

ROOMER

The Newsletter of the Traditional
Drama Research Group.
Vol 2, no. 1. 1982.



TRADITIONAL DRAMA RESEARCH GROUP

Over the past years a number of researchers in the British Isles have been informally working together on aspects of Traditional Drama. Recently, as a logical extension of this co-operation, the Traditional Drama Research Group has been formed with the express aim of furthering research in this field of study by encouraging communication and co-operation.

One of the first decisions of the group has been to instigate a series of occasional publications. Several geographical indexes of traditional plays, covering the counties of Berkshire, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire and Wiltshire, have previously been published by members of the group. Updated editions of these are currently being prepared for publication in this series and further lists are being collated to cover other areas of the country and genres of related traditions. It is also intended to commence publication of out-of-print books, articles and original studies. Also in the area of publishing, the Traditional Drama Research Group has kindly taken over the administration and finance of the newsletter Roomer.

In order to handle the enormous backlog of relevant research materials, members of the group have developed a Co-operative Indexing Scheme for Traditional Drama and Related Customs. The aim of this scheme is to update and expand the material listed by E. C. Cawte, A. Helm and N. Peacock in their volume, English Ritual Drama (London, 1967). Since the publication of this seminal volume, due to the increased interest in this area of study, many more references have come to light. Unfortunately the bulk of this material has not yet been made available in a comparable work. As a result, it is now increasingly difficult to discover just what material relating to a tradition has been located. In order to resolve this situation, a series of worksheets have been developed as an aid to indexing relevant sources.

The group has arranged a series of meetings over the past twelve months. These have been held in various parts of the country and a programme is now available for the forthcoming year.

Enquiries regarding the activities and publications of the Group should be directed to: Traditional Drama Research Group, c/o Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield, Sheffield. S10 2TN

DOCUMENTING TRADITIONAL DRAMA - PART I

PAUL SMITH

Over the years several research aids and questionnaires have been produced, often as part of larger research projects, that are directly relevant to the study of Traditional Drama. As many of the ideas and approaches contained in these items could prove useful in future work we hope in this series to present you with a selection of some of the approaches that have been adopted.

For the first of these we are indebted to Dr. David Buchan and Professor Herbert Halpert for permission to reproduce questionnaires that were originally designed for use in the Department of Folklore, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

MUNFLA Q67 2

MUMMERING

1. We are trying to find how many areas of Newfoundland have had some form of Christmas disguising and house visiting often called Mummering or Janneying. Even a brief report that it existed in your community and whether it is still carried on would be helpful. If you can say something on this point please do so, even if only briefly.
2. A more detailed description, and particularly complete details of one set of disguises and one house visit would be more helpful than many generalizations.
3. We would like to get specific details on any of the following:
 - a) What do people call those who dress up in various disguises during Christmas in your community, or in any others you know? (Name each place) (Some names used include fools, mummers, darbies, janneys, johnnys, jenneys, guisers, geezers, maskers, dress-ups, soldiers, white boys, ribbon fools, etc.). If there is more than one name, which did the older people use? When did the newer one(s) come in? Please try to find out what brought in the change.
 - b) On what day or days during the Christmas season did people dress up? At what times of day or night did they visit other houses? About how many houses? How many people were in any one group? How did they announce themselves? Give examples of typical ways of asking admission, and typical replies. If they have any special way of talking, please describe it and give examples of what they might say.
 - c) Describe their behavior while going between houses? (Noisy? Singing? Marching or casual walking? Peaceable or rough? Any fights or chasing?) Describe what they carried in their hands (sticks? walking canes? split? hobby horse, etc.) and how used?
 - d) If admitted how did they behave? (Were they quiet or rowdy? Describe any tricks they might play). If they were expected to entertain, what would they do? (e.g., dance? sing? recite? tell stories or jokes? play musical instruments?)
 - e) Describe how people tried to find out who the disguised visitors were, and how the visitors reacted. Were there any differences in the ways men or women behaved?
 - f) If anyone in your community remembers an old act or play which the visitors sometimes performed, we should be very glad to have any details however small. Although we only have a few reports of this perhaps you can find someone who remembers such details as the fight(s), the collection, or the names and costumes of characters. These last vary from place to place but might include some of the following: Father Christmas, Roomer, Jack or Jan, George, Patrick, Turkish Knight, the Doctor and some Devil figure, a Captain, someone dressed in woman's clothes, etc. etc.
 - g) Give a complete description from top to toe of at least one common disguise and one more interesting, odd or amusing. You might add to this other details on the kinds of materials used for costumes and how these were made up. Some materials used include the following: Old clothes, quilts, sheets, pillows, rags, unusual clothes, new clothes, old clothes, underwear, white clothes, animal skins, cardboard, birch rind, boots and shoes, headgear, feathers, ribbons, paper, uniforms, animal disguises, etc.
 - h) In which of the following ways did mummers disguise their faces? Paint? soot blacking? lipstick? veils? stocking? bag? box? mask? (of cloth, oilskin, paper, cardboard, wood, animal skin, store-bought, etc.). Describe as many of these as you can in detail. For the masks, especially, even a rough drawing would be helpful.

MUNFLA Q 70E

FACE DISGUISES

In the following questions the word mask is used throughout. When writing your information, please use the word which is known in your community (false face, mummer's face, etc.).

Please write details rather than give straight yes or no answers. Whenever possible, illustrate with a drawing or a photograph.

These questions suggest some points about which we need information. Please feel free, however, to write about any aspect of face disguising, mummering, or janneying, even though it may not be covered by the questions.

1. On what occasion(s) did or do people dress up or use some kind of face disguise? What is the local term for the disguise? In what community was this, and when (the approximate years it was practised)?
2. If masks are worn what are they made of? Are boxes, wood or bark, bags, cardboard, animal skins, sheep's tails or other things used. How is the mask made?

How are the masks decorated (with hair, moss, animal skins, sheep's tails, etc.)? How are the decorations fixed on the mask?

ILLUSTRATE with a drawing, an actual photograph or a mask if possible.

3. Do the older people remember masks that were different from those worn today? When were these worn? By whom? Please describe one of these older masks in detail and tell about its owner if you can.
4. Are masks preserved from year to year or are they made up new every time?
5. Describe what use is made of ashes, paint, shoe polish, paper, cloth, nylon stockings, etc., in typical face disguises in your community. What is such disguising called?
6. Do people wear costumes when they disguise their faces? What kind? What would be a typical costume (describe in some detail)?

Drawings and/or photographs would be a help in explaining your answers.

ANY ACTUAL MASKS WHICH CAN BE FOUND IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND MADE AVAILABLE TO THE FOLKLORE ARCHIVE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY APPRECIATED.

MUNFLA Q67 3

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS; ANIMAL AND BIRDANIMAL DISGUISES

Have you seen or heard of a horse figure or horse's head used as part of Christmas activities? Some of the names reported are Hobby Horse, Horsey Hops, Lopchops. Which of these names, if any have you heard? What others do you know? We would be glad to get information on any of the following:

1. Who made the horse-figure?
2. How was it made? (Mention size, details of manufacture such as wood, nails, cloth, fur, paint used, appearance; did it have eyes, nose, mouth, ears, etc. how lifelike was it? Was a real horse's head ever used: How were the movable jaws constructed and operated? etc.)
3. How was the head carried? How was the carrier disguised or covered? if the horse had wooden legs or feet were they movable. How were they operated?

4. Describe the behavior of the figure and the reactions of those involved.
5. What other animal figures have you heard of which are used during the Christmas season? (We should like to get reports of the Christmas Bull, or figures which include cows' heads, rams' and sheep's heads (sometimes called the Derby Ram) or any other animal figure). Describe the figure and its use fully.
6. Write down what you know of any song, speeches, dialogue or play connected with any of these figures.
7. WREN. Can you give any information about Hunting the Wren (or Ran)? When did it take place and for how long? How was the procession organized and who took part. Describe especially how the wren was secured, prepared, decorated and carried; also the house-visits, drinking, what was collected and how the collection was used. Was any use made of disguise or costume? If there was a song please give the words.
8. OTHER CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS. We shall be pleased to have descriptions of any other Christmas plays, games or customs, such as "Shoeing the horse", "selling" a man for being away from home on Christmas Day, etc.

MUMMERS IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Steve Roud

I have long been suspicious of many of the apparent gaps on the Traditional Drama map, so I recently sent a letter to several local newspapers in Bedfordshire to see if anything turned up. In reply I received the following

"There were certainly Mummers in Bedfordshire at the end of the last century - 1885-1900 - when my father was a youth in Harlington, Beds [TL 0330]. I remember him telling us as children how he with others visited houses and pubs playing the different roles. The one that has stayed in my memory was the one for Christmas when they took the roles of Christmas fare such as Mince Pie, Plum Pudding, Holly, etc. The only rhyme I can remember is 'Come in Mince Pie and do your part and show these ladies and gentlemen your gallant heart.' I suppose they were called in one by one and each said their piece...."

The ease with which this information was gathered, prompts me to suggest that a concerted effort by those active in Traditional Drama research, aimed at neglected parts of the country, might help to fill in a few gaps. Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire spring to mind as worthy of immediate attention - even Norfolk and Suffolk, long written off as 'Mummer-less' counties might have something to offer after all.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has attempted to collect in any of these areas, or from anyone who would like to co-operate in a new 'offensive'.

ANIMAL DISGUISE IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

Tom Pettitt

In connection with a forthcoming study of the interactions between traditional customs (including traditional drama) and social unrest, the editor of Folklore has kindly drawn my attention to the following account in Maxwell Fraser's West of Offa's Dyke: South Wales (London: Robert Hale, 1958), p.59:

The deplorable living conditions and hours of work resulting from the sudden rise of the iron and coal industry caused widespread misery, and among the many symptoms of unrest were the exploits of the "Scotch Cattle". This organization was formed in South Wales and operated chiefly in Monmouthshire. The "herds" were led by a "bull", dressed in the skins of beasts, and, with blackened faces, would "scotch" anyone who had offended them. These bands first appeared at Nantyglo in February 1832. Shortly

afterwards they were active in the Pontypool valley, and the movement soon spread. The gangs of men worked together, so that a transgressor in one area was punished by a "herd" from another locality to prevent identification.

Fraser goes on briefly to note two specific incidents in 1834 in Blackwood; the murder of a woman, and an attack on a shop owned by one Thomas Rees. Interestingly, for anyone (like myself) dubious of using Welsh material in discussion of English traditions, Fraser observes that "comparatively few of the 'Cattle' were native Welsh, and the leader of the Blackwood herd was a Staffordshire man, who eventually disappeared from the district after the murder of a constable".

Maxwell Fraser does not give a source for this information, but states in her Preface that where no specific source is indicated she had usually used local newspapers of the time. Welsh newspapers of the nineteenth century are not the most readily available primary source at Danish universities, and I take the liberty of Roomer's good offices to enquire if anyone has come across this material before, or indeed if similar theriomorphic manifestations of social unrest have been noted elsewhere in England or Wales.

Tom Pettitt, English Department, Odense University, Campusvej 55, 5230 Odense M, Denmark.

M. W. BARLEY'S CLASSIFICATION OF PLOUGH PLAYS

P. T. Millington.

Maurice Barley's Plough Plays in the East Midlands⁽¹⁾ remains the most important work on East Midlands folk drama. Not only did Barley systematically collect and describe the first large body of plough play material, but he also attempted to determine the local variations on the plays. In his paper however, he did not give a formal summary of the groupings he had identified, rather he noted that localised variations blend one into the other. Here, I will try to give a schematic presentation of his findings.

General Terminology

Firstly, it is necessary to understand Barley's general terminology. He used Chambers' English Folk Play⁽²⁾ as the starting point of his study, and broadly followed Chambers' usage. Barley's references to 'Mummers plays' and 'Plough plays' refer to types of plays in terms of characters and lines and are used irrespective of times of occurrence. His references to 'Plough Monday plays' usually mean any play performed on Plough Monday, regardless of type.

East Midlands Groupings

In addition to Christmas Mummers' plays, Barley recognised four localised variants, in the East Midlands. These are distinguished by a) the opening lines of the play b) certain special characters and c) the length of the Doctor's diagnosis of the injured dispartant. They are named after their respective areas as follows:-

North Lincolnshire Group

- Opening lines - Good evening ladies and gentlemen,
I come to give you a bold call.
As Christmas time's a merry time,
I've come to see you all
- Special characters - Bessom Betty and Indian King
- Doctor's diagnosis - long

Kesteven Group

Opening lines - In comes I Bold Tom,
A brave and nimble fellow.
I've come to taste your beef and ale,
It is so ripe and mellow.

Special characters - None

Doctor's diagnosis - long

Nottinghamshire Group

Opening lines - Here I come, who's never been before,
There's four more actors outside the door.

Special characters - Eezum Squeezum

Doctor's diagnosis - short

Western Notts. Intermediate Group

Opening lines - A room, A room, A room to let us in,
We are not of the ragged sort, but of the Royal King.

Special characters - "Mummers' play" assemblage of characters, occasionally
with "Plough play" characters.

Doctor's diagnosis - short

Group Interrelationships

Again I would stress that the groups blend into each other, and therefore the best way of illustrating the relationships between the groups is a Venn diagram (see Fig. 1). Figure 2 illustrates the classification more conventionally.

Fig. 1 - Venn Diagram of East Midlands Folk Plays

(The double line delimits Plough Monday plays)

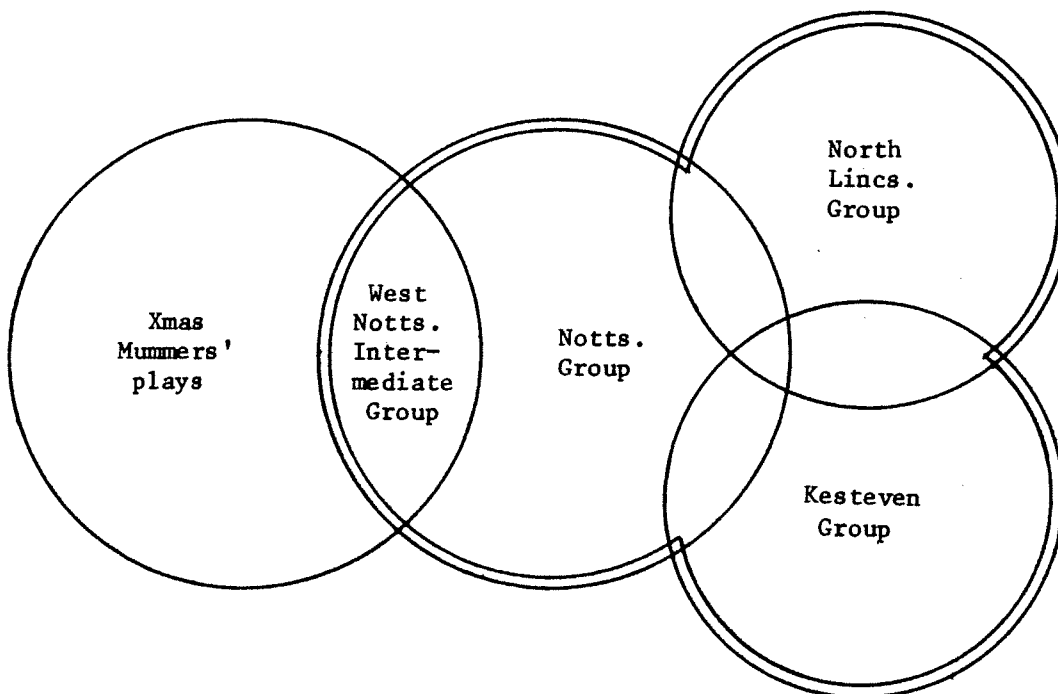
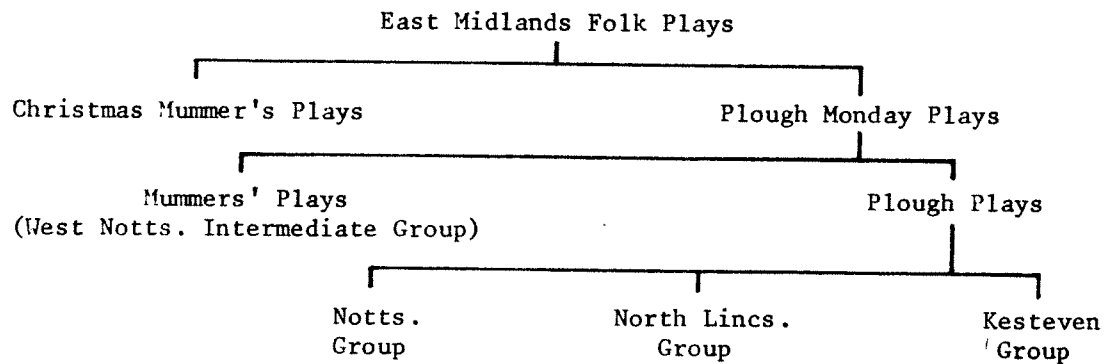


Fig. 2 - Barley's Classification of East Midlands Folk Plays



References

1. M. W. BARLEY, 'Plough Plays in the East Midlands', Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society 7:2 (1953), 68-95.
2. E. K. CHAMBERS, The English Folk-Play, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933)

PUBLICATIONS NEWS

Recent Publications

Geoff Bibby, 'Lymm, Cheshire, Notes from a Collector's Diary', English Dance and Song 43:3 (1981) 8.

Pauline Dennis, 'Whillesey Straw Bear', English Dance and Song 43:4 (1981) 21-22.

Bob Grant and Mike Heaney, 'In Steps!', English Dance and Song 43:4 (1981) 18-20.

Thomas A. Green (Editor), 'Folk Drama', Special issue of Journal of American Folklore 94 (Oct. - Dec. 1981)

Contents:

421-32	Introduction	Thomas A Green
433-55	The Mummers' Play and the Old Wives' Tale	Roger de V Renwick
456-85	In Comes I, Brut King: Traditions and Modernity in the Drama of the Jasksdale Bullguisers	Ian Russell
486-505	The Camp Mock Ordeal: Theatre as Life	Bill Ellis
506-26	Why do they Laugh? An Interactional Approach to Humor in Traditional Iranian Improvisatory Theater	William O Beeman
527 55	Puppet Voices and Interlocutors. Language in Folk Puppetry	Frank Proschan

Ray Hargreaves, 'We are the Merry Actors', English Dance and Song 43:4 (1981) 2-3.

H. W. Harwood and F. H. Marden (Introduction) THE PACE EGG: The Midgley Version (The authors; Halifax, 1935). Reprinted by D. & C. Bland, Halifax, 1977, 24pp, (75p)

Venitia Newall, 'The Turkish Knight in English Traditional Drama', Folklore 92:II (1981) 196-202.

Tom Pettitt, 'Ritual and Vaudeville: The Dramaturgy of the English Folk Plays', (Paper delivered at the Traditional Drama 1981 Conference, University of Sheffield) Pre-Publications of the English Institute of Odense University - No. 19. (English Institute: Odense, 1981) 16pp, (Free from the author)

Steve Roud, Review of Alex Helm 'The English Mummers' Play', English Dance and Song 43:3 (1981) 24.

Ian Russell, 'Appy New Year', English Dance and Song 43:4 (1981) 16.

Georgina Smith, 'Chapbooks and Traditional Plays: Communication and Performance', Folklore 92:II (1981) 208-218.

Paul Smith, Review of David Bradby et al., 'Performance and Politics in Popular Drama: Aspects of Popular Entertainment in Theatre, Film and Television 1800-1976', Folk Music Journal 4:2 (1981) 178-9.

Mick Tams, 'A Welsh Christmas', English Dance and Song 43 4 (1981) 18-20.

Glynne Wickham, Review of T. J. B. Spencer and S. Wells 'A Book of Masques in Honour of Allardyce Nicholl', Folk Music Journal 4:2 (1981) 179-80.

David Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood (D. S. Brewer: Woodbridge, 1981) 97pp (£12)

TRADITIONAL DRAMA 1982 -- CALL FOR PAPERS

The Fifth Annual Conference on Aspects of Current Scholarship in Traditional Drama

University of Sheffield - Saturday, 16th October, 1982

In the 1982 Conference we wish to expand further the varieties of topics covered. Consequently we would like individuals interested in presenting papers, chairing discussions or bringing exhibition materials, slides and films to contact the organisers by 1st June, 1982.

For further information regarding the conference contact: Paul Smith, The Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield. S10 2TN

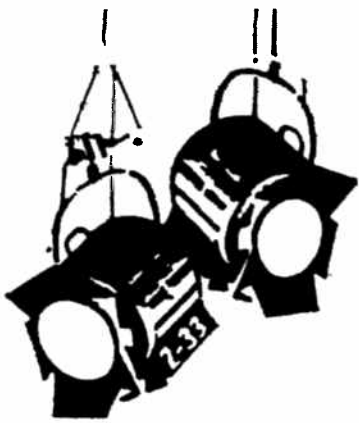
ROOMER: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TRADITIONAL DRAMA RESEARCH GROUP

Research in any field is, as often as not, hampered by the lack of communication between individual researchers, and Traditional Drama is no exception. We are acutely aware that there are many people doing valuable work who have little or no contact with others in this field and, consequently, no opportunity to compare notes or air their views.

ROOMER then is designed to fill this gap by providing an informal forum. It includes notes and queries, details of publications, out-of-the-way texts, information on work in progress, in fact anything that may be of interest to those working in the field of Traditional Drama. As such it relies heavily on participation by subscribers. Therefore, if you have any potential contributions we would be most grateful to receive them.

Back volumes of the newsletter are currently available at the cost of the annual subscription. For further information regarding ROOMER and the work of the TRADITIONAL DRAMA RESEARCH GROUP contact:

Steve Roud, 22 Adelaide Road, Andover, Hants (0264-4397)
Paul Smith, 2A Westfield Road, Bramley, Rotherham, Yorkshire (0709-548426)



Theatre in Focus

Original monographs accompanied by colour slides

Published by The Consortium for Drama and Media in Higher Education
in conjunction with Chadwyck-Healey/Somerset House

Series Editor: Richard Cave

Theatre is essentially a 'living' art and this combination of text and colour slides enables the reader to visualise the realities of theatrical performance. No other format can bring the theatre of the past so sharply into focus in the reader's imagination.

Each monograph is conceived by a specialist on theatre history and presents original research material in a lively and interesting style complemented by the careful choice of visual evidence.

The series covers three general areas of interest:

- : notable theatres
- : particular actors, directors and companies
- : unusual theatrical genres and styles of performance

Each monograph includes an extensive essay on the subject which after a detailed introduction structures the material around the slide illustrations. This is supplemented by bibliographies of suggested further reading and appendices giving secondary materials (architects' plans, important theatre reviews, extensive descriptive accounts in novels or poems of particular buildings or performers) that are not readily available to the student of the theatre and social history.

The slide sets amplify the information given in the text by including where relevant ground plans and photographs of theatres past and present, programme excerpts, playbills, portraits of artistes appearing at the theatre, as well as photographs of particular plays in performance and of stage sets for these plays.

The primary aim of the series has been to disseminate knowledge by making original research material available in a format both suitable as a teaching aid for the lecturer and exciting to the general reader.

Specifications

Text: 210 x 148mm soft covers

Slide sets: 35 to 50 35mm colour slides

Price: £25 \$50 per title

Titles available

Terence Gray and the Cambridge Festival Theatre by Richard Cave

Terence Gray was the foremost theatrical innovator of his day in England. This is the first authoritative study of his work which is still influencing our theatre today. Under his management the Cambridge Festival Theatre of the 'twenties presented highly stylized and innovative productions experimenting with the principles of constructivism and expressionism.
90pp 50 slides

Fairbooths and Fit-ups by Jane Traies

The English Fairground saw the latest survival of medieval religious drama, the birth of Mr Punch, the debut of Edmund Kean and the beginning of the cinema. This slide set skilfully evokes the theatrical experience of a huge popular audience which never attended any other playhouse than the fairground booth or penny gaff.
58pp 44 slides

Wilton's Musical Hall by Jacqueline S. Bratton

Wilton's is the oldest surviving music hall in London and its history provides a unique example of the development of music hall buildings and entertainments.
44pp 42 slides

Théâtre des Variétés by Joseph Long

Built in 1806 on the Boulevards, the Théâtre des Variétés is the oldest theatre in Paris to have survived demolition and fire. The history of the Variétés illustrates the turbulent situation of theatre in Paris under the Revolution and shows how new forms of theatre emerged when the right to perform was democratised.

62pp 50 slides

Astley's Amphitheatre by Jacqueline S. Bratton and Jane Traies

Astley's was the first and greatest equestrian theatre. This slide set illustrates the history of successive Astley's buildings and shows some of the renowned personalities and performances.

65pp 39 slides

The London Coliseum by Victor Glasstone

The owner (Oswald Stoll) and designer (Frank Matcham) of the Coliseum determined to out-do Drury Lane in building the largest theatre in London. This slide set studies the building at various periods with the attractions and personalities that were presented from the first lavish variety extravaganza on the great revolving stage to Max Reinhardt, Sarah Bernhardt, the Diaghilev Ballet and the series of post-war American musicals.

55pp 50 slides

Henry Irving at the Lyceum by George Taylor

Arguably the greatest star actor of the Victorian age, Henry Irving was certainly its greatest actor-manager. For thirty years at the Lyceum he set a standard of production and presentation that was to influence English and American theatre well into the twentieth century. This collection illustrates the remarkable talents of both Irving the manager, and Irving the actor.

76pp 49 slides

Forthcoming Titles

- Peter Godfrey and the Gate Theatre* by Richard Cave
- Strindberg and the Intimate Theatre* by Inga-Stina Ewbank
- Chekov in Performance in Russia* by Vera Gottlieb
- O'Casey and Expressionism* by Nesta Jones
- Maeterlinck Plays in Production* by Katherine Worth
- William Poel and the Shakespearian Revival* by Marion O'Connor
- Pantomime* by David Mayer
- The Canterbury Hall* by John Earl and John Stanton
- Melodrama Theatres of the French Boulevard* by John McCormick
- London Garden Theatres* by John Dixon Hunt

Ordering Information

Orders should be returned with payment to the publishers.

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
20 Newmarket Road
Cambridge CB5 8DT
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck NJ 07666
USA

March 1980

Order Form



I should like to order:

- Copies of Terence Gray and the Cambridge Festival Theatre
- Copies of Fairbooths and Fit-ups
- Copies of Wilton's Music Hall
- Copies of Théâtre des Variétés
- Copies of Astley's Amphitheatre
- Copies of the London Coliseum
- Copies of Henry Irving at the Lyceum

Payment enclosed cheque giro
 postal order amount _____

Name _____
Address _____

