



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Stead Collection

1672-1932

*T-Mss 1933-001

Summary

Creator: Stead, Hiram

Title: Stead Collection

Date: 1672-1932

Size: 600 portfolios>

Source: Purchase, Stead, Hiram, 1932

Abstract: The Stead Collection gives a comprehensive depiction of the English theater. The collection consists primarily of playbills, programs, clippings and prints, but also contains manuscript material consisting of letters, photographs, legal and financial documents, and ephemera.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

Conditions Governing Use: Photocopying prohibited

Preferred citation: Stead Collection, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Collector and theater-goer, Stead travelled through Great Britain collecting playbills, programs and other ephemera to document British theater history.

Scope and Content Note

The Stead Collection gives a comprehensive depiction of the English theater. The collection consists primarily of playbills, programs, clippings and prints, but also contains manuscript material consisting of letters, photographs, legal and financial documents, and ephemera. Broad­sides and programs, usually

single sheets, comprise the bulk of the collection. There are often complete or nearly complete runs in the 18th and 19th centuries for some London theaters including the Theatres Royal at Haymarket, Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Other London theaters include the Adelphi and Royal Victoria, and some that were subsequently demolished or converted to other uses such as the Lyceum, Olympic, St. James, and Surrey. Also contains some programs for theaters outside London: in Bath, Leeds, Liverpool, and other cities. Subject files created by Stead consist of material in various formats relating to particular actors, plays, theaters, or playwrights. For example, there are letters of actors such as Edmund Kean and William Macready; many files under title for individual plays by Shakespeare and other playwrights; small amounts of material on pantomime and the circus; and general files on British theatrical history. Legal documents include leases and other material relating to theatrical litigation. Financial records include account books, ledgers and box office statements. The collection also contains music; drawings; time-books, which are records kept by stage managers of artists' attendances at rehearsals and performances; and ephemera such as tickets. Though the focus of the collection is on British theater, there is a small amount of material documenting the American, French and German stage.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Broadsides
Clippings
Letters (correspondence)
Prints
Programs

Subjects

Circus -- England
Pantomime -- England
Theater -- England -- History -- 17th century
Theater -- England -- History -- 18th century
Theater -- England -- History -- 19th century
Theater -- England -- History -- 20th century
Theaters -- England
Theaters -- England -- London
Theaters -- Great Britain

Names

Stead, Hiram
Kean, Edmund, 1787-1833
Macready, William Charles, 1793-1873
Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616
Adelphi Theatre (London, England)
Covent Garden Theatre
Haymarket Theatre (London, England)
Lyceum Theatre (London, England)
Old Vic Theatre (London, England)
Olympic Theatre (London, England)
St. James Theatre (London, England)
Surrey Theatre
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (London, England)