

Research Resources in the College Archives

Drama

The College Archives contain the collections of several small, but controversial twentieth century London-based touring companies. Records of theatre and performance inspired by gender and sexual identities, political and social attitudes and events, and the desire to bring theatre to new and non-traditional audiences form the mainstay of the collections. Scripts, directors' papers, rehearsal, performance and technical notes, and photographs provide insight into the devising and production of plays. Extensive collections of reviews reflect how these performances were perceived by the public. In documenting drama created in changing political and social contexts the theatre archives provide an accessible, colourful and varied resource for original research for both undergraduates and postgraduates. The research resources for studying drama and performing arts provided by the theatre collections and the Coton Collection of dance memorabilia are complemented by records reflecting the strong tradition of student drama at Royal Holloway, and its former London counterpart, Bedford College.

Relevant archive collections include:

Records of the Red Shift Theatre Company, 1982-2007, (RSTC)

This recently catalogued accession provides extensive insight into the workings and productions of an award-winning theatre company which aimed to make English and European literary and theatre classics accessible and relevant to the concerns of modern audiences. Production and technical records reflect the Company's emphasis on the cinematic use of music and design to create imaginative and inspiring work that would distinguish it from other small-scale touring companies. Public responses to these radical new versions are well documented in audience correspondence, whilst the acclaim which the Company received for its imaginative and inspiring work is recorded in press cuttings and reviews.

Records include:

Administrative and financial records; production records, including annotated scripts, technical notes, rehearsal and production notes and directions, stage directions, information on casts, and tour and venue information; tour records; publicity material; marketing and educational-outreach material; audiovisual performance records; audience correspondence and feedback; cast, rehearsal and production photographs.

Records of the Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company, 1974-1995, (GS)

The Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company tried to create, through its performances, a realistic public representation of homosexuality. This collection contains extensive records relating to the concepts and issues that inspired and divided this controversial and successful theatre company. Production records show how the Company devised and wrote many of its own plays, which aimed to deal with controversial contemporary issues such as genetic engineering, lesbian custody, AIDS, transsexualism, and violence against women.

Records include:

Administrative and financial records, including company minutes, reports and correspondence from the public, and papers regarding company funding; records relating to the founders of Gay Sweatshop and to the authors of plays performed by the company; production records, including scripts, financial papers, venue information, contracts, audience correspondence, reviews, programmes, press releases; tour material; publicity records; newspaper cuttings and reviews; audiovisual records of company productions; photographs of productions and Gay Sweatshop members.

Records of the Half Moon Theatre Company, 1972-1990 (HMT)

This company, whose founders wanted to create an accommodation and performance space inspired by Sixties alternative society, possessed a strong political agenda and went on to become one of London's most influential left-wing theatre companies. Financial records and correspondence show how the Company struggled to ally its own aims to provide political theatre to audiences with low disposable incomes with government arts funding policies, which stipulated that arts organisations should be self-supporting through ticket sales. Architectural records relating to the construction of a new theatre in the 1980s document the creation of an innovative new community-based performance space where primary-school children to pensioners could work, meet and visit. Production records document performances of plays by well-known

playwrights, including William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Stephen Berkoff and Dario Fo, as well those written by, and produced specifically for, the company.

Records include:

Administrative and financial papers, including company minutes, reports and records relating to funding and funding council applications; annual reports and accounts; scripts; production records, including advertising material, press releases and clippings of reviews; architectural records relating to the Half Moon Theatre building; newspaper clippings and reviews; a large number of production and cast photographs.

The Coton Collection

This collection of performance programmes, souvenir programmes, photographs, and calendars was amassed by A.V. Coton, real name Edward Haddakin (1906-1969), the eminent *Daily Telegraph* dance critic, President of the Critics' Circle, London, and author of several books on ballet. The collection contains photographs of many famous dancers, including Antony Tudor, Anna Pavlova, Moira Shearer, Vaslav Nijinsky, Erik Bruhn and Leonide Massine. Whilst books and journals from the Collection are accessible in Founder's Library, the programmes, photographs and calendars, providing a colourful insight into mid-twentieth century dance performance, staging and publicity, are stored in the College Archives.

Records include:

An extensive collection of photographs of individual dancers, performances and companies; a large collection of performance programmes, dating from 1935 to 1968, for such companies as Ballet Russes, Ballet Rambert, the Royal Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet and American Ballet Theatre.

Records of drama at Royal Holloway and Bedford Colleges

A strong and vibrant tradition of student drama is evident in the archive collections of both colleges. The performance of plays and musicals was a popular form of leisure and entertainment for students, whilst the production of Greek plays was a key activity of classical societies.

Records include:

Bedford College:

Photographs of Greek drama performances, 1887-1921 (BC PH/6/2); photographs of drama, 1887-1949 (BC PH/6/2-3); photographs of various drama groups (BC PH/6/3/3); photographs of the Bedford College Dramatic Society, 1933-35, (BC PH/6/3/4); records of the Bedford Light Opera Group (BLOG), 1960s-1980s, (BC AS/212)

Royal Holloway College:

Papers of the Shakespeare Society, 1908-1945 (RHC AS/216); papers of the Savoy Opera Society, 1971-80 (RHC AS/233-236); records of the Royal Holloway Dramatic Association, CHARD, 1913-1977 (RHC AS/211; A63); photographs of CHARD productions, 1958-1965 (RHC PH/240); photographs of drama and musical productions, 1896-1965 (RHC PH/240-253); records of the Classical Club, 1939 (RHC AS/210/1); photographs of 'Antigone', Classical club drama production, 1905 (RHC PH/241/22-50); records of the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies, 1986 (RHC AS/920/7)

Other relevant items from the College Archives:

- The **Personal Papers of Professor Caroline Spurgeon 1890-1936 (PP7)**, lecturer and Head of English at Bedford College. The collection contains papers relating to Spurgeon's research on Shakespeare, Chaucer, Keats and mysticism.
- The **Personal Papers of Professors Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson 1690-2001 (PP56)**, who taught at Bedford College, University College London and Birkbeck College, and published several works on English literature. Their papers contain notes on dramatists and actors of the nineteenth-century, including Tennyson and Byron, Shakespeare and other non-19th century dramatists, Gilbert & Sullivan, Victorian pantomime and melodrama, notes and cuttings on contemporary descriptions of visits to the theatre and Victorian commentary on drama.

The Royal Holloway and Bedford College collections can be used to research a variety of subject areas, including:

- Social and cultural history of university life
- Attitudes towards women's education
- Women's career opportunities and employment
- Gender and patriarchy
- Victorian and Edwardian femininity and sexuality
- Women's social and political activity and status in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain
- Women's suffrage
- Female social reformers
- Life in wartime and the war effort
- Women's fashion (see online '**College Fashion Exhibition**' on the Archives website)
- Victorian and Edwardian domesticity
- The domestic interior
- Material culture
- Advertising
- Visual representation through photography
- Life in nineteenth and twentieth century London
- Nineteenth century economic and social history
- Nineteenth century medicine
- Victorian philanthropy
- History of art and architecture
- Student politics
- Student literature and poetry
- Leisure pursuits and sports
- Student drama

The archives can also provide examples and guidance in the following areas:

- Life narratives, oral history and auto/biography
- Drama and theatre history
- Victorian art, media and culture

Relevant highlights from the collections include:

- A large collection of formal and informal staff and student photographs dating from the 1880s, including several personal albums
- An extensive collection of photographs of student and staff bedrooms and studies at the College
- Student diaries from the early twentieth century, including the diaries of Winifred Seville (1906-1910), providing a detailed and personal account of life at Royal Holloway College
- Former staff and student reminiscences, correspondence and oral history memories, including a large collection of nineteenth and twentieth century correspondence
- Student Union records
- Student magazines, containing literary, theatre and dance reviews and examples of student creative writing
- Records relating to the design and construction of Bedford College and Royal Holloway College buildings and interiors

Reference works on the history of Bedford and Royal Holloway Colleges, the Picture Gallery, women's education, the life and work of Thomas Holloway, and the Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company are available for consultation in the Archives Reading Room.

The collections may be useful for the following undergraduate modules:

- Contemporary Theatre-making
- Critical Theory
- Playwriting
- The Director and The Stage
- Producing Women: Feminist Theory and Theatre
- Devising Theatre
- Film, Gender, Race and Sexuality
- Portable Theatre and Education Outreach
- Bouquets & Brickbats: Theatre Reviewing & Theatre Historiography
- Dissertation

The theatre archives can also be used for research for the pathways in 'Directing', 'Applied Drama', 'Playwriting' and 'Physical Theatre and Performance' in the following MA courses:

- MA in Greek Theatre Performance
- MA in Theatre
- MA in British Theatre Culture

Appointment and contact details:

If you wish to look at records from the archives please contact us via archives@rhul.ac.uk to arrange an appointment.

However, you are welcome to visit the Archive Service without appointment to enquire about the collections and to view our corridor displays.

Further information about the Archive Service, including the online catalogue, facilities, opening hours and contact details can be found on our website at <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/archives>.