'Plurality’ might be the most accurate description of the London stage in the nineteenth century: plurality of genre, of style, of theatre buildings. There were new dramatic forms, new technological advances, and new styles of management, not to mention new audiences and ways of attending the theatre.

We welcome contributions on all aspects and forms of drama and theatrical practice, from plays and operas to pantomime and puppetry. Subjects might include: theatrical resources, including collections; the constitution and history of theatrical genres; publishing and circulation; stage biography; music and musicians; scenography and spectacle; and theatrical spaces of all kinds. The ‘London stage’ should be interpreted as inclusively as possible, and we particularly seek papers on such topics as criticism, dance, the staging of the exotic, music hall entertainments, and international influences on London theatre. The meeting will provide an opportunity to take stock of the range of research currently being undertaken in the field as well as a chance to consider the place of London in the broader theatrical and political world.

All sessions will be held at New College, Oxford, with a keynote address by Daniel O’Quinn (University of Guelph) at the Bodleian Library’s new Weston Research Library. The conference is timed to lead up to the Bodleian Library’s exhibition ‘Staging History’, which will be held in the new Weston Research Library in October 2016.
Abstracts

Of

Papers
Illuminating Spectacle: Light and illusion in *Gustavus the Third* (1833)

On the evening of 13 November 1833, the final scene of *Gustavus the Third* – adapted from Auber’s *Gustave III* – was revealed at Covent Garden to rapturous applause. What impressed the audience was the vision of a masked ball illuminated by chandeliers, lamps, brackets, tripods and candelabras. At first glance, the situation in Paris had been much the same. There, *Gustave III* also won accolades thanks to its elaborate finale. But changes made to the opera in the transfer process, combined with the differing contexts of lighting and masquerading in London and Paris, meant that *Gustave III* had acquired new significations as *Gustavus*.

Investigations into opera and visuality have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. Few, however, have considered how the introduction of gaslight shaped opera stagings. To turn to 1830s London is to explore a time and place obsessed with lighting technologies and understanding the eye. Using the example of *Gustavus*, I reveal how new discussions about light and vision influenced responses to opera, and how light could prompt audiences to delight in illusion, wonder at technology, and be overwhelmed by a scene. Bringing light into the picture not only draws upon an aspect of urban and theatrical life that was consuming contemporary discourse, therefore, but also offers ways to deepen our understanding of how opera was experienced in early nineteenth-century London.
Sir Charles Santley (1834 – 1922) was a star of the operatic stage in Victorian London. Despite his celebrity, however, Santley was in a problematic position as a British male opera singer. In nineteenth-century Britain, opera was often perceived as a feminised and foreign pursuit. It therefore became imperative for Santley to construct himself an identity that asserted both his masculinity and his Britishness. Like other singers, Santley turned to the autobiography in order to do this. Unlike other singers, however, Santley’s memoirs did not conform to the conventions of theatrical autobiography. Instead, his two works could largely be defined as travel writing.

Santley’s autobiographies offer lengthy discussions of his adventures around the globe, and these are presented in a very particular way. This paper will argue that Santley deliberately drew on the figure of the explorer to construct an identity not of an opera singer, but as a very British explorer of Empire. This tactic proved remarkably successful, as his tales of travel had an extraordinary impact on his public image in Britain. This paper will conclude with a reflection on theatrical autobiography as travel writing, arguing that these sorts of texts can tell us much about the identities which performers sought to construct.
Impossible, undanceable, and quite unfit for the London stage: Heinrich Heine’s anti-ballet Der Doktor Faustus

Considering Heinrich Heine’s dislike for ballet, an art form which he repeatedly referred to as artificial and codified, it might seem surprising that he accepted a commission from Benjamin Lumley to write a ballet libretto for Her Majesty’s Theatre in 1846. Heine’s involvement with this genre was by no means unambitious: he chose no lesser subject than the Faust saga and compared his creation for a wordless stage to the masterpiece of Germany’s national poet, Johann Wolfgang Goethe. In his libretto, which revolves around the female devil Mephistophela, Heine skilfully exploited the choreographic potential of his source and created ample opportunities for dances of great variety. He also proved to be well acquainted with the conventions of the Romantic ballet which was in full bloom in the 1840s. What might therefore be the reason why Lumley refused to stage the ballet, claiming that it was “impracticable […] for stage purposes […] especially in England”? This paper argues that Heine’s work was in fact an anti-ballet with considerable potential for scandal, since it undermined both the conventions of the theatre it was written for and the laws of its own genre.
In 1813, the brilliant architect and planner of London’s Regent Street, John Nash, was faced with a problem. In that year, Parliament enshrined in the New Street Act the proposed development of Regent Street, a plan which required extensive works through a developing area of London. However, while the act is generally understood to promote the linking of the Prince of Wales’s Carlton House to Regent’s Park, it in fact provided for the creation of ‘a more convenient communication from Mary-le-bone Park […] to Charring Cross’ and to achieve this, the commissioners were empowered, where necessary, to enact the ‘diverting, altering, widening, and improving such parts of the present Streets, as will form entrances into such new Streets or into the Streets, Squares and Places connected therewith.’

To complete the route as specified by the Act, the street, when it turned left at the bottom of Waterloo Place and towards Trafalgar Square, had to be worked into the scheme. And this meant addressing the problem of the Opera House, an edifice still incomplete after its reconstruction after its destruction by fire in 1789. As one critic commented: ‘the unlucky fragment is fated to stand as a foil to the vile and absurd edifice of brick pieced to it, which I have not patience to describe.’ The Opera House could not be left to disgrace the new street scheme with its smart terraces, shops, and arcades, and this paper will examine Nash’s solution to the problem, a solution which involved turning the site into an island and redeveloping the building as part of a new city scape.
Matthieu Cailliez  
University Grenoble Alpes

The reception of operas on the London Stage through music criticism in Italy, France and Germany between 1842 and 1852

During the first direction of Benjamin Lumley at Her Majesty’s Theatre between 1842 and 1852, the London stage is characterised by the complicity, then by the rivalry between the director and his conductor Michael Costa. After five years spent in the service of Lumley, in 1846 Costa transferred his allegiance to Covent Garden, bringing most of the company with him, and from then on the British capital has two Italian opera societies at its disposal. Unlike the rest of Europe, the United Kingdom is not affected by the Revolutions of 1848 and the London stage continues to thrive while the continental theatres are going through a serious crisis. The purpose of this paper is to present a study of the international reception of the representation of operas on the London stage during the decade 1842-1852, based on the analysis of numerous reports published in nine European music journals, namely three Italian music journals, the Gazzetta musicale di Milano, Il Pirata and Teatri, Arti e Letteratura, three French music journals, the Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, La France musicale and Le Ménestrel, and three German music journals, the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik and the Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung.
German drama issued from the *Sturm und Drang* movement of the late eighteenth century meets with the appreciation of contemporary British intellectuals and with both popularity and aversion by the London audience. To meet with the public’s approval, plays are often transformed into melodramas, as is the case for Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe*, firstly staged in London in 1819, and for the same author’s *Wilhelm Tell*, which was presented for the first time at the Royal Amphitheatre in 1802. Furthermore, as a consequence of censorship, Schiller’s *Räuber* are refused a license because of politically volatile themes, and are finally staged in the 1799 Haymarket season as *The Red Cross Knights*, a considerably altered version of the original. That these plays could provoke vehement criticism and yet prove popular in the theatres demonstrates that they were more than innocuous entertainment. The moral liberty explored in the *Sturm und Drang* dramas was associated with the political liberty advocated by English radicals. The aim of the paper is to deliver an analysis of the different practices employed in the presentation of plays by German *Sturm und Drang* dramatists such as Goethe, Schiller, Lenz and Klinger on the London Stage in the first half of the nineteenth century.
Adaptation in English Opera of the late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: New Light on London Repertoire from the Norwich Theatre Royal Music Collection, Norfolk Heritage Centre

A neglected collection of 243 early nineteenth-century music prints and manuscripts deposited at the Norfolk Heritage Centre is revealed to be of national importance, containing unique or rare items and being one of only a few survivors of the fires that destroyed many British theatre-music archives of the period. This paper investigates manuscript scores and sets of parts for London repertoire apparently arranged and adapted by Charles Henry Mueller, a London-based flautist and violinist who moved to the Theatre Royal Norwich around 1823. Mueller’s manuscripts, which suggest he was a remarkably energetic ensemble leader, include full-score versions of English operas that have not otherwise survived – some Don Juan burlesques, for example – or that otherwise exist only in printed vocal scores with piano arrangement of the orchestral texture. They include operas by Dibdin, Shield, Mazzinghi, Storace, Arnold, Bishop, among others, as well as music for ballets, balls and other entertainments given at the Theatre Royal in the 1820s and 30s. Research into English theatre-music of the period has been hampered by a lack of full scores (only a handful are currently known), and our cataloguing and assessment of the Norwich material has the potential to advance knowledge and inspire stage revivals.
Oskar Cox Jensen
King’s College, University of London

Song-borne: The London Stage on Street and Page

‘Come, my lucky masters, here’s a choice collection of songs, that have been sung at Drury-lane, Common Garden, Sadler’s Wells, the Uproar House, Fox-Hall, and other places, out of the most famouستest roratorios’ – George Parker’s impression of ‘The Ballad Singer in the neighbourhood of St. Giles’s’ Perhaps the most portable element of London’s theatrical entertainments was the song: the hit number, usually associated with a specific actor and performance, that could be sold individually to audiences beyond the playhouse. In this paper I wish to consider three aspects of this phenomenon of mass, exported theatricality: the social diversity of the market for the same material, from purchasers of luxury sheet music to buyers of halfpenny ballads; the extent to which street performers of these songs adopted forms of theatrical gesture; and the imaginative theatrical spaces and commentaries afforded by the images that accompanied the song-sheets of Laurie and Whittle. Thus issues from piracy to class, from performativity to the Romantic imagination, will be explored through an interrogation of a single phenomenon, the sale of theatrical song.
The London Stage and the Nineteenth-Century World  
14-16 April 2016  
New College, Oxford

Sophie Duncan  
Magdalen College, University of Oxford

“‘Mr Hyde at large in Whitechapel’: the Ripper on the London stage”

Scholarship on Richard Mansfield’s 1888 performance as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde at London’s Lyceum has noted the overlap between Mansfield’s reception and reportage on the Whitechapel killings, centring on an anonymous letter which suggested Mansfield as the Ripper. This paper examines how Mansfield’s production and Ripper panic conditioned each other beyond the theatre, on the London streets, drawing on little-studied and unpublished material. First, I examine the visual and textual traces of Mansfield’s production in Ripper coverage, from cartoons depicting the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde posters, to journalistic use of ‘Hyde’ as an alternative name for the Ripper. Second, I map how Mansfield spread panic over the Ripper from Whitechapel to the West End, with his transformation from middle-class, heterosexual Jekyll to the class interloper and would-be rapist Hyde creating a figure potentially more frightening to audiences (and certainly more accessible) than ‘saucy Jack’ himself. Examining theatregoers’ subsequent claimed ‘sightings’ of Hyde or the Ripper in streets and omnibuses shows how vividly Mansfield’s performance impacted Londoners’ psychogeography, theatricalising the Ripper in the autumn 1888: a time at which, as Mrs Humphry Ward noted, there was ‘a taste just now for the horrible’.
Cat-Cat-Catalani: British audiences and the threat of opera in the early 19th century

Angelica Catalani was the most celebrated opera singer of the first decades of the 19th century. Her performances in London, over a period of seven years, served as a focal point for an audience wishing to participate as cultivated connoisseurs in a cosmopolitan community of taste. However, her performances in London also attracted an exceptionally wide range of attacks and critiques which pointed towards the various measures the opera singer is employing within the symbolic logic of the medium (such as an abnormal physicality or the manipulation of language) and the social corruptions they supposedly entail. In my paper I will focus on one image that was repeatedly invoked as part of the anti-Catalani discourse, that of a singing cat, and the ways it was used to alert the public to the dangers of opera on the background of the political turmoil and cultural anxiety of those years.
Women dramatists wrote in a variety of genres in the nineteenth century—ranging from verse tragedy, melodrama, romantic comedy, and farce, to early-modernist naturalistic drama—but by the end of the century they were often particularly associated with one form, the one-act comedy or lever de rideau. At a meeting of the Playgoer's Club in 1897 the seasoned actress-manager Lady Bancroft even declared that she “did not believe in long plays by women.” This paper will trace the history of the lever de rideau, its roots in France, and its significance for the London stage in the second half of the nineteenth century. It will pay particular attention to the association of women dramatists with short plays in general and the lever de rideau in particular. Were female playwrights pigeon-holed as the authors of frothy curtain-raisers because these were perceived to be suitable for their gender? Or was this association linked to authorial preferences and rooted in women writers’ strong position in the print publication market for amateur theatricals, which specialised in short plays?
The rise of the photographic magazine and newspaper in the late Victorian and Edwardian era was both exploited by and exploitative of the theatre, with stars of the London (and provincial) stage filling many pages of the journals as wide ranging as the *Daily Mirror* (‘photo-journalism’, 1903/4-present), *The Lady’s Realm* (women’s and society magazine, 1896-1914), and *Play Pictorial* (theatrical journal, 1902-39). These outlets offered ‘respectable’ – though not unproblematic – representations of the female form, and were targeted at a middle-class readership. This paper will focus on ‘the other end of the scale’ - the representation of the chorus girl in the weekly ‘soft porn’ magazine, *Photo Bits* (1898-1914) which is considered Britain’s first mass circulation ‘pin-up’ magazine. It featured both stars and unknown/unnamed performers in the same issue, in nude or near-nude poses with accompanying narratives or commentaries, and, unusually, draws upon a large number of suburban London theatre performers as subjects. The paper will consider both image and accompanying text, and issues of authenticity and fiction in the deployment of the chorus girls’ image.
Jonathan Hicks
King’s College, University of London

Performing Tourism in 1850s London: Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc

An 1858 issue of the New York Musical Review lists “European Items” of interest to American readers: among a London Don Giovanni, a new Meyerbeer opera, and a Viennese Lohengrin, is a mention of Albert Smith, who “has ascended the Mont Blanc for the last time, after having done so (in Piccadilly) about two thousand times.” Although the operas in question remain firmly in the musicological canon, Smith’s hit show has received only passing attention. Yet his one-man performance of Alpine tourism, dubbed a “monopolylogue” in the tradition of Charles Dibdin and Charles Matthews, was central to the exhibition culture of the mid-century metropolis, and provides a rich case study of the uses of music in Victorian stage entertainment. Of course, much of the interest was visual, with scenery prepared by William Beverley, but audiences also heard Smith accompany himself in comic songs at the piano, with an alpine horn and mule bells offered as audible markers of his mountain journey. Using contemporary programmes and press reports, I seek to recover the sonic qualities of Smith’s performance, and then to consider how the acting out of tourism contributed to broader perceptions of European travel.
I will examine the writings of nineteenth century literary critics and reviewers to identify the dramatic as interference in our conception of Romanticism. Narrativity as a form of knowledge emerges to account for the ideological coherence of the Romantic period as it breaks away from a previous moment in history; Jerome McGann defines this ideological coherence as Romantic Ideology. Romantic ideology is significant as a ‘strategy of containment’. Every strategy of containment then has its necessary exclusions. These exclusions are related to the stage, or what can be identified as the dramatic. I will explore the nature of these exclusions, not as something neglected by literary scholarship, but as something, which constitutes the very concept of Romanticism. Cox identifies dramatizing as the “central mode of the romantic imagination”, but it is an absent presence. The dramatic functions as an interference in the strategies of containment, or romantic ideology; but if one removes the interference, then one is left with nothing. Our purpose will be to identify the rifts within romantic ideology, which exposes ideological integration as a failure, but failure itself as necessarily constitutive of conceptual integration.
First brought to public notice in Charles Hullmandel’s 1824 treatise, *The Art of Drawing on Stone*, the lithographer Richard James Lane (1800-1872) produced hundreds of carefully wrought theatrical portraits. The circulation of these images allowed traces of ephemeral performance to remain in public hands, which in turn helped to shape the expectations of audiences and the reputations of performers. Despite his rich theatrical output, Lane has principally been noted for his reproductive prints after celebrated contemporary artists. This paper seeks to revise Lane’s significance by arguing that his advantageous art and stage connections, as both Associate Royal Academician and close friend of influential theatre professionals, gave him a unique opportunity to exploit the artistic and commercial potential of lithography as an emergent printing technique. It will also explore Lane’s claims to have ‘drawn from life’ in the context of Henry Bankes’s idea of lithography as multiplied originals rather than reproductions. While industrial advances certainly made lithographs more affordable, technology was not the only determining factor. Evidence from Lane’s account books reveal the strategies used to surmount the economic risk of his speculative theatrical portrait ventures, and his private correspondence demonstrates how the artist altered pose, costume and composition in line with concerns over gender and genre. However, Lane’s high-minded intentions did not always meet their mark, as the commercially driven print market produced cheaper, sometimes more salacious adaptations of his work.
A distinctive feature of the Savoy Opera genre is an ensemble number in which characters are allotted a solo verse each, with a tutti refrain. In some cases, these settings are strophic, but much more frequently the different participants are given different verse melodies. While this is partially a consequence of the different vocal ranges of the characters (and Sullivan developed something approaching a formula for this), musical differences between verses also naturally reflect the various dramatic situations of the characters involved. As successful a feature of the Savoy Operas as was the verse-ensemble (and evident still in the works of these collaborators years after they parted ways), it does not feature in the later musical comedy tradition, nor the subsequent Broadway and West End repertoire. Gilbert and Sullivan made this ensemble type particularly their own, but—as with recitative—Gilbert’s poetic structures reveal influence of a broad repertory of French, German, and Italian opera. Sullivan’s treatments of the lyrics suggest using a narrower range of models.
St. Martin’s Hall (SMH), built for John Hullah’s populist sight-singing classes, was the first large building in London designed specifically for concerts. While forgotten today, nineteenth-century critics reviewed performances at SMH with the same attention given to events at Exeter Hall and other established venues. SMH also hosted lectures, exhibits, and increasingly noisy political meetings.

Fire destroyed SMH in 1860, usually considered its demise. However, it was soon rebuilt as a popular music hall and only ceased to exist under that name when transformed into the Queen’s Theatre in 1867. SMH maintained its notoriety as a hotbed of radical politics, serving as the birthplace of the International Workingmen’s Association (First International) in 1864. In 1866-1867, music and politics intersected in the ‘Sunday Evenings for the People’, a series of public lectures and performances of sacred music, challenging Sabbatarian restrictions on Sunday entertainments.

In this paper, I explore the history of SMH from Hullah’s concerts through its evolution as a centre of political agitation. Although the two iterations of the hall seemingly had little in common, I argue that seeds of radicalism were planted during Hullah’s tenure, and were closely connected to his reformist ideals of music education for all classes.
Actors and Aesthetics on the Early Nineteenth Stage

Working from Henry Siddons’ manual for actors, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to the English Stage* (1807), actors’ memoires and contemporary theatre reviews, this presentation theorises the development of a Regency acting style, which was distinguished, according to contemporary critical opinion, by careful attention to nature and psychology, as well as an enhanced sensibility to the author’s inspiration. Focussing on performances by Henry Siddons mother, Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), John Philip Kemble, his uncle,(1757-1823) and Edmund Kean, (1787-1833) my paper considers the interpretation and representation of “feeling” and “the passions” through the flexibility of an actor’s voice and body and also silence and stillness – or the theatrical pause.
Pete and Barney on the London Stage

Mules and donkeys are the comics of equine theatre. Pete and Barney were “educated” mules, famous in America before appearing in London in 1858 with Howe and Cushing’s American Circus at the Alhambra Theatre. Barney, seemingly docile and easy to ride, defeated attempts by any spectator (responding to a challenge from his handlers) who essayed to ride him for three consecutive circuits of the ring. Pete, introduced as “learned” and skillfully obedient, repeatedly humiliated his trainer by refusing to perform the tasks promised but displayed clever alternative solutions.

In 1860, the mules - purchased by the boxer Tom Sayers, who, retired from the ring, was attempting a career as a clown - featured in a pantomime at the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton. By 1875, the pair were simultaneously performing on either side of the Atlantic having mutated from a single act to an international brand for comically subversive mules.

Both animals were trained to disobey and display willful disobedience, purposefully undermining their trainers’ intent to demonstrate compliant animals—embarrassing their trainers and mocking their audiences — which directly clashed with other trainers’ attempts to display clever animals.

Our paper will describe these acts, the various theatrical milieux the animals appeared, how their disobedience was promoted, and, in a century which celebrated well-trained and obedient animals, how their insurrections repeatedly created hilarious chaos.
The Melodramatic Stage as a Machine for Thinking [In]

In this paper, I want to explore ways of ‘reading’ the melodramatic stage in London as a physical and virtual crucible for experimentation, particularly experiments in new approaches to the visual. I am interested in the ways we can interpret the three-dimensional mise-en-scene of early melodrama from the archival record, and find ways to read that record with a focus on the embodied, sensory (visual and aural) environment physically created on the boards of the theatre stage.

Jonathan Crary argues that at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a ‘massive reorganization of knowledge and social practices that modified the human subject’ by creating a ‘new type of observer’ at the centre of visuality (3). I want to use this argument as a tool to elicit new knowledge about melodrama, and its use of the visual, the embodied, and the spectacular. I propose that, regarded through an account of its positioning in the emergent visual culture of industrial Britain, melodrama becomes a way of looking at systems of representation and cultural production as an exchange of observations, of looking, of seeing and being seen, which acknowledge the body at the centre of popular culture.
To the Halls: theatre and music hall exchange

The phenomenon of music-hall stars appearing in pantomimes at the London theatres in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is well documented. Typical of contemporary responses is a complaint from January 1881 that ‘the “music-hall element” . . . is rapidly driving from our English stage the art of pantomime’. Such negative comments underline the clear distinction made between the two performance traditions and their exponents, with the music hall envisioned as threatening the theatre’s integrity. What is less well remarked is the contraflow of traffic as some actors and actresses who had made their names in the theatres migrated to the music hall to perform dramatic sketches. These short pieces have previously been discussed, if at all, in relation to battles over the legality and/or morality of music-hall acts.

In this paper I examine cross-venue exchange during the 1880s and 1890s by focusing on actors from the Britannia Theatre in Hoxton, including J. B. Howe, Walter Steadman, Algernon Symms and Ada Morgan. Through analysing the factors driving their engagement choices, exploring how both performances and performers were marketed and recorded, and investigating the nature of their dramatic sketches, I reassess the significance of a largely hidden practice.
Berlin 1866. One of the most famous playwrights of her time, Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's adaptation of Wilkie Collins "The Woman in White" hits theatres in Berlin and Vienna. Throughout her long career Birch-Pfeiffer was always searching for books, which were bestsellers in other countries such as England and France, and adapted them for the German stage. 1853 she had a huge success with an adaptation of Bronte's "Jane Eyre". Her stage productions were much loved by the audience especially for her attention to detail, costumes and realistic stage scenery. 1866, two years before her death, she created a unique double role based on Collins "The Woman in White". The actress who played Laura Fairlies also had to play the Woman in White. To make time and location changes more understandable for the audience Birch-Pfeiffer utilised a white curtain.

When Wilkie Collins finally decided to bring his version onto the London stage in 1871 he had heard of Birch-Pfeiffer's play in Berlin. Collins decided to work with George Vining. Vining not only played the main part, Count Fosco, but is also named as the second director. The play had a very successful run, the audience flocked the theatre to watch the villain Count Fosco, they knew so well from the besteller, take shape and become alive. Like Birch-Pfeiffer Collins used a green tableau curtain to help the audience understand when time and location changes took place. His scenery was magnificent, featuring gaslit rooms and a two story house, with a functioning upper level where the actors could walk around and look out of the window.
Comprehending anti-Semitism in Georgian London entails an engagement with the performance of violence in a wide range of social venues. Tracking the career of the great Jewish pugilist Daniel Mendoza from his early triumphs over the conspicuously English boxer Richard Humphries through to his spectacular role in the notorious Old Price riots at Covent Garden theatre, this lecture explores the degree to which Mendoza's interventions in public life were both conditioned by and aimed at ethnic stereotypes promulgated on the Georgian stage. In quite startling ways we will discover that Mendoza fought endless rounds with Shylock himself.
Imagine a London theatre stage set with a ruined castle, abandoned church, haunted cemetery, dense forests, lush overgrowth, steep mountainsides—everything stark, barren, ominous. Welcome to the staging of Jane Scott’s *The Old Oak Chest*, produced in 1816 at the height of London theatre’s gothic period. The highly prolific Scott, wrote at least forty-eight plays—most of them within the gothic genre—between 1806 and 1819. Gothic theatre, popular with a number of women playwrights, appealed to the audiences’ vulgar tastes, incorporating high-spectacle, low-comedy, and formulaic plots. The more grandiose the scenery, the more bizarre and haunting the plot, the more elaborate the staging—all done in an effort to get audience members’ hearts racing—the more working- and middle-class audiences who preferred escapist fantasy over an increasingly colorless industrial life. An increase in London’s middling class meant that a new group of people now had the means and access to the theatre. With this new audience came a new aesthetic taste in a more physical and less intellectual entertainment. A combination of changing audience sensibilities and the availability of new technological advancements made sensationalized gothic productions possible and fed on popular contemporary anxieties about specters and the supernatural.
‘She WAS tragedy personified’: Sarah Siddons’s long farewell to the London Stage

Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) began the nineteenth century as the doyenne of London theatre, having dominated the stage since 1782. On 29 June 1812, following three decades of unparalleled success, Siddons officially retired. She performed as Lady Macbeth (her most famous role) and then delivered a final, emotional address to her audience: with her exit from the stage the curtain fell on eighteenth-century theatre. This retirement was undermined, however, by subsequent repeated comebacks due to popular demand.

In the critic William Hazlitt, however, we see an ardent admirer distressed by her returns. Despite his ‘fandom’ Hazlitt concedes that to see Siddons perform was now to see merely an ‘imitation’ of herself at the height of her powers. ‘She was tragedy personified’ he famously remarked – but was no longer.

By exploring Siddons’s retirement through the perspective of the viewer I argue that we must pay attention to the role audiences and print media played in shaping the nineteenth-century stage. Through Hazlitt we can see both the ‘fan’ and the critic combined, the tension between popular and critical success, and the image of the fading star on the cusp between two theatrical eras.
In the period immediately before Gilbert and Sullivan began to collaborate the Victorian musical theatre was dominated by adaptations of Offenbach, Audran and Lecocq and, as Gilbert himself later recalled, ‘their treatment was crude, unintelligent and sometimes frankly improper’. Outside the West End of London, the commonest type of entertainment was the Penny Reading, since, for many, a theatre would have been out of reach, both financially and practically, as transport links to the city were often poor. To this was added the middle class moral and religious prejudice against the institution of the theatre itself.

The year 1871 was marked by the first collaboration between Gilbert and Sullivan in *Thespis*, but also saw the establishment by William Morris of the Kelmscott Press. Morris set new standards in book production, furniture and dress design, all of which had a great influence on the English stage. Focusing on *Patience*, this paper will examine how Gilbert and Sullivan in the sequence of operas produced at the Savoy Theatre, and in conjunction with others, helped to change attitudes to the musical theatre and will demonstrate the extent to which what they established can still be discerned in today’s musical productions. This is not confined to their technical aspects, but also how the public perceptions of the theatre and acting profession gradually changed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century so that it could generally be held that entertainment, artistic quality and propriety were not wholly incompatible.
Arthur Sullivan’s posthumous musical reputation has been created almost entirely through his collaboration with W.S. Gilbert in the string of comic operas that form an undiminished presence on the operatic stage. But while Sullivan’s use of parody, allusion, prosody and text-setting has received excellent consideration from scholars such as Gervase Hughes, Robert Fink and James Brooks Kuykendall, questions of larger musical-dramatic design have received little scrutiny. The present paper seeks to build on these contributions by looking at the larger musical design of Sullivan’s comic operas and formulating some of the dramaturgical principles at work in them. In particular, it examines the role of music in unfolding the work’s narrative and articulating the plot’s dramatic complication and resolution; the relationship between music and dialogue and the question of musical continuity, as seen in the construction of larger musical expanses such as the extended finale structures encountered in many of the later operas; the use of musical recall, either in a structural capacity or for comic effect; and music’s role in the articulation of dramatic time.
The London Stage and the Nineteenth-Century World
14-16 April 2016
New College, Oxford

David Taylor
University of Warwick

Harlequin Napoleon: Caricature and the Pantomime of War

This paper considers the depiction of Napoleon as Harlequin in more than a dozen British caricatures of the early nineteenth century. Building on important recent scholarship on British pantomime of the long eighteenth century – most notably John O’Brien’s Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760 (2004) and David Worrall’s Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity, and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment (2007) – it asks why anti-Bonaparte graphic satire turned to the iconography of pantomime with such frequency and also what these prints tell us about the cultural and political coding of the harlequinade at this moment in history.

The paper contends that to depict Napoleon as Harlequin was to harness a syntax of cultural debasement and otherness. Satirical prints of Harlequin Napoleon need to be understood as the culmination of a culture war that has its beginnings in the 1720s and the critiques of pantomime by the likes of Pope and Hogarth. Their view that the popularity of pantomime represented the incursion into English culture of foreign modes of performance that threatened native authors and art forms is given emphatic, if paradoxical, expression in David Garrick’s pantomime Harlequin’s Invasion (1750), which closes with the descent of Harlequin and the triumphant rise of the figure of Shakespeare. Once we recognize the history that informs Harlequin Napoleon caricatures, it becomes clear that these prints are mobilizing a much older – and manifestly cultural – spectre of invasion as a means of both imagining and deriding the threat posed by Napoleonic France. Indeed, it is telling that, in contrast to the significant number of prints that cast Napoleon as Harlequin, there are just two extant caricatures of Napoleon as one of Shakespeare’s villains. However malevolent a Richard III or a Macbeth, these characters nonetheless carried with them associations cultural authority and national prestige that needed to be carefully sequestered from – and placed in opposition to – Napoleon.
The London Stage and the Nineteenth-Century World  
14-16 April 2016  
New College, Oxford

Dorothea Volz  
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

The London Olympia Hall: “An Ideal Edifice for a Truly Fantastic Spectacle”

The London Olympia Hall is a paradigmatic example of the close relation between economy, exhibition and entertainment at the end of the nineteenth century: Constructed as National Agricultural Hall in 1886, it was soon transformed into an entertainment space, used by fairs and circuses. In this building, P.T. Barnum presented the London premiere of “The Greatest Show on Earth” in 1889; between 1891 and 1893, Imre Kiralfy offered a visit to “Venice in London”, reconstructing Venetian buildings, before his brother Bolossy turned the Canal Grande into the Bosporus, the perfect scenery for his spectacle play “Constantinople” (1893-1894).

The Olympia Hall offered new sensations, desirable aesthetics, and the thrill of the unknown. In my understanding it should be viewed as part of an “exhibitionary complex” (Tony Bennett) and at the same time as part of a metropolitan complex of consumption, like department stores and world exhibitions; as a place which allowed its visitors cultural participation and the staging of the self, showing spatial and economical presence. Focusing on examples of mass spectacles and the way they have been staged and consumed at the Olympia Hall, I will have a closer look at the relation of the building as part of London’s entertainment and consumption culture, but also as a place for transnational exchange of new sensations.
John Russell Stephens describes acting editions, the primary format of dramatic publishing in the nineteenth century, as an “inconvenient format […], full of stage directions printed in a technical language […], incomprehensible to the majority of the public.” The sheer number of acting editions in circulation indicates, however, that the public did not feel unduly inconvenienced at all. At a price averaging sixpence each, several thousand plays were available to a wide consumer base comprised first and foremost of amateur actors—a demographic that generated enough demand for Wentworth Hogg, manager and later owner of Samuel French’s theatrical publishing house in London, to identify “the amateur [as] our greatest patron.” In this paper, I propose to examine the ubiquitous, but also ephemeral and hard-to-trace practice of amateur theatrical performance through the corpus of acting editions published by Thomas Hailes Lacy and Samuel French, a corpus which has hitherto received only moderate scholarly attention. I will investigate specifically what the choice of published playtexts can reveal about the changing structure and makeup of the theatrical marketplace in the nineteenth century, as well as the demand from a varied audience comprising both genders, different social backgrounds, and all ages.
When Thomas Holcroft translated a French play into English, *A Tale of Mystery, A Melodrame* (Covent Garden, 1802), he introduced a new theatrical term to London’s audiences. The genre’s mixture of pantomime, tragedy and comedy, accompanied by music, departed from the longstanding patent theatres’ demarcated categories. Melodrama also fed demand in London’s minor theatre culture, which developed concomitantly with the genre’s emergence. Due to its plurality of genres and popular appeal, melodrama was perceived by many critics as monstrously incongruent to previous theatrical tradition, and dependent on spectacular effects generated by stage technologies. These pejorative opinions planted the seeds of melodrama’s perennial association with superficiality and excess. As this paper will explore, such stereotyping has obscured the genre’s cultural receptiveness to societal concerns. Beneath the spectacle, the vampire in James Robinson Planché’s *The Vampire; or, The Bride of the Isles* (1820) encapsulated the aristocracy’s parasitic control over working classes. These tensions over aristocratic hegemony stirred reformist thought, and caused wider fears that a replication of the French Revolution may break out in Britain. As indicated in Richard Brinsley Peake’s *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), the Creature complemented shifting concerns, as the production articulated the intensifying perceived thin line between reform and revolution. The monster villains therefore reveal the powerfully symbiotic relationship between London’s melodramatic and political stages.
David Worrall
Nottingham Trent University/University of Roehampton

The £8 a week Shylock: Drury Lane and the economics of Edmund Kean’s first season

This paper is about the day-to-day economic structures of Drury Lane during Edmund Kean’s first (1812-14) season. By examining their financial accounts, the ‘box book,’ as well as the prompter’s rehearsal schedule book, the paper raises particular questions about why Kean’s public acclaim did not translate into financial rewards either for the actor or for the theatre.

Kean was not the highest paid performer at point during his first season. He was paid £8 in his first week, rising by several gradations to £23.6.8. by 18 July 1814. On that day R.W. Elliston (later lessee of Drury Lane) received £35 and Rebecca Maria Davison (?1780–1858) and Sarah Smith (1783–1850) were each paid £29.3.4. These pay differentials remained consistent throughout the season. In his first week, when Kean received £8, Davison and Smith each earned £25. Amazingly, in the week of his first Richard III (12th February), Kean continued to receive £8, his pay not rising until 5th March when he started to earn £10.13.4 (Folger W.b. 360).

That top earning actresses outmatched male performers is an irregularly recurrent feature of Georgian and Regency theatre but, by any standard, Kean’s earnings lagged behind for an extraordinarily long time. The Fifth Report to the General Assembly of Subscribers to the Re-Building of the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane, September 2, 1814, was essentially the shareholders’ annual financial report, a document apparently part of the brewer-turned-politician, Samuel Whitbread’s management innovations. It notes that, despite Kean’s astonishing success, income for the 1813-14 season at £68,329.2s.0d was actually down by £6,913.14s on the previous season (£75,242.16.0.). By extending the season by 42 nights, the Fifth Report admits they had not anticipated how ‘Provision was to be made for the expenses’ of running extra performances. On 6 July 1815 Whitbread killed himself, as some think because of the tangled finances of Drury Lane combining with a visible, but undiagnosed, illness (ODNB). At this point, Kean was earning £20 per week.

From 1813, Drury Lane adopted a completely new type of nightly receipts book, pre-printed in red ink, subdividing the entire auditorium both laterally and longitudinally (as P.S. and O.P. divisions). This gives an unusually detailed breakdown of nightly attendance which I have collated with their ‘Box Books,’ records of who-sat-where in the boxes. Names (and titles) were normally requested (sometimes addresses as well).

The findings act as a caution, early in the century, on a necessarily causal link between celebrity, full houses and financial success.
Between 2009-2012 I worked as RA on Kate Newey’s and Jeffrey Richards’s AHRC-funded project ‘The Cultural History of English Pantomime’. As part of the project, I created a database documenting every London pantomime performance (advertised in national and local press) between 1810 and 1910. The database includes details of theatre, playwright, and – where information was available – choreographer, musical director, and ‘stars’. This is an invaluable resource for several reasons: it enables analysis of long-run data (location of performances – east-end, west, south); it documents the decline of the Harlequinade and the rise of the influence of the music-hall celebrity; and allows investigation into the popularity of specific titles over the course of the century. In the period of peak imperial propaganda, popular performance responded to international affairs – a surge in oriental pantomime (Ali Baba, Aladdin etc) and other productions nominally set abroad after the 1880s is immediately obvious. Giant-land often became a colonial landscape. Dick Whittington, Gulliver, and Robinson Crusoe travelled the empire affording opportunities for topical comment. This paper will use the database to chart what parts of the world were brought to the London stage, and investigate further the relationship between pantomime performance and popular imperialism.