

London Theatre - a bibliography



Gaiety Theatre.
Programme, 1905

Theatre has played an important role in the cultural, architectural and social history of Westminster. As the local studies and archives centre for the borough, City of Westminster Archives Centre is committed to documenting the history of West End theatre.

The Archives Centre's holdings include:

- Over 30,000 theatre programmes from the late 19th century to the present day
- 1,000s of 19th century playbills
- News cuttings and scrapbooks
- Portraits of 19th century actors and actresses
- Prints and drawings of West End theatres

These extensive collections of original material are supplemented by a large number of reference works on the history of London theatre, located at Westminster Archives Centre as well as at the Westminster Reference Library.

This guide is an introduction to Westminster Archives Centre's library collections on London theatre. The bibliography is just a selection of important works in our collections; you will find many more theatre history books and periodicals in Westminster Libraries and Archives by searching our online catalogue:

<http://elibrary.westminster.gov.uk>.

Quick reference

KENNEDY, D. (ed.) *The Oxford encyclopedia of theatre and performance*. [2 vols]. Oxford: OUP, 2003. Brief entries for all aspects of theatre and performance, include biographical entries, with extended entries on particular developments in performance history. [792.03 OXF]

HIGHFILL, P. [et al.] *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, managers & other stage personnel in London, 1660-1800*. [16 vols]. Carbondale & Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1973-93. Thoroughly researched biographical dictionary with over 8500 entries. Covers not only principal performers, but also all aspects of theatre production, from principal performers to prompters, and from machinists to magicians. Volumes 1 to 10 include plates of rare historic prints, plans, theatre ephemera and administrative papers. [792.092]

Who's who in the theatre: a biographical record of the contemporary stage. 9th ed., 13th-16th ed. London: Pitman, [1939-1977].

An essential reference work, covering London theatre from 1936 to 1977. Includes cast lists for London productions, actor biographies and obituaries, and listings of long runs on the London stage. Editions 9 to 14 include details of notable productions and revivals 'from earliest times'. Edition 13 includes interior plans of the principal theatres.

MEYER-DINKGRÄFE, D (ed.) *Who's who in contemporary world theatre*. London: Routledge, 2000. 1,400 entries on people working in the worldwide theatre industry today, with basic biographical details, information on professional training and details of major achievements. [792.092 MEY]

HOWARD, D. *London theatres and music halls, 1850 - 1950*. London: Library Association, 1970. Indispensable reference for discovering history of particular theatres; arranged alphabetically by theatre name, gives details of name changes, architecture and construction, managers and years of licences. Particularly useful for researching minor theatrical venues, including public houses, concert rooms and music halls.

- BERGAN, R. ***The great theatres of London***. (Rev ed.) London: Andre Deutsch, 2004.
Easy-to-use guide to the main London theatres, with brief descriptions of their architecture and history. [792.09421 BER]
- MANDER, R. & J. MITCHENSON. ***The theatres of London***. (Rev. ed.) London: New English Library, 1975.
Mander and Mitchenson's collection of short articles on London theatres includes Club and 'Outer Ring' London theatres as well as the landmark venues of the West End. It is complemented by their publication *Lost theatres of London* (see below) [792.09421]

General guides to theatre history

- FRASER, N. ***Theatre history explained***. Ramsbury: Crowood, 2004.
An overview of the history of Western theatre, with an emphasis on plays and playwrights. [792.09 FRA]
- HARTNOLL, P. ***The theatre: a concise history***. (3rd ed.) London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.
A history of theatre in Europe, with many illustrations. Includes details of principal London actors and theatres in each historical period. [792.09 HAR]

Theatre through the ages

- The Cambridge history of British theatre*** (3 vols). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
A key reference work, with essays covering the history of British theatre in considerable detail from its origins to the present day. Expertly researched and thoroughly indexed. [792.0941 CAM]
- AVERY, E. (ed.) ***The London stage, 1660-1800 [...]***. [4 vols]. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, [1960-]
An indexed calendar of plays, concerts and other entertainments performed in London theatres from 1660-1800. Entries have been transcribed from playbills, newspapers and other theatre ephemera, and often include details of the cast, venue, prices and administrative details. Introduction consists of a collection of essays on various aspects of the theatre during the period. [792.09421]
- POWELL, K (ed.) ***The Cambridge companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre***. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
A collection of essays covering a wide range of aspects of Victorian and Edwardian theatre, including 'showbusiness', stagecraft, audiences and gender theory. [792.0941 CAM]
- PICK, J. *The West End: mismanagement and snobbery*. Eastbourne: Offord, 1983.
An investigation of theatre management in the West End from the mid 19th century to the 1980s. [792.09421]
- TAMES, R. ***Theatrical London***. London: Historical Publications, 2006.
A historical overview of the London stage from the Tudor period to the present day. Illustrated and indexed, with a handy chronology. [792.09421]
- MANDER, R. & J. MITCHENSON. ***Lost theatres of London***. (3rd ed.) London: New English Library, 1975.
Mander and Mitchenson investigate the sometimes complex and confused histories of London's lost theatres, including converted theatre buildings and those theatres that have simply been demolished. Illustrated, with maps of theatre locations. [792.09421 MAN]

Theatre architecture

- KILBURN, M. ***London's theatres***. London: New Holland, 2002.
A lavishly illustrated collection of short essays on London's principal theatres, giving historical details of each theatre's development and detailed descriptions of the interior decoration. [792.09421]

Lytton's theatre and concert halls seating plans, 1960-1961. London: Dancing Times, [1960].

Lytton's theatre and concert halls seating plans, 1966-1967. London: Dancing Times, [1966].

Lytton's seating plans were compiled as a means of selecting seats offered by booking agents. They give detailed, numbered plans of seating areas in both London and provincial theatres, with brief historical entries on each theatre. [792.0942]

Guides to particular London Theatres

City of Westminster Archives Centre has a large number of works on particular theatres, searchable via the library catalogue: <http://elibrary.westminster.gov.uk>

Of particular note are:

Survey of London. Vol 35: The Theatre Royal Drury Lane and The Royal Opera House Covent Garden. London: Athlone, 1970.

Volume 35 of this highly-regarded architectural survey is an in-depth history of the site, buildings and management of two of London's oldest and most significant theatres. [942.11]

MACQUEEN-POPE, W. **Haymarket: theatre of perfection.** London: Allen, 1948.

The prolific theatre historian W. Macqueen-Pope writes about the history of one of London's oldest and most renowned theatres. [792.09421 HAY]

HOLLINGSHEAD, J. **Gaiety chronicles.** London: Constable, 1898.

Includes a chronological listing of performances at the theatre to 1898. [792.09421 GAI]

Theatre biography

The Theatre Collection is supported by a large number of biographies and autobiographies of people in theatre, including Mrs Siddons, Kean, the Kembles and Garrick, as well as some popular entertainers and current names in theatre. These are searchable via the library catalogue: <http://elibrary.westminster.gov.uk>

Popular theatre

TURNER, J. **Victorian arenas: the performers. A dictionary of British circus biography.** [2 vols]. Formby: Lingdales, [1995-2000].

A useful reference work for this important yet little documented aspect of Victorian entertainment. Performers' real and stage names are cross-referenced. [791.3]

HOLLAND, C. **Strange feats and clever turns: remarkable speciality acts in variety, vaudeville and sideshows at the turn of the 20th century as seen by their contemporaries.** London: Holland and Palmer, 1998.

A collection of articles reproduced from popular magazines and newspapers at the turn of the 20th century. Features shows and variety acts that performed at venues such as the Egyptian Hall and the Palace Theatre. The author also has a website: www.palaceofvariety.co.uk [792.7]

GRIMALDI, J. **Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi.** London: Bentley, 1846.

Joseph Grimaldi is the most famous clown in British Theatre, and during his lifetime transformed the art of pantomime into the most popular and lucrative form of entertainment in Regency Britain. These edited memoirs, published a decade after his death, are based on Grimaldi's own manuscript of the account of his life on stage. [791.33 GRIMALDI]

SHERIDAN, P. **Penny theatres of Victorian London.** London: Dobson, 1981.

Penny theatres or 'penny gaffs' were a popular entertainment venue for the urban poor of the middle to late Victorian era, performing principally pantomimes and farces. Although concentrated in London's East End, this book also covers penny theatres in Marylebone and Paddington. [792.022]

Illustrated works

FOAKES, R. *Illustrations of the English stage, 1580-1642*. London: Scolar, 1985.

A collection of contemporary visual evidence of the London stage during this important period in the city's theatre history. Each source is described, interpreted, evaluated by the author. [f792.094205]

MACKINTOSH, I. *The Georgian playhouse: actors, artists, audiences and architecture, 1730-1830*. [Catalogue for exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, 21 Aug – 12 Oct 1975]. London: Arts Council, 1975.

Catalogue of a major exhibition held to celebrate the opening of the National Theatre. [792.094207]

WILKINSON, R – *Theatrum Illustrata* [...] London: Wilkinson, [1819-1825]

An ambitious work, Wilkinson's *Londina Illustrata* is a pictorial survey of historic monuments and noteworthy buildings in London and Westminster. The second volume in this part work, *Theatrum Illustrata*, (listed as *Londina Illustrata Vol. II*) is dedicated to the graphic documentation of 'ancient playhouses, modern theatres and other places of amusement' in London and Westminster. [ff942.11(7)]

WILSON, F. *The photographs of Angus McBean : from the stage to the surreal : photographs from the Harvard Theatre Collection*. London : Thames & Hudson, 2009.

Lavishly produced volume of the theatre portraits of Angus McBean, the 'court photographer' of the London stage from the 1930s to the 1960s. [f792.09421 MAC]

Other theatre history sources in Westminster Archives Centre and Westminster Reference Library

Westminster Libraries and Archives' performing arts collection includes a vast amount of original source material at Westminster Archives Centre:

Theatre Playbills

Our collection of playbills is arranged by theatre and then by date, and is held in our on-site stores. A list of theatres and corresponding playbill portfolios is available at the Enquiry Desk: please ask a member of staff.

Theatre Programmes

Arranged by theatre and then by date. Please ask a member of staff for more details

WESTCAT – Archives catalogue: <http://www.calmview.eu/Westminster/CalmView>

Search the WESTCAT catalogue to find historic prints and photographs of the London theatre scene.

E-library – Books and pamphlets catalogue: <http://elibrary.westminster.gov.uk>

Search the Westminster Libraries' E-Library for records of our theatre history, biography and architecture books.

Prints, photograph and book illustrations card catalogues

A card index to prints, photographs and illustrations in the Archives Centre's collections is available in the Search Room.

Broadley collection of theatre prints

A.M. Broadley's bound collection of theatre prints covers the history of Haymarket theatres, with a large amount of 18th and 19th century material. The volumes are indexed in the card index in the Archives Centre's Search Room.

Performing Arts resources at Westminster Reference Library

Westminster Libraries and Archives' performing arts collection at **Westminster Reference Library** includes over 15,000 books covering all aspects of the performing arts, a third of which are available to borrow. Westminster Reference Library also offers a wide range of yearbooks, directories, journals and digital resources on the theatre. For more information on theatre resources at Westminster Reference Library, visit <http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/special/perform>

Useful websites

More theatre history resources in Westminster Libraries and Archives

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/special/perform/>

Information about Westminster Reference Library's Performing Arts collection

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/gateway/entertainment/>

An online subject gateway with links to a wide range of useful online sources for theatre history research.

Theatre collections

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/theatreollection/bristol.html>

Website for the University of Bristol's theatre collections

<http://library.kent.ac.uk/library/special/html/specoll/theatre.htm>

The University of Kent's dedicated pages for its theatre history collections. Includes playbill and programme catalogues with full item transcriptions.

http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/theatre_performance

The Victoria and Albert Museum holds the national collection of material on live performance.

<http://www.bl.uk/theatrearchive>

The British Library's theatre archive documents the history of post-war British theatre.

Theatre history

<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk>

This website is a wealth of information on London's theatre history, with over 2,000 pages and 5,000 archive images.

Performance databases

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/339/339>

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust maintains this database of RSC productions, many of which were performed in the West End. Searchable by play title, production or cast.

<http://worthing.nationaltheatre.org.uk>

Developed by the National Theatre Archive, this performance database allows users to search for National Theatre Production by production or role.

Image collections

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/contentdm/cdm4/search.php>

The University of Illinois Theatrical Prints Collection includes almost 3,500 portraits of actors from 1720 to 1920. These have been digitised and can be viewed via their special collections catalogue.

Theatre societies

<http://www.str.org.uk>

The Society for Theatre Research's website includes the latest news in the field of theatre history research.

<http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk>

The Theatres Trust's site includes a theatre history database and a collection of over 2000 theatre-related images.