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**Theatre Playbills Collection**

**1760s-1970s**

**Description:** This collection comprises circa 6,000 playbills and a number of programmes, posters and related newspaper cuttings, mainly from Hull theatres, but also including some from other Yorkshire towns and cities, and from India. The playbills date from the 1760s to the 1970s, and advertise a wide range of pantomime, melodrama, farce, ballet, opera and comedy. The theatres of Hull were host to many touring companies, from London and elsewhere, both acting and opera. The best known actors and actresses of the day; for example the comedy actress Mrs Jordan and the actress of tragedy Sarah Siddons, appeared as star attractions at the Hull Theatre Royal.

The list of theatres covered is as follows: the Theatres Royal of Hull, Doncaster, Huddersfield, Exeter and York, and of Rourkee and Chowringhee in India; Theatre Royal and Opera House, Huddersfield; Theatre Doncaster; Theatre Leeds; Theatre Pontefract; Theatre Wakefield; the Assembly Rooms, Royal Clarence Theatre, Minor Theatre, Sans Pareil, Summer Theatre, Queen's Theatre, Grand Theatre, New Theatre, Alexandra Theatre, Royal Institution, Scott's Theatre, Scott's Pantheon, Zoological Gardens, Mechanics' Institute and Jarratt Street Music Hall, all in Hull; and Theatre Grand and Opera House, Leeds.

The most extensive theatre related collection is that of the playbills of the Theatre Royal, Hull and other local theatres. These are available mainly on microfilm, although there are also some photocopies and some originals. The Theatres Royal began after 1750, Hull and York gaining their licences in 1769, a copy of which is kept in the library holdings. [hq PN 2593L4] .

The collection reflects the development in the theatre. From the time of the opening of the Theatre Royal onwards the playbills are a valuable source of information for researchers. They offer a wealth of detail and are a comment on the social concerns and pleasures of the day. The changing provincial tastes in entertainment may be traced in considerable detail. Comedy was enjoyed by late eighteenth century audiences, melodrama and military dramas were especially popular with Victorian audiences, and towards the end of the century Western themes were also popular. The Playbills themselves are often lively pieces of commercial art. Double or even triple bills were the normal practice with, for example a long melodrama followed by a shorter farce or lantern show. A wealth of detail was crammed on to the bills. Often a scene by scene synopsis was included, with apposite comments on the characters.

**Extent:** 9 microfilms

**Access conditions:** Access to the majority of the collection is by microfilm (microfilm numbers M/I 3607-M/I 3615). Check University of Hull library catalogue for individual entries.

**Language:** English