



Shakespeare in the L. W. Conolly Theatre Archives

THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH LIBRARY'S theatre archives section began in a modest fashion with the acquisition of one small collection in 1969. In the subsequent three-and-half decades, the archival collections have rapidly expanded to form the largest archival theatre holdings in Canada, with a significant portion of those archives devoted to Shakespearean production and adaptation. From the outset, a major collecting focus has been on modern Ontario theatre. Today, in 2007, most major Ontario theatres are represented, as are a number of prominent individual theatre artists who have deposited their own personal records, such as renowned Canadian Shakespearean actor William Hutt. The breadth and depth of Guelph's holdings demonstrate that the work of Canadian playwrights transcends provincial boundaries. Without a doubt, our theatres, performers, playwrights, and designers have had both national and international impact.

The University of Guelph Library's rich and varied collections were named the L. W. Conolly Theatre Archives in 1999 to recognize the leadership of Dr. Leonard Conolly in establishing and sustaining its development while he served as chair of the University's drama department and as vice-president academic in the 1980s and 1990s. The L.W. Conolly Theatre Archives have become a major resource for scholars, not only in Canada but around the world. Naturally, William Shakespeare is well-

LEFT Yorick's skull, production prop from *Hamlet* (Phoenix Theatre, 1981)

represented in the theatre archives by entire collections centered on the Bard's plays.

Shakespeare's influence in Canadian, especially Ontarian, drama is most evident in a number of Guelph's major theatre collections. These archival resources form the basis of Guelph's holdings on William Shakespeare. They are available for viewing in Archival and Special Collections in the Wellington County Room, as well as in the library reading room used by students, faculty, researchers, and members of the public. The following collections also include the unique reference code for these materials.

SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL NATIONAL THEATRE COMMITTEE COLLECTION (UK). The Committee was established to promote and organize the creation of a National Theatre for Britain. Two "minute books," May 1909–July 1912, are signed on five occasions by Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), and on four occasions by William Archer (1856–1924), the great Scottish theatre critic and translator. Also included is a sheet signed by fifteen members of the Executive Committee. It was not until 1963 that the National Theatre (under Laurence Olivier) opened at the Old Vic in London. [XZ1 MS A106]

WILLIAM HUTT FONDS. Canada's internationally recognized performer began his professional career in 1948. Hutt joined the Stratford Festival in its first season in 1953 and starred in much of the Shakespeare canon as an actor, director, and associate director until his retirement in 2005. Among the prominent leads he has taken on are Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, Prospero, Falstaff, Titus, Brutus, Timon, Feste, and Richard II. [XZ1 MS B020, B027]

CANADIAN PLAYERS COLLECTION. Founded as a national professional touring company for Canada by Tom Patterson and Douglas Campbell, the Canadian Players first toured in 1954, and for the next twelve years took a repertoire of mainly Shakespeare and Shaw across Canada and into the United States. The Canadian Players merged with Crest Theatre in 1966 to form the Crest Players Foundation, which eventually became Theatre Toronto (1968). The collection features programs and reviews, 1955–65. [XZ1 MS A120]

STRATFORD FESTIVAL COLLECTION. Founded in 1953 by Tom Patterson, the Stratford Festival has established itself as one of the world's leading Shakespearean theatre companies. The library holds prompt scripts, programs, posters, articles, publications, promotional materials, press releases, and designs, from 1953 to the present. The collection includes microfilm copies of prompt scripts of all productions, 1953–1970, as well as twenty-nine scrapbooks donated by the London Public Library, Ontario, in 1991. Holdings are selective as the Stratford Festival also maintains its own comprehensive archival collection, recently moved to a new location. Included in the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition is one item of particular interest from Guelph's Stratford holdings, an *As You Like It* costume designed by the celebrated theatre designer Desmond Heeley for a 1959 production. [XZ1 MS A400–414]

BARRY MACGREGOR COLLECTION. Clippings, programs, designs, photographs, and other materials relating to the career of popular actor and director Barry MacGregor, primarily at the Shaw and Stratford Festivals, and the Bastion Theatre (Victoria, BC), 1949 to the present. MacGregor is featured in the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition through production materials for *Henry V* in 1980, *The Merchant of Venice* in 1970, and *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1973. [XZ1 MS A008]

CECIL O'NEAL COLLECTION. Scripts, production files, and administrative records relating to the career of director, administrator, and teacher Cecil O'Neal, particularly relating to his position as director of productions at the Stratford Festival, 1975–1985. [XZ1 MS A121]

ELDA MAGILL CADOGAN COLLECTION. Scrapbooks, clippings, photographs, scripts, correspondence, programs, and financial records, 1937–1994, chiefly relating to Cadogan's play *Rise and Shine* and to Stratford Festival productions. Cadogan was a widely-produced Canadian amateur playwright, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s. [XZ1 MS A148.]

HILARY CORBETT COLLECTION. One of Canada's pre-eminent costume designers, Hilary Corbett moved to Canada from England in 1964 and worked for the Stratford and Shaw Festivals throughout the 1970s. In 1975, she began a twenty-year tenure as a staff designer for CBC Television.

She has designed costumes for major theatre companies across Canada. There are approximately 900 sheets (704 in colour) of original costume designs, many with manuscript notes and cloth swatches; 104 photocopies (forty-eight in colour) of costume designs (60% with attached swatches); four sketchbooks of monochrome and colour designs; over 120 production photographs; and some sixty programs. The collection covers Corbett's career from the 1950s to 1995. [XZ 1 MS A158]

ERIC DONKIN COLLECTION. Biographical information, correspondence, photographs, reviews, programs, and other materials relating to the life and career of Eric Donkin (1929–1998), a well-known character actor born in Liverpool. Donkin played leads in many of the major houses across the country, including Neptune Theatre (*King Lear*, 1977), Centaur Theatre, the National Arts Centre, and the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for the Young. He is most noted for his twenty-five-year association with Ontario's Stratford Festival. [XZ1 MS B007–B008]

TONY VAN BRIDGE COLLECTION. Articles and reviews, photographs, correspondence, and other memorabilia relating to the career of British-born actor and director Tony Van Bridge (1917–2004) who arrived in Canada in 1954. He performed extensively in television, radio, and at the Stratford Festival. He directed at Stratford and in theatres across the country. Van Bridge was well-known for his acting, especially his portrayal of Shakespeare's loveable Falstaff. [XZ1 MS B106]

In addition to these ten significant archival collections, there are major individual performances, commemorative theatre events, and artistic achievements that illustrate Shakespearean themes and works. Many Canadian theatres and playwrights have reinterpreted and adapted Shakespeare's works in the past thirty years. The process of reinterpretation and adaptation is a focal point for the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP), now the largest digital archive studying the Shakespeare effect from a particular national (read Canadian) perspective. CASP has relied extensively on the L.W. Conolly Theatre Archives and on Shakespearean resources that reflect both universal Shakespearean qualities and particular Canadian viewpoints or original adaptations derived from the world's greatest playwright. The

essence of Shakespeare is present in various types of publications and artistic representations held by the library, which also possesses a small number of theatre props such as Yorick's skull, part of the Phoenix Theatre holdings.

A variety of library materials are not included in the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition, although they can be referenced in Archival and Special Collections. For example, there are many house programs that not only serve as a record of a theatre's production, but also satisfy the need to inform audiences attending a given performance. Shakespeare's plays are well represented by many Ontario theatres, such as CentreStage, Theatre Passe Muraille, the Crest Theatre, the Grand Theatre (London, Ontario), Black Theatre Canada, Canadian Stage Theatre, and Toronto Free Theatre Archives. The Richard Rose Collection in particular is strong with performance scripts and includes class notes and essays for his teachings on Shakespeare at York University.

SET MODELS. The University of Guelph theatre archives house the largest collection of scale set models (or maquettes) for theatre in Canada. Over the years, the work highlighting Shakespearean productions by a number of designers, such as Cameron Porteous, has been preserved. The models serve the purpose of linking performance with stage sets and furnishings, and range from the ordinary to the elaborate depending on practical realities of theatrical budgets. In the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition, there are four maquettes from our collection:

- *Twelfth Night* designed by Cameron Porteous for Citadel Theatre in 1998
- two productions of *Romeo and Juliet* designed by Jim Plaxton for Toronto Free Theatre in 1985 and 1986 (also known as *Dream in High Park*, this production is particularly noteworthy as it was designed for outdoor seasons in North York)
- *The Tempest* designed by William Chesney for Skylight Theatre in 1987

For more information about our collection of set models, please consult our library's theatre archive website <www.lib.uoguelph.ca/resources/archives/theatre/>.

POSTERS. Shakespeare advertised! The theatre archives hold many attractive and colourful posters. The Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition includes posters for *Hamlet* from the Phoenix Theatre’s 1981 production and Theatre Passe Muraille’s 1982 production. Also, Black Theatre Canada’s *A Caribbean Midsummer Night’s Dream* is an interesting 1983 adaptation that celebrated the company’s tenth anniversary. Adapted from Shakespeare’s original, the production was shortened and enriched by the sounds and sights of the Caribbean—its music, dances, costumes, speech rhythms, drumbeats. A mixed company of Black and white actors delivered Shakespeare’s poetic prose with a distinctive Caribbean cadence.

TECHNICAL DRAWINGS. The technical aspect of staging a production in a finite space is illustrated by many drawings that bring a creative endeavour to life. The specifications for Toronto Free Theatre provide the details for layouts, set changes, and furnishings for *Romeo and Juliet* that reveal both the play development and the financial considerations of smaller theatres. Shakespeare’s *Tempest* at the Skylight Theatre—Toronto’s first professional outdoor theatre in North York—drawn by Canadian scenic artist William Chesney is another fine example of this type of work that the library holds, and is complemented by the displayed set model.

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS. Photographs can be used to visualize productions in different ways. Often, they serve to illustrate the realities performers or directors wish to capture, but they also may be used to establish information about the play, the time it was set in, or memorable stage events. Production photographs from many theatres, including Black Theatre Canada, the Grand Theatre in London, the NDWT (Ne’er-Do-Well-Thespians), and Stratford Festival, as well as those from the William Hutt collection, provide a fascinating visual record of Shakespeare in Canada.

COSTUME DESIGNS. The contributions of Canadian costume designers are represented by holdings from the Centre Stage Theatre Company, and from the William Hutt and Peter Blais collections. Blais has been involved in many aspects of Canadian theatre and has made contributions to productions across this country.

LORNE BRUCE & LORNA ROURKE

IN SUM, the L. W. Conolly Theatre Archives has emerged in the short span of two decades as a significant national resource for theatre studies with holdings that reflect on Canada's extraordinary relationship with Shakespeare, but also on Canadian theatrical culture more generally. With more than one hundred and twenty-five separate collections, it has become an essential repository for the study of Canadian theatre and continues to grow at a rapid pace.

Lorne Bruce is head of Archival and Special Collections at the University of Guelph Library and is engaged extensively with the acquisition, arrangement, and description of theatre collections for library users. He also has published articles and books in Canada, the United States, and Europe on a variety of library and book history topics ranging from ancient Rome to the public library system in Ontario.

Lorna Rourke is a University of Guelph liaison librarian who currently is developing collections and providing research assistance for students and faculty for English, Theatre Studies, Library Science, and the Bachelor of Arts and Sciences program. She is a recipient of the University of Guelph Faculty Association Academic Librarianship award and teaches a course on academic libraries through the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario in London.