in the near future for additional lists relating to musicians, directors, composers, designers, foreign theatre and...
variety (plus others). In the meantime, while formatting for the web is taking place, you can contact the Theatre Collection if you have a specific request and we can search these lists on your behalf.

The boxes have revealed a multitude of fascinating and unusual archive items, some of which have already been displayed in the recent Corresponding with Conflict exhibition, not to mention several features in our Facebook ‘Object of the Month’. These include “Bayardo II, the Donkey that Roller-Skates”, from a press cutting dated 1910 found in the Variety boxes, and a beautiful lace-edged programme for a concert of classical music at Buckingham Palace which took place on 25 May 1866.

The National Cataloguing Grant Scheme is administered by The National Archives and is funded by a variety of grant-giving bodies, including the Pilgrim Trust, the Foyle Foundation and the Mellon Foundation amongst others. It is the only grant scheme to fund purely cataloguing projects and as such is heavily oversubscribed, so we were delighted to receive funding.

Our wonderful volunteers are continuing to repackage the Reference Boxes into archival quality enclosures and have completed over 800 boxes so far. If you would like to help us finish this task we’d love to hear from you.

**NEWS**

**New Reprographic Charges**
We have recently revised our charges for copying any material from our holdings. For further information, please see our webpage at https://www.bris.ac.uk/theatrecollection/reprographics.html or contact us.

**Donations**
Please note that to avoid excessive duplication of material, we are currently not accepting theatre programmes until we have rationalised our current holdings of over 150,000 programmes.

Whilst we amalgamate the Mander & Mitchenson Library, we are also no longer accepting routine donations of books unless they are of particular importance or relevance to our archival collections.

**Research**
The Theatre Collection dealt with 570 research enquiries from 1 January to 30 November 2014. We also had 62 new researchers working with our Collections, consulting a wide range of subjects and University of Bristol students have been working with us on projects around nineteenth-century melodrama and John Osborne’s play Look Back in Anger.

**Website**
The Theatre Collection website will be migrated to a new system over the coming months to comply with the University’s visual identity guidelines. We will be developing our Collections pages and revising much of the other content to make the site more informative and easier to use. Please look out for the update and do send us your feedback on the changes.

**Facebook**
We are continuing to attract a wider audience via our Facebook page with items such as Object of the Month proving particularly popular. We try to give you an indication of what happens behind the scenes here at the TC on the page, so please do have a look and let us know what you think.
**NEWS**

**Staffing and Structure**
A recent Academic Review of the Theatre Collection by the University has resulted in a higher profile, increased staffing levels and stronger management structure for the Theatre Collection. A new permanent, full time post of Archive Assistant was established and many of you will have met Jill in the reading room. Additionally, the Keeper: Theatre Archives has been expanded to a job share post with both archivists, Heather and Laura, working 3 days per week.

Another benefit of the Review is that the Theatre Collection is now directly part of the Faculty of Arts. This increases its visibility and position within the University. A new reporting structure keeps the TC Management Committee, but also gives it an Advisory Board, which will provide a more externally-facing, high profile advocacy and strategic advice. We are delighted to announce that Friends President, Stephanie Cole, has kindly agreed to join the Advisory Board.

In order to strengthen its academic links across the University, a new role of Academic Champion has been created. The Academic Champion will promote the TC as a resource for teaching and research across a wide range of departments in the University as diverse as Archaeology, English, Film, Historical Studies and Music. The position will be allocated to a different member of academic staff every 2-3 years and we are pleased to welcome Dr Ellie Rycroft from the Theatre Department as the Theatre Collection’s first Champion.

**Volunteers**
As always, we are indebted to our wonderful volunteers for all the help they give us and in 2014 this totalled 1,570 hours - the equivalent of another member and a half of staff!

Thanks to all their hard work, the huge task of re-packaging the John Vickers Archive glass plate negatives is now complete and the re-packaging of the M&M Reference Box Collection is progressing well - please get in touch if you would like to get involved as more volunteers are always very welcome.

**COLLECTIONS**

**Theatre Archives**
Over the last 18 months we have received several additions to the Yolanda Sonnabend Archive, generously donated by her family. These include set models, sketch books, correspondence and research files which support the finished designs that we already hold. The Yolanda Sonnabend Archive is not yet catalogued, so if you would like more information on the Collection please get in touch.

**Live Art Archives**
The Online National Review of Live Art Video Archive continues to grow as more artists, including Franko B and Bobby Baker give permission for their footage to be made available at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/nrla/online-archive.

The Theatre Collection has been awarded a £20k grant from The Wellcome Trust for a Scoping Study to develop new methodologies for enhancing access to, engagement with and the curatorial care of body-based art and archives. The project is due to start in 2015 and will use the Franko B Archive as a case study.

**Rare Book Collection and Journals**
The ongoing integration of the M&M Library into the Theatre Collection’s holdings has dramatically increased the number of pre-1900, limited edition or more fragile books we now have available to researchers. We are gradually working through the new items to make them as accessible as possible to users, although cataloguing may take a while. A new Rare Book Collection leaflet is being produced and the Theatre Collection also has an entry in the forthcoming edition of the CILIP Directory of Rare Book and Special Collections in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Also, as a result of the M&M Library integration, the last year has seen the number of individual journal titles we now hold rise from 177 to 322, with 145 being new title runs.
Our current exhibition explores the story of Theatre Roundabout, a unique theatre company whose archive was given to the Theatre Collection earlier this year. The archive includes costumes and props as well as photographs, scripts and other documentation. It is currently being catalogued and will be fully accessible soon.

Theatre Roundabout was formed by Peter Albery with actors Sylvia Read and William Fry in the early 1960s, at a time when small-scale theatre touring was almost unknown. Although there were occasional Arts Council supported tours of drama, opera and ballet, for large areas of the country there was no easy access to live theatre at all. Faced with a total lack of guidelines, the company had not only to beat out its own touring circuit through the wilderness but to devise a new form of theatre which could pay its way without financial subsidy. Sylvia and William solved the problem with their two-person shows, working without scenery or change of costume and using narrative and poetry as well as dialogue, often adapting classic novels into two-handers.

After a positive notice in The Sunday Times in 1961, enquiries came in from all over the country, and in 1964 Theatre Roundabout was incorporated as a non-profit-making company.

In addition to the Theatre Collection newsletter, Friends will have noticed that they are now receiving their own newsletter which contains more information about their work and events.

The Friends are also now on Twitter ([Friends_UoB_TC](https://twitter.com/Friends_UoB_TC)) and have their own e-mail address: [theatrecollection-friends@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:theatrecollection-friends@bristol.ac.uk). Please use this direct e-mail address to contact them.

**Funding from the Friends**

The Friends have been extremely supportive this year and have partially funded the purchase of the new costume case which is in the recently extended exhibition area at Park Row (see page 6).

**Bluebell**

The restoration by Bush & Berry of this lovely painting was funded by the Friends prior to it going on display in the *Actors and Artifice* exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy (RWA) (see page 8).

Work was carried out to surface clean the painting, fill paint losses and damages, restore thinned areas and blemishes and apply a final varnish. The painting is now in pristine condition and it is wonderful to be able to display it once more.

Subsequent to the restoration of the painting and the RWA exhibition, a specially leather-bound souvenir edition of the 250th performance of Bluebell (1902) was discovered in the Mander & Mitchenson Reference Box Collection. This includes printed music and has been rebound with original photographs and manuscript additions.
EVENTS

Universities UK Week 9-13 June 2014

University Museums Group Conference
The Theatre Collection hosted the annual conference of the University Museums Group (UMG) for the first time in 2014. 84 delegates attended a very successful two day event on 8-9 June on the theme of Digital Dimensions. The conference also included a Digital Showcase Day exploring new and ground-breaking ideas around interactive museum displays.

Revealing Roles
To coincide with Universities UK Week the Theatre Collection hosted workshops, led by Clare Thornton, the TC Artist in Residence, giving hands-on access to a selection of rare and fascinating archives and items and allowing people to discover more about how theatre reflects and reveals changing social roles in the early C20th at particular moments in time, such as 1914-1918.

Bristol Doors Open Day 2014
The Theatre Collection once again took part in the Bristol Doors Open Day event in September.

We had 860 enthusiastic visitors exploring our exhibition areas, reading room and library. The Corresponding with Conflict exhibition was extremely popular and generated lots of discussion about WWI and the Theatre Collection’s holdings. For many people although it was their first visit to the Theatre Collection it was hopefully not their last!

COLLECTIONS

charity. Most early performances were given in churches and their first important patron was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, but they were also sponsored by The British Council, The Scottish Arts Council, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, The Welsh Arts Council and The Arts Council of Great Britain.

During the 1970s Theatre Roundabout began to present full-sized plays for larger casts, but still, out of over 4,000 performances, 90% were two-person performances. Sylvia Read and William Fry toured all over the British Isles, from Shetland to the Channel Islands, and from London theatres to remote halls in Eire, as well as in Western Europe, Kenya, Bermuda and the United States. When on tour they lived and travelled in a motor-caravan, known as Mercy, purchased in 1983 through the generosity of many charitable trusts and members of their audiences.

Launch Event
On Friday 14th November, the Theatre Collection hosted an event at Royal Fort House to welcome the Theatre Roundabout Archive to Bristol, launch the exhibition and announce the cataloguing of the archive and its availability to researchers. This was a well-attended and joyful event with many people who had worked with or seen Theatre Roundabout over the years joining us to celebrate the legacy of the company and share their own memories.

William himself gave a fascinating account of the history of Theatre Roundabout and his and Sylvia’s experiences along the way. He provided a personal insight into the story of this unique company, which is reflected in the richness of its impressive archive.
EXHIBITIONS

New Exhibition Space

The Theatre Collection has expanded its exhibition space by taking over the adjacent room at Park Row. The space houses two new cases, one for displaying our costume collections and another with additional drawers enabling us to put more items on display.

Loans Out

We have been very active in the last year loaning out material to other organisations for exhibitions including:

- Franko B Archive items to The National Centre for Craft and Design, and the Oriel Davies Gallery for Creating a Scene
- Vivien Leigh material to Topsham Museum for Vivien Leigh: A Century of Fame
- Hull Time Based Arts Archive items to the Whitechapel Gallery, and Middlesborough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) for Damn Braces: Bless Relaxes
- Paintings, sketches and archival ephemera to the Royal West of England Academy (RWA) for Actors and Artifice (see page 8)
- Paintings, prints and books to the Holburne Museum of Art in Bath for Striking a Pose: Gesture in Theatrical Portraits, curated by students from the University of Bristol History MA unit 'Curating the Collection' (see page 8)

PROJECTS

Noël Coward: The Master

In the summer of 2013, The Theatre Collection was awarded £5,000 by The Noël Coward Foundation to catalogue the Noël Coward items in the Mander & Mitchenson Collection (M&M).

This project built on the links established with the Noël Coward Foundation following the M&M transfer in 2010/11, and the loans of Coward material from the Theatre Collection to the Star Quality exhibition at the New York Library of Performing Arts.

The friendship between Noël Coward (often referred to as ‘The Master’ by M&M) and Raymond and Joe (whom Coward nicknamed ‘Gog’ and ‘Magog’) resulted in a collection which is quite remarkable for the range and quality of the contents. The project was completed in March 2014, with over 4,500 items being catalogued and repackaged, including several hundred production and portrait photographs, programmes, letters, fliers, press cuttings and reviews, music scores and some unusual items including amateur photographs taken during a performance of Post Mortem in a prisoner of war camp during the Second World War.

A subsequent exhibition celebrating the life and work of ‘The Master’ ran from March to July at the Theatre Collection and was extremely successful, attracting a wide range of visitors.

The project as a whole has successfully achieved its aim of raising the profile of the archival resource, which has since been regularly consulted by researchers.
PROJECTS

Costume Collection

Over the summer this year we catalogued and photographed the costumes in the Theatre Collection.

The Theatre Collection holds more than 180 costumes, including a large number in the Mander & Mitchenson Collection such as this 19th century clown costume (short jacket and breeches) worn by Harry Payne, who is shown in the photograph in a similar outfit.

We would like to express our gratitude to the individuals who generously funded this project.

Naked Objects: Intelligent Showcases

The Theatre Collection has received REACT (Research and Enterprise in the Arts and Creative Technologies) funding to develop a museum display case for the 21st century in partnership with the company Aerian. The museum object is placed in the prototype case in its original state (the naked object) and the visitor can engage with the case using an interactive screen. This will allow the visitor to zoom-in on a high resolution digital image with facts, video, imagery and sound to entice users to participate. As the visitor’s level of engagement increases, the case will respond and track their areas of interest, presenting new information.

EXHIBITIONS

The Secret Life of Objects (Sep 2013-Mar 2014)

In this exhibition we selected some of the most intriguing items in the Theatre Collection and discovered what we could of their ‘life story’.

Although the stories are not always apparent from an item’s present appearance, researching its past can often provide fascinating information about people and places we know well, or reveal their own history of use and re-use, often being used for purposes completely different from those intended.

The exhibition focused on three themes: Place - looking at the Prince’s Theatre on Park Row and the Bristol Old Vic, Changing Uses - for example, a mid-17th century religious tract, Satan’s Fiery Darts, being re-appropriated as a prop Bible used by Lady Benson when playing Ophelia and People - investigating how items associated with well-known individuals such as Ivor Novello, Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier and Thomas Hardy can shed new light on their life stories.
EXHIBITIONS

Actors and Artifice (Feb-Mar 2014)

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection presented an intimate exhibition of theatrical portraits in partnership with the Royal West of England Academy (RWA). Items selected from over one hundred paintings depicting actors, directors and theatre professionals explored theatre's fascinating relationship with artifice in art, including artworks commissioned by actors keen to document themselves in character.

Over 3,000 visitors saw the exhibition. Curating exhibitions and loaning archival material to other venues is proving to be an extremely effective way to introduce our Collections to larger, more diverse audiences. More than 119,000 people saw our material which was out on loan last year.

Striking a Pose (June-July 2014)

This exhibition, curated by the University of Bristol MA History of Art students in a first-time collaboration between the TC and the Holburne Museum, Bath, brought together works from both organisations and included material from the Holburne’s Somerset Maugham Collection which had never been exhibited before.

It explored the lost dramatic language of gesture in the theatre, which was key to an 18th century audience’s understanding of the play. In an overcrowded, noisy theatre, where speech could be drowned out, gesture was an important way for the actors on stage to convey the meaning and action of the performance.

EXHIBITIONS

Corresponding with Conflict (Aug-Oct 2014)

As part of this year’s First World War Centenary commemorations, the Theatre Collection was delighted to be working once again with our Artist in Residence, Clare Thornton. She curated an exhibition breathing new life into archival material dating from the 1914-1918 period and encouraging fresh encounters with it.

Drawing inspiration from across the Theatre Collection’s holdings and looking at the lives of those left behind during WWI, the exhibition provided glimpses into how conflict and everyday life became entwined. Through playbills, programmes, photographs, letters and the occasional object, the story of everyday responses to the war was revealed. From adverts asking people to send chewing gum to the soldiers, to formal announcements from the Prime Minister to be read aloud in the theatre asking people to ‘Hold Fast’, the little details that survive in the archive allowed deeper reflection on those times.

The exhibition included two new art pieces made by Clare and a new interpretive text-based piece by Richard Aslan presented alongside the original wartime documents that inspired their creation. This encouraged visitors to make deeper, unexpected connections with the evocative archival material.