

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

# Digital Shoeboxes: the history and future of personal performance archiving.

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Gabrielle Enthoven at home with cabinets holding her collection of theatrical documents, about 1909. Theatre and Performance Archive, PN 1620-L7 Folio © Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Eve Smith.

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## Abstract

Personal performance archiving describes a practice in which individuals who regularly attend live performances document their experiences, usually through the collection of documents such as programmes, playbills, cast sheets, ticket stubs, posters and leaflets. This is a form of documenting performance which intersects with the related field of serious leisure. Personal performance archiving relies on the collection and storage of physical documents, yet in this age of rapidly advancing digital technologies and social media, born-digital documents are beginning to take precedence in event management. This will undoubtedly affect these kinds of hobbyist archivists. This project strives to understand three main topics; what information can be taken from archived performance documents, how audience members are currently documenting and archiving their experience, and how the increase of digitisation and born-digital documents will affect this practice.

This project used a survey to determine the current collecting and archiving preferences of modern theatregoers, several collections of physical and digitised programmes to compare style and content over different eras, and contains a literature review concerning current and future digital modes of performance documentation.

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## Introduction

*Programme*: A booklet of information concerning a specific live performance or run of performances (usually theatrical in nature), available to buy at the venue.

*Playbill*: Once a single sheet of paper advertising a show, now a synonym for programme in the USA and other countries.

*Cast sheet*: A free sheet of paper with minimal cast and show information, usually provided at most dance and operatic performances.

*Ticket stub*: The remains of a physical ticket once it has been validated by an usher.

'Personal performance archives' are defined here as personal collections of live performance documents; programmes, playbills, cast sheets, ticket stubs, leaflets and posters, photographs, newspaper clippings, reviews, autographs, etc. The collection and curation of such things has been affected, like all processes, by the digital age, and in regarding this the library and information science viewpoint becomes vital. This project will seek to understand the shift that personal performance archiving has undergone in the digital age, and how it will further adapt. The shift from documentation as tangible, paper documents in libraries and archives to computerised or 'born-digital' documents in digital libraries, archives, and social media can be seen in almost every aspect of modern library science. From the near-extinction of physical card catalogues to the increase of e-books and digital journal articles, digitisation is having a profound and divisive effect on the library world. This is no less true of archives and personal archiving. While performance documentation has enjoyed greater visibility and study as of late, with new conferences and collections of essays being published in the field, it is still an arguably new and under-researched discipline which would continue to benefit from LIS research, especially concerning the subject of digitisation and digital libraries. Therefore, my dissertation project will explore this subject, and attempt to answer two research questions; how is digitisation affecting personal performance archives, and what does this mean for the future of performance documentation?

Archiving and collecting can be a deeply personal and often sentimental enterprise, inspiring many a poetic reflection on the subject. Consider this often-quoted passage from Carolyn Steedman's 2001 book *Dust*:

"You know you *will not finish*, that there will be something left unread, unnoted, untranscribed. You are not anxious about the Great Unfinished, knowledge of which is the very condition of your being there in the first place, and of the grubby trade you set out in, years ago. You know perfectly well that the infinite heaps of *things* they recorded, the notes and traces that these people left behind, constitute practically nothing at all. There is the great, brown, slow-moving strandless river of Everything, and then there is its tiny flotsam that has ended up in the record office you are at work in. Your craft is to conjure a social system from a nutmeg grater, and your competence in that was established long ago." (Steedman 2001).

While personal archives are most often used for intimate and particular research, if indeed used for research at all rather than simple nostalgia, the notion of conjuring 'a social system from a nutmeg grater' is not alien to those who often find themselves sorting through dusty boxes in attics. While researching plays and ballets in my spare time and for my studies, I have become all too familiar with the feeling of trying to 'conjure' a performance from a programme, or ticket stub, or even a vague review from a decades-old newspaper clipping. Like several other theatregoers, my own 'archive'

consists of a large scrapbook filled with ticket stubs, ordered chronologically, and a nearby filing box filled with miscellaneous documents. Such collections are often housed in shoeboxes, folders, and under-the-bed storage. The title of this research project, 'Digital Shoeboxes', (and indeed much of the project itself) was inspired by a talk from Ramona Riedzewski at the 2016 'Documenting Performance' conference at City, University of London. "What if all those shoeboxes of programmes were dumped into one big shoebox that everyone could share? A shoebox in the digital cloud." This inspired me to think not only of my own collection (which was indeed in a shoebox at the time), but of the thousands of other such boxes filled with live performance documentation across the world. While the idea of digitising all these collections would certainly be a fascinating enterprise, I became interested in looking at performance documents that are 'born-digital', such as e-tickets and programmes that are sometimes available on company websites. How are audience members choosing to store these, if at all?

As I became more interested in the subject and embarked upon further reading, the motif of shoeboxes kept returning. I started to look at not record offices or archives, but personal archives of performance; shoeboxes of programmes, scrapbooks of ticket stubs, old photographs and home videos. My research became concerned with serious theatregoers; those people who regularly buy glossy programmes that are more advert than performance data, those who wait in the hall until the band start clearing up in the hopes of snagging the paper set list. As Glen McGillivray puts it in *Scrapbooks, Snapshots, and Memorabilia*:

"Despite the popularity of television programmes such as the Antiques Road Show that entreat the public to 'Flog It' or look for 'Treasures in the Attic', there are still people who carefully keep single theatrical items or bundles of papers relating to the history of entertainment. These are not specialist collectors but individuals who have inherited a previously disregarded cardboard box or battered suitcase of memorabilia." (McGillivray 2011)

This and other texts in the same vein suggest that these individual hobbyists are not quaint people of the past, but serious collectors and archivists, a sentiment echoed by the responders to a survey I put out on the subject. The structure of this dissertation, which has three main chapters including the aforementioned survey results, is as follows:

Chapter one, *"This Is All In Your Programme": performance documents through the ages*, will focus on the history of performance documents from a library and documentation perspective, with discussion of both public and personal archives. Performance data will be identified and assessed over several eras using examples of programmes from the eighteenth century to the present day. These historical programmes and playbills have been found through the British Library's digitisation collection, (BL Labs), from personal collections I have been able to look through and from archives such as The King's Theatre, Portsmouth and the V&A theatre and performance collection. These will be compared in order to look at what kind of information people were being given, and then collecting compared to what is on offer in the present day, especially in regard to online information, theatre 'fandom', and social media. If a person can find everything they need to know about a production on the Internet, for free, why bother with buying and storing a theatre programme?

Chapter two, *"I Don't Trust Memory": Survey Results and Discussion*, will discuss the results of a survey I created and sent out to regular theatregoers in order to see how current trends in digitisation are affecting the way in which people collect and store theatre ephemera. I assumed, as a modern library science student, that digitisation would have made a huge impact on the way that we as theatre fans manage our own archives and use others. The use of e-tickets has increased noticeably in the last few years, and I have noticed the use of 'e-programmes' at events such as live cinema

screenings of dances and plays. I was curious to find out if modern audiences members were agreeable to this (admittedly slow) change, and if so, how they were organising these new types of documents into their collection, and if not, why not? The responses I collected were diverse, which afforded a wonderful insight into the minds of modern audience members of all ages.

Chapter three, "*Who Tells Your Story*": *Social Documentation and the Digital Age*, serves as the background literature review and is an exploration of how current trends in theatre fandom and social media are affecting the ways in which audience members document their experience. From Twitter, to dedicated Internet forums, to apps which allow audience members to give feedback on shows in real time, the digital world is now more than ever present on the theatrical stage. Fandom - which is primarily internet-based - is a major factor in this, especially when it comes to current (at the time of writing) 'cult phenomena' like *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* or the Broadway musical *Hamilton*. This demand for both behind-the-scenes and onstage documentation from a global fan base, all trying to see as much as they can of one show at one theatre in one country, has driven digital theatre documentation into a new age. It has also arguably democratised the process by making the majority of this content freely available and able to add into people's personal digital collections.

The word 'personal' is especially applicable in this field. As watching a live performance is so personal and subjective, performance collecting is a world apart from most other forms of 'serious leisure' and collecting. No two personal performance collections could ever be the same; far from being a static and finite "collect them all" situation such as the collection of baseball cards or sticker albums, performance documents capture extremely specific events; pictures and text, people's thoughts and greetings, and even emotions. They are like a kind of flypaper for memories rather than simple booklets of information - one looks through their scrapbook and remembers a night as a whole rather than just the performance; the company they kept, the restaurant they ate at, the actor they met at the stage door. As a journalist asking "what's the point of theatre programmes?" once wrote, "a good programme can be a time machine, jogging your memory and making past performances suddenly seem vivid and alive." (Gardner 2012). It is what makes the notion of 'documenting performance' so fascinating, and while time machines still belong in the realm of fantasy, performance archiving is something quite close.

## Chapter One: History

“This Is All In Your Programme”: performance documents through the ages

*“And this is all in your program  
You are at the opera  
You're gonna have to study up a little bit  
If you wanna keep with the plot  
'Cause it's a complicated Russian novel  
Everyone's got nine different names  
So look it up in your program  
We'd appreciate it, thanks a lot.”*

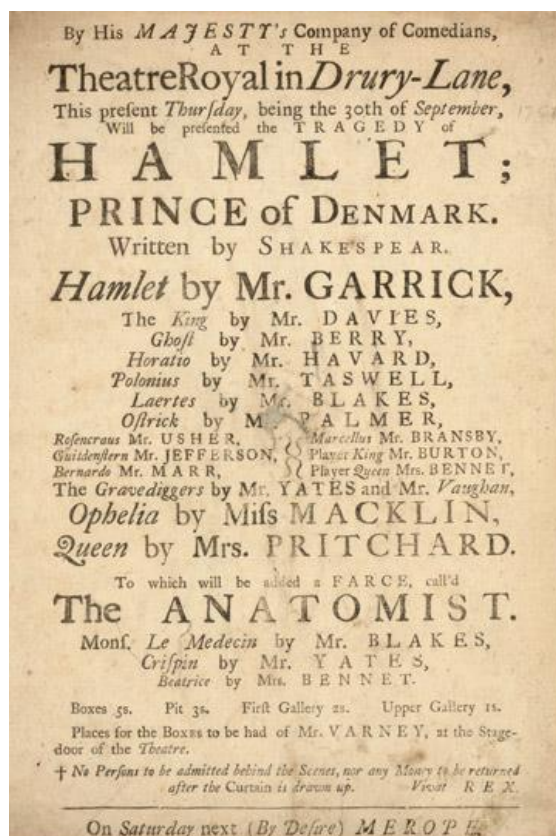
- “Prologue”, from the off-Broadway musical *Natasha, Pierre, and The Great Comet of 1812*, written by Dave Malloy.

Theatre programmes in the modern age are usually a booklet available for sale at live performance venues, which include names and biographies of the actors, a list of crew, interviews, backstage photos, (and more and more frequently, pages of adverts). However, these documents provide audience members (and indeed, archivists and theatre historians,) with much more than just show information. Right from the earliest examples of programmes we can access we know that they were ripe with varied data; locations, reviews, adverts from local businesses, even news items, which all piece together to give us a snapshot of life in the community around the theatre. Many people collect their programmes, cast sheets and ticket stubs in scrapbooks, boxes, folders and files. This an old practice, with no concrete beginning, although many believe the Victorian era saw the largest ‘first wave’ of playbill collecting as the theatre entered a golden age and scrapbooking became popular.

Yet even from the 17th century in London programmes of theatrical events were posted as ‘bills’ around the town, (hence the term ‘playbills’), and would be collected up by theatregoers to remind them of the times and locations of performances. They would often carry them to the performance itself, which also earned the pieces of paper the term “handbills”. One programme from Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1827 has this addition:

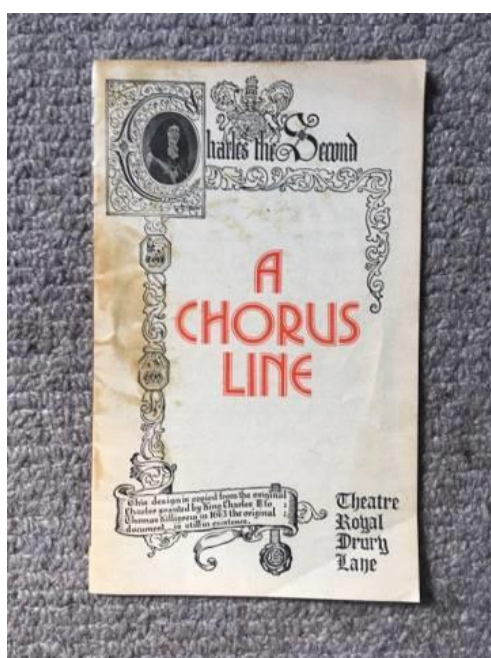
*“Any Persons wishing to have the BILLS of the PLAY delivered to them, may be accommodated on application (by Letter, Post-paid) addressed to Mr. THOMAS COOPER, at the Stage-Door at this Theatre.”* (British Library collection, 2013).

This shows an interest by regular theatregoers in the collection of playbills - whether these documents went on to be stored or not - and that the theatres in Drury Lane were aware of this demand and could satisfy it. These playbills were still usually one sheet of paper, laid out much like this:



A 1756 playbill of Hamlet, by William Shakespeare, performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London (<http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet/past-production-photos.aspx>)

An equivalent programme from the same theatre, produced 220 years later, has this appearance. A note on the cover tells the reader that “This design is copied from the original Charter granted by King Charles II to Thomas Killigrew in 1663 the original document is still in existence.” The programme contains adverts, cast and crew information, black and white backstage photographs, and (as far as can be researched), a complementary document like its 1756 counterpart.



(A 1976 programme of *A Chorus Line*, by Michael Bennett, performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London. Document borrowed from a personal collection.)



When writing about the collection of theatre documents, I think it is necessary to look at what exactly these individuals were collecting - what information is given to them on the programme, and if the variety and usefulness of the information has increased or declined since playbills were first available. For this I am using a magnificent collection of digitised playbills from the British Library, which have been put through an OCR reader and remain unnamed and unsorted, but no less rich in data. The information available on early handbills are in some ways much more focused on the theatrical community, rather than simply the performance on the night in question. For example, there are often notes regarding the experience of the actors on stage; whether someone is performing for the first time or making a triumphant return, if someone is 'indisposed' or if there has been some related news backstage. This is rarely something found in modern programmes, unless there are dedicated interviews in the booklet. One cast change notice from Thursday October 2nd, 1828 at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane reads:

"Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

MR. LISTON'S First Appearance,

This Evening, THURSDAY, Oct. 2, 1828,

The Stew Divertissement

Is unavoidably postponed, on account of the Indisposition of Miss ROSA BYRNE.

A YOUNG LADY

of great Musical promise a pupil of Mr. Lanza, will shortly make her debut."<sup>1</sup>

Whereas a cast change notice from this year, (also London, but from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden) reads:

"Royal Opera House

The Royal Ballet

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

CAST CHANGE NOTICE

THURSDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2017

DUE TO INJURY IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING CAST CHANGES:

PROLOGUES:

Helen Crawford is replaced by Anna-Rose O'Sullivan

as Fairy of the Golden Vine

James Hay is replaced by Solomon Golding as a Cavalier".<sup>2</sup>

The difference here is noticeably more personal: while the "young lady of great musical promise" is not named, she is described and her teacher is named, so those in the know would perhaps have kept the playbill in their collection in the hope that the evening might have been her breakout performance. The cast change notice from 2017 is more perfunctory. It is also useful to note that the 1828 notice is printed onto the playbill sheet itself, while the cast change notice from 2017 was

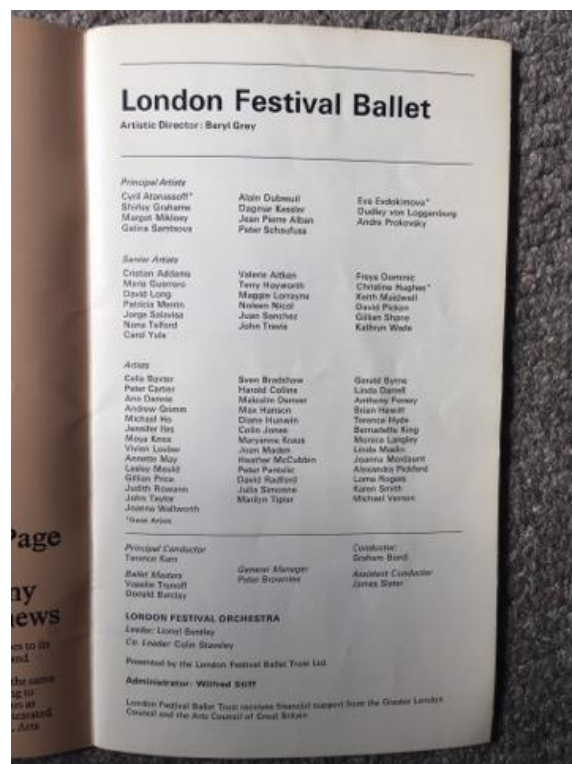
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<sup>1</sup> British Library Digital Labs, "Theatrical Playbills from Britain and Ireland (OCR text only), file name: lsidyv3f9dd402.txt, available at: <https://data.bl.uk/playbills/pb2.html>.

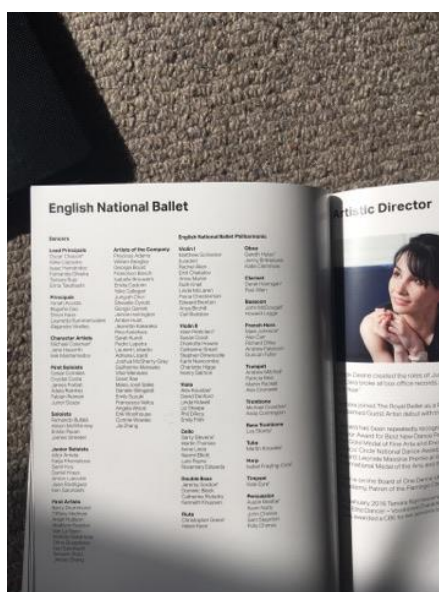
<sup>2</sup> Taken from the author's personal collection.

printed on a separate slip of paper and handed to audience members as they passed by the box office, regardless of whether they bought a programme or picked up a complimentary cast sheet.

One more modern comparison, from the world of dance, concerns programmes from the once-named London Festival Ballet, (now the English National Ballet). Ballet is an especially interesting genre of live performance when looking at performance documents throughout history, as the main core of the repertoires of ballet companies have remained the same for centuries; classical ballets such as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppelia*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Nutcracker* are still put on every year, and so it is easy to track the changes in performance documents through the same productions. The London Festival Ballet was founded in 1950. This programme, from 1961, concerns a production of *Coppelia*. It is a complementary document, with cast information, show synopsis (divided into acts), adverts, subscription slips, and black and white photographs. The design is minimal.



A 2016 programme for Akram Khan's *Giselle* looks very different. It is a 32-page booklet printed on glossy paper, with several high-quality photographs, interviews, adverts, and previews of other shows. There is not specific cast information; rather a list of all dancers in the corps, as the programme is sold over the entire run. A free cast sheet for the specific night was available. The programme cost over £5.



As mentioned previously, programmes also give us an important insight into the culture of the period, and not just the personal memories of the collector. In the programme for Akram Khan's *Giselle*, for example, there are articles detailing how the current refugee crisis inspired the new adaptation of the *Giselle* story. This was also especially prevalent in wartime, with many notices of world events to be found in playbills from the period. Many of the playbills digitised in the British Library's collections give notices of triumphs and losses in naval warfare. In the more modern eras national news was less likely to be found on programmes, although during the Second World War, theatre patrons were advised on air raid safety and cancellations on their playbills. One especially poignant example, found on a 1942 programme for "David Garrick" at the King's Theatre in Portsmouth, Southsea, reads:

"AIR RAID WARNING. – Should the "Alert" be sounded, notification in red will appear on the number indicators on each side of the stage. Patrons who wish to leave are at liberty to do so, but the performance will continue."<sup>3</sup>

Copies such as these are also collected by wartime memorabilia collectors and historians of war, culture, theatre, etc. It is another example of how programmes and playbills contain far more recorded data than simply the actors' names.

Another important transformation in the history of playbills is that of advertising language. In the 18th and 19th centuries, of which this digital collection is primarily concerned, bills were posted advertising the theatrical performances before the show and these then served as playbills, therefore the language used to describe the actors and shows was of a much more persuasive and descriptive tone; recording extra facts about the actors such as their schooling and the number of shows they had performed in the hope of enticing audiences. In the present day, programmes are usually only available in the theatre itself on the night of the performance (whether paid-for or complementary), so the cast and show information is simple and direct. For collectors through the ages, this means a shift from collecting documents that explicitly record the more emotional side of theatrical memories, to documents that record facts with which memories are associated. This collecting in itself is especially interesting from a library and information science viewpoint, and to understand how modern theatre collections are maintained (and why), it is important to understand the foundations of collecting theory and 'serious leisure'.

<sup>3</sup> June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1942: "David Garrick", at the King's Theatre, Portsmouth (Southsea).

Most forms of collecting, including theatre and performance collecting, fall under the umbrella of 'serious leisure'. Serious leisure is defined by Robert Stebbins as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience." (Stebbins 2009). Theatre and performance collecting is serious leisure, (and not project-based leisure), due to its adaptability and individuality. Theatre and performance collectors build and curate extremely personal archives, even while collecting many of the same documents as their peers, as the documents are so intrinsically linked to individual memories. In Donald Case's study of coin collectors, he cites L. Saari as having defined four types of collectors; "passionate collectors, who are obsessive and may pay irrationally high prices for their desired objects; acquisitive collectors, who acquire items as an investment; hobbyists, who collect out of pure enjoyment; and expressive collectors, who develop collections as a statement of identity and to express themselves." (Case 2010). Theatre and performance collecting can fall into any of these four types. While it is less usual that playbills are collected like baseball cards in a 'catch them all' style of collection, many theatre fans of particular shows and actors do search for and buy specific documents, even if they had not attended the specific show in question. These playbills can be sold for a high price, depending on rarity and quality, so playbills or programmes from a important or highly sought-after event can be collected by who Case calls 'acquisitive collectors'. Hobbyists need no further explanation, but it is expressive collectors who bring a fascinating dynamic to theatre and performance collecting, and who develop their collections as archives of personal memory and identity. This theme came up in both the results of my survey on theatre and performance collectors and also through secondary reading on the subject, as will be explored further.

Susan Pearce also identifies three different types of collections; souvenir, fetishistic, and systematic. (M. Pearce 1994). A collection of programmes and ticket stubs would fall into the category of 'souvenir', as explained in the following quote: "A collector forms a souvenir collection to serve a reporting or reminding function. The objects in a souvenir collection are a sample of an event that can be remembered but not relived, not repeatable but reportable." (Winget and Asprey 2011). Souvenir collections are personal archives of memory, and this is perhaps never more relevant than when looking at collections of performance documents. These sorts of collections are not necessarily meant to be shared or exhibited: they function as an extensive aide-memoire, not just for memories of performance but memories of the life of the individual who watched them. While still interesting from a second-hand point of view, a secondary viewer will never get the same amount of information from a souvenir collection as the individual who put it together.

So why collect these documents at all? Stebbins offers a suggestion. "Several durable benefits, or broad outcomes, of serious leisure have so far been identified, mostly from research on amateurs. They are self-development, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity." (Stebbins 2009) 'Lasting physical products of the activity' is of course a major factor when it comes to performance collecting, as live performance is so ephemeral by nature. Another reason to collect documents for and maintain personal performance archives is to better benefit public archives of performance. Many public archives now outsource their work, partly for this reason, and also to save money, and create opportunities for the public, as explained by Mia Ridge: "For organisations whose missions encompass engaging people with cultural heritage, there is sometimes a sense that (...) the transcriptions produced are a 'wonderful by-product' of creating meaningful activities for public participation." (Ridge 2014). Public archives of performance are a relatively new construct – performance studies became into its own as a discipline in the early twentieth century, and many archives of performance documents were created from donations; collections lovingly maintained by amateurs and hobbyists. As Catherine Haill wrote in *Snapshots*, "the history of any public collection devoted to one subject is the history of many individuals with

different interests and different backgrounds, ultimately dedicated to a common goal.” (Haill 2011). It is interesting that her work on this subject is named ‘Accidents of survival’. Many performance collections are specifically donated to performance archives, but many more are lost, sold, or auctioned, with no particular purpose or destination in mind. There is also a lack of systematic collection in performance documentation, as individuals enter the practice with specific agendas and enjoyments in mind. This can skew archive material when there is a heavy level of donation: “There is even a hierarchy of remnants: souvenir material produced to commemorate performance such as prints, playbills, programmes, books, and theatrical journals are more likely to survive than the remnants from actually putting on entertainment such as, for example, actors’ manuscript parts or prompt scripts.” (Haill 2011). However, in the case of the V&A Theatre and Performance archive, the donations from one individual, Gabrielle Enthoven, her collecting practices could definitely be described as systematic. Enthoven campaigned for there to be a theatrical section in a national museum, had a “passion for verifying facts”, and started the practice of “continuously soliciting contemporary material from venues, managements and performers, a policy that the Theatre & Performance Department has pursued ever since.” (Dorney 2014). While theatre and performance collections are very rarely maintained through a “collect them all” process, Enthoven’s work in supplying the V&A with possibly the most comprehensive collection of documents regarding British theatre is an impressive example of just how a personal archive of performance can benefit a public one.

Enthoven’s legacy has become one of the most important theatrical resources in the United Kingdom, however, most collectors of theatrical ephemera are not quite as systematic. For this research project I circulated a survey around communities of regular theatregoers and found the results to be quite diverse. Getting a modern audience’s perspective to track current trends in how individuals now experience and document live performance was fundamental for this project and raised many interesting questions. Chapter two documents the results of this survey.

## Chapter Two: Survey

### “I Don’t Trust Memory”: Survey Results and Discussion

*“I can’t abide romantic notions of some vague long-ago... I want to know what’s true, dig deep into who, and what, and why, and when. Until now gives way to then...”*

*“Did you ever imagine I’d hang onto your stuff, Dad? Me either. But I guess I always knew that someday I was going to draw you. (...) I need real things to draw from, ‘cause I don’t trust memory.*

- “It All Comes Back”, from the Broadway musical *Fun Home*, written by Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron.

#### **Purpose of the Survey**

The purpose of the ‘Digital Shoeboxes’ survey was to ascertain the current feeling in theatregoers’ circles regarding e-documents and current methods of storing personal collections. While I wasn’t originally planning to write a survey, and had not included plans for one in my project proposal, it was recommended that I start one by my project supervisor and it yielded very interesting results.

#### **Research Design**

I chose the platform of Google Docs for my survey, for two reasons. Firstly, by keeping my work in a cloud-based format, there would be little risk of an accident destroying my work. Secondly, a Google Doc survey updates in real-time, and the responses are neatly collected in graphs without the need to collate them personally. (As I am not of a mathematical bent, this was appealing to me.)

There were fourteen questions in the survey, five of which were optional. As stated in the introduction, all results remained anonymous:

*This is a survey for a research project on personal performance archiving; the collection of programmes, playbills, ticket stubs, and any other mediums in which a person might document a live performance. For the purposes of this questionnaire, ‘performance documents’ refer to any of the following; tickets, programmes, leaflets, posters, cast sheets, etc. This project is being researched by Adelaide Robinson, for an MSc in Library Science (City, University of London). In choosing to respond to this survey you agree to your responses being kept as part of a dataset, which may be published in electronic format, and your text may be quoted in the final printed/electronic dissertation. Names will not be collected and any personal questions such as age or location are optional.*

#### **Participants**

I wanted to specifically survey regular theatregoers, and not just a sample of the general public, and so I made this clear when promoting this survey on Twitter and Facebook. I also put out a call for responses on a dedicated UK theatre forum, and sent messages to theatregoers’ blogs.

#### **Research Questions**

The research questions for my survey had three main focuses, based on the three main questions I wanted to answer. Firstly, I wanted to ascertain whether or not regular theatregoers were buying theatre programmes as well as keeping complimentary documents. Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 dealt with this area. The subject of e-documents versus physical copies was my second focus, (questions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). I wrote this survey with the preconception that more people would prefer to have e-copies of tickets and programmes, because of the convenience and benefit to the environments. This was

disproved, as I shall present later in the analysis of the results. Thirdly, I wanted to find out if the types of people answering my survey (regular and serious theatre fans) had a particular style of collecting or reason for maintaining their collections. This was the focus of questions 11 and 12. The last two questions, 13 and 14, were both optional (question 13, “to which age bracket do you belong?” had a ‘prefer not to say’ option), and were used to analyse survey-takers backgrounds and how this might have a bearing on their answers, especially regarding the practice of using e-documents in attending events.

Question 5, “how do you store documents such as programmes, ticket stubs, etc. ?” had the largest variety of answers. This was also the question in which I was most interested to see the results. The question was multiple-choice, and included the options “a dedicated scrapbook”, “a dedicated box”, “unorganised (pile, undedicated box or folder, storage, etc)”. A dedicated box would be a box reserved for the sole purpose of storing documents – from the proverbial ‘shoebox under the bed’ to a professional filing cabinet – while an undedicated box would be a general storage box containing other types of documents. There were also 2 other options; “I do not store performance documents”, and “other...” with an option to elaborate in a text field below.

The questions appeared on the survey as follows;

1. When you attend a live performance, do you keep complimentary documents such as cast sheets, ticket stubs, and leaflets?
2. Do you buy programmes (also known as playbills) at the theatre?
3. Which factors affect your decision to buy a programme?
4. If you answered 'other', please elaborate here.
5. How do you store documents such as programmes, ticket stubs, etc. ?
6. When given a choice by the theatre, do you usually opt for electronic documents or hard copies?
7. If electronic, why?
8. If hard copies, why?
9. Do you document your live performance experience on social media? This could include taking pictures of yourself and/or friends at the theatre, taking pictures of your ticket or other documents, 'checking in' at a theatre's location, attending an event on Facebook, discussing a performance on a forum, etc.
10. If yes, on which platforms do you usually use?
11. (Optional, for those who regularly collect performance documents). Do you use your collection for any particular purpose, or is it purely recreational?
12. Have you ever used a performance archive, or accessed performance documents in a library?
13. To which age bracket do you belong?
14. Optional: if answering from outside of the United Kingdom, where are you based? (The country in which you go to the theatre most often.)

With the exception of 4, 7, 8, 11, and 14, all questions were multiple choice. (A link to the online copy of my survey can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.) I used a similar system to the Likert scale for most questions, giving the responders a choice of “Yes - always”, “Yes - sometimes”, “Rarely”, and “Never”, for the questions in which I’d asked them about their regular theatre experiences such as buying programmes. One respondent commented that a “Yes - most of the time” option would have been useful.

## Results and Discussion

The survey begins with the question, “When you attend a live performance, do you keep complimentary documents such as cast sheets, ticket stubs, and leaflets?” The options are the standard, “yes – always” to “no” as stated earlier in this chapter.

150 people (54.7%) selected “Yes – always”. 92 people (33.6%) selected “Yes – sometimes”, 18 people chose “Rarely” (6.6%) and the remaining 14 chose “No” (5.1%). I expected that over half would choose the ‘always’ option.

**Question 2:** Do you buy programmes (also known as playbills) at the theatre?

Yes – always: 60 (21.9%)

Yes – sometimes: 121 (44.2%)

Rarely: 55 (20.1%)

No: 38 (13.9%)

**Question 3:** Which factors affect your decision to buy a programme?

The expense of the programme: 173 (63.1%)

How much I enjoyed the performance: 80 (29%)

Contents of the programme (interviews, articles, etc.): 102 (37.2%)

Autograph space: 8 (2.9%)

Other (please refer to next question): 45 (16.4%)

I never buy programmes: 30 (10.9%)

These answers presented as a list of checkboxes rather than multiple choice, with responders able to tick as many options as they liked. I expected that ‘the expense of the programme’ would be a main factor, as from personal experience the prices of programmes at West End theatres usually range from £5 - £10, with negligible content provided. I was interested to know what factors would persuade someone to spend this amount of money on what usually is a small pamphlet, which will not necessarily be read again, even if stored in a collection. Therefore, question 4 was an open text field for those who answered ‘other’.

**Question 4:** If you answered “other”, please elaborate here.

Below are the results from those who answered “other” – answers have not been formatted or any misspellings corrected. Responses of particular note, to be discussed later, have been put in bold type.

- **My own finances.**
- Playbills tend to be free where I see shows.
- Playbills are free
- Normally If I'm a big fan of the story already I would buy a programme as a momento
- I like to read about the actors and know the order of the acts etc
- **How emotionally connected I am to the performance content** - source material, actors, companies etc. Regardless of he quality of the specific show.
- All of the programs I have received from performances have come with the cost of the performance and were not an additional cost!



- **If anyone I know is listed in programme**, who I am with at the performance and if they will enjoy the programme
- Generally always buy a programme unless very expensive!
- **Because it supports the production**
- **Programs are usually free here**
- how much i have looked forward to the show
- I don't really think to buy one
- I've only been to a show where the programs weren't free maybe once or twice.
- **How aesthetically pleasing it is.**
- Only ever when it's a ballet
- How thick/ good quality it looks from the outside
- I always buy the programme because it's **a document of my attendance** (I'm a bit of a collector)
- Always buy as a memento.
- The design of the programme is an important factor to me.
- Depends on how badly I wanted to see the show
- How much I already cared about the show prior to seeing it
- Sometimes I just want something to read in the interval!
- I collect all programmes of every show I attend
- As answered above - I ALWAYS buy the programme!
- If I have already seen the show, especially if with the same cast
- If it is a show I have previously enjoyed - even if in a different context such as film - I will usually consider buying it based on how much I already enjoy the piece.
- I always buy one unless I have seen the show before.
- **Whether I already have a programme for that particular show**
- Nothing, always buy so I have a record.
- I usually buy it as something to remember by, and I like reading up profiles of the actors too. The shows I usually go to have stunning pictures inside so I like to have those as well.
- **Cast and Musical Number information**
- I have about four large boxes full of programmes. Due to cost now more than anything I will only buy programmes for **"special" shows** (Angels in America, Harry Potter, next year Hamilton). I just don't have the storage space for everything now and the cost savings are massive
- No factors, as I always buy one.
- All programmes I have received have been free

- On Broadway they're free, so I keep them to show I went and to remember
- Whether or not i have someone to talk to before the performance starts
- Only for really special productions.
- **Prefer to buy the play text instead**
- Depends if I want more info re the story, cast or historical info re the play and it's origins
- I want to know who's in the play, who involved with the production and the plot synopsis. Not really bothered by price but may avoid pictures only. Concert brochures less likely to buy these days
- How much I was anticipating seeing the program / how big of a deal it was to me
- Specific cast info
- **How easy it is to find cast information elsewhere e.g. Online.** And my general interest in the production

These responses generated a number of interesting themes, which will be discussed here. Firstly, as predicted, finances were a significant issue that impacted the decision to buy a programme for most people. Although this was already an option in question three, some people chose to elaborate on this in question four, pointing out that personal finances are always in flux and for some shows it may be easier for an individual to spend money on a programme than others.

Second is the theme of emotional connection, cited many times by responders; “only for really special productions”, “how badly I wanted to see the show”, etc. Although the notion of a “special” production is undefinable, as ‘special’ is a quality completely unique to each individual, one responder provided a list of shows they found special which could provide some insight. These shows were listed as “Angels in America”, “Harry Potter” (assumed to mean the play *The Cursed Child*, parts one and two), and “Hamilton”. The latter two are both shows with phenomenally large cult followings, while “Angels in America” is an extremely popular play experiencing a resurgence in attention at the time of writing this dissertation, in a new run at the National Theatre with actors Russel Tovey and Andrew Garfield. Behind-the-scenes documentation is essential to creating a wide fanbase for a show such as *Hamilton*, described by the *Telegraph* as “already one of the most successful Broadway musicals ever,” despite the fact that “the majority of its most ardent fans have never actually seen it.” (Runcie 2017). Capitalising on a cult following will sell many more programmes, posters, and associated behind-the-scenes documents – a new version of the play text was commissioned for the 2017 National Theatre run of *Angels in America*, and the book of essays and lyrics accompanying the show ‘*Hamilton*’ reached the #1 spot on the *New York Times* bestseller’s list and sold out its initial 60,000 print run in its first few weeks. (Alter 2016). The buzz around ‘*Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*’ need hardly be mentioned, with a midnight release of the play text creating immensely long queues of fans in London. Emotional connection ties up almost inseparably with fandom, especially in the theatre, where fans of particular productions will queue in adverse weather and spend their savings on tickets for a story or an actor that they are particularly connected with, (this was a feather in *Angels in America*’s cap with the casting of Andrew Garfield, which attracted many people to the play).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Fan determination can also be a detriment to spreading awareness and diverse viewing of a show – in the previously quoted article from the *Telegraph*, the writer bemoans the lack of tickets available for casual viewers: “This is when you discover that the first tranche of tickets for the London run have, seemingly, already gone, snapped up by proper *Hamilton* nerds who booked themselves into the presale months ago and probably also learned a secret handshake or something.” (Charlotte Runcie).

Documenting a particularly special experience therefore becomes a more important and pressing task to a theatregoer. Another theme brought up was that of documenting an even more personal experience – in the situation where there is an actor or crew member who is known to the individual watching the show, and therefore they would like to keep a record for sentimental reasons.

As this survey was released on the Internet with no restrictions on location, many people (at least 54, from those who chose to give their location) responded from the United States of America. From this, it was gathered that the majority of people who responded with “programmes/playbills are usually free here” were American. The Playbill Magazine serves as the theatre program for almost all Broadway shows, and is given freely on the door. They are highly collectible, especially due to the advent of “limited edition” playbills for events such as show anniversaries, (in October 2013 Playbill was “green-ified” in honour of the tenth anniversary of the Broadway musical *Wicked*), and for Pride month, adding a rainbow banner to all copies for every June since 2014. (Blank and Gewirtzman 2013; Playbill Staff 2017). Playbills are in fact so traditionally collectible that they have their own ‘buying guide’ on the eBay website:

“Playbills are a great way to remember your favorite play. Each playbill is specific to a particular play, describes its characters and scenes, and lists the cast and crew involved in the production. By keeping playbills as treasured mementos, collectors can relive a favorite theater experience or learn more about a play they could not attend. Playbills also offer a valuable insight into the past. But before buying playbills, remember to investigate available options, learn about the different eras of plays, find out what information a typical playbill includes, and learn how to buy playbills safely and securely on eBay.” (eBay 2016).

Collectability also ties in with other strong themes of the responses – how aesthetically pleasing the document is, which will be explored further in the discussion of question 5 – and the idea of collecting one program for each show and no more, insinuating that it is the story and/or production that is being documented by the (watcher), and not a particular night.

Lastly, for this discussion of the results of question 5, there is the issue of the actual provided information and how easy it is to find elsewhere. Several responders wrote that they purchased and stored a programme for easy access to cast and crew information, order of musical numbers, interval times, etc. One response read “How easy it is to find cast information elsewhere e.g. Online.” As more and more information is now freely available online, on special websites for each production and on online versions of programmes and Playbill Magazine, those who collect programs simply for their data may stop adding to their collections soon enough.

**Question 5:** How do you store documents such as programmes, ticket stubs, etc.?

Unorganised (pile, undedicated box, storage): 121 (44.2%)

A dedicated box: 80 (29.2%)

A dedicated scrapbook: 22 (8%)

I do not store performance documents: 14 (5.1%)

There was also an option to add a personal answer, and those who answered as such are recorded below:

- "pinned" on the fridge
- A box of memories
- A box that is for special paper things ie.photos/letters/card

- A dedicated cupboard - much bigger than a box
- A dedicated folder
- A mix of the above. Many of them are in a binder, many of them are in boxes, and many of them are unorganised.
- Bookshelves (alphabetical order).
- Collaged in picture frames on the wall
- Collages/photo frames/shadow boxes
- cupboard
- Front of fridge door.
- I always keep my sketchbook with me, i draw almost daily so ticked stubs get glued on the back of the page where i didnt draw on
- I display my broadway playbills on my wall
- I frame show posters of shows I've been in or been involved with. Others are kept in a scrapbook
- I have a scrapbook specifically for alcohol forms of tickets, and a shelf where I stack my playbills
- I pin them to my bulletin board!
- i put them in books or notebooks that i had with me during the performance or that were within reach when i came back from the performance
- I staple the ticket stub into my diary
- I started with a dedicated box, but the collection has outgrown it, so there's now an overflow pile
- I try to put them into a scrapbook, but often it takes a while for me to get around to it.
- in a drawer / on bookcases
- In a drawer with other significant mementos I've picked up
- It goes into a personal notebook.
- On a pinboard
- On my wall
- On shelf
- On the bookshelf
- Pin them up in my room.
- pinned to my wall
- Playbill binder
- Put the ticket on my wall

- Scrapbook for ticket stubs/leaflets, shelf for programmes
- Sometimes i stick them to things (fridge, mirror, wall, etc.)
- Stick them to my bedroom door.
- Taped to wall
- Tickets in a metal tin, programmes in a bookshelf
- Under a fridge magnet until end of year then discard

There seemed to be a clear divide in these responses between people who store their documents for aesthetic displays, and those who keep them to be read and referred to in the future. Aesthetic displays here mean being displayed on a wall or other such surface, in photo frames, on a pin board, in collages and shadow boxes. Storage options given include boxes (the proverbial shoebox), tins, a bookshelf, in a drawer, and in a cupboard. The Venn diagram of “storage” and “display” has a middle section where scrapbooks and binders live, (which, incidentally, is how the author of this dissertation chooses to store her programs and tickets).

How could this change in the digital age? There are already websites that mimic scrapbooks and collages – such as Pinterest, which allows users to collect images and links in electronic ‘boards’. With handheld digital scanners becoming more advanced and affordable, serious collectors may start scanning in their documents to store in digital scrapbooks, combining both aesthetics and efficiency.

**Question 6:** When given a choice by the theatre, do you usually opt for electronic documents or hard copies?

Hard copies (delivered to my home or picked up at the box office): 196 (71.5%)

Electronic (such as e-tickets): 78 (28.5%)

**Question 7:** If electronic, why?

E-tickets are more convenient for me: 56 (70.9%)

I like that e-tickets are more eco-friendly than using paper or card: 34 (43%)

I keep all or most of my documents online: 7 (8.9%)

I find e-tickets more aesthetically pleasing: 0 (0%)

E-tickets are easier to store: 11 (13.9%)

Options added by responders:

- Post not good
- I can print at home
- I sometimes opt for hard copy tickets as well if I've been to the box office for instance. Online orders I tend to go for elektronuv
- Often theres no charge although i do miss having a stub etc to keep
- e-tickets have, in my experience, been cheaper. I have only recently begun to choose this option over hard copies.

- i actually think etickets are DO MUCH more convinient bc u cant lose them etc. but i love having hard copies to much
- If i lose e-tickets i can print them again
- My tickets are usually a gift from someone and they choose those.

**Question 8:** If hard copies, why?

Paper tickets are more convenient for me: 45 (22.5%)

I find paper tickets more aesthetically pleasing: 142 (71%)

Hard copies of documents are easier to store: 51 (25.5%)

I keep all or most of my documents as hard copies: 48 (24%)

Other options added by responders:

- call me old fashioned but i like a paper ticket, something i can hold with a stub to keep.
- Easier to collect at box office
- Habit
- I can look at it before the show starts
- I don't have a printer so prefer to collect to avoid going to library for this
- Easier not to forget the ticket if you keep it at box office!
- Hard copies I usually pick up at the show, so I don't have to worry about losing or forgetting them before the show
- its a memory i can keep
- the collectible is more pleasing to me in a physical rather than electronic form.
- Having something physical to look back on and feel with my hands is more sentimental to me.
- I keep all or most of my documents as hard copies.;I grew up with paper tickets, and I've been saving the ticket stubs for everything I've seen for nearly 20 years. It's the most accurate record of the shows I've watched, and I'm attached to the tangible physicality of that record. Tangible evidence of that experience, the entry itself, is so important to me when I work with an art form that is impermanent.
- I like having solid proof in case technology fails
- I like to scrapbook my tickets as well as my playbills, especially because some performances do not provide playbills.
- I'm afraid of digitally 'losing' the e tickets and feel safer with a hard copy
- It's just nicer. Seems more fancy.
- Sometimes purchase very close to performance time

- i like having the physical evidence of where i have been. even when i can only get an e ticket when booking the show i print out a physical copy
- I pay for electronic delivery and it cost the company nothing, so think by paying for hard copies, it cost them more and they make less profit
- I think it's more respectful(?) to have a nicely printed hardcopy :-> (also I dont have to pay the processing fee for e-tickets)
- If I've bought at the box office I have the paper ticket
- It's easier to collect from the box office
- My familys livleyhood depends on paper.(if the paper mill shuts down, no money, no theater tickets.)
- Don't have a computer or that sort of mobile phone.
- I tend to get tickets day-of. Also, I leave tickets at will call so I can't lose them.
- You can ask someone to sign them, or put them in a scrapbook - harder to do with e-documents

The first factor to mention here is the idea of aesthetics and artwork. No-one chose the option to respond with “I find e-tickets more aesthetically pleasing”, or mentioned such a factor in the “other” responses, so there is definitely a divide between physical items being preferred because they are seen in some sense as works of art, and e-tickets being preferred because of convenience. In the responses to question 7, there was no mention of e-tickets being stored, whereas the majority of responses to question 8 listed the storing documents as a main factor of their choice. Two of the responses which intrigued me most are ones which talk about the physical document being superior: “the collectible is more pleasing to me in a physical rather than electronic form”, and “Having something physical to look back on and feel with my hands is more sentimental to me”. Why are physical documents automatically more sentimental than electronic ones? In the digital age, a scrapbook or box of memories can exist equally in either format, and yet, the majority of responses to this survey lauded physical documents over their electronic counterparts to the point of derision. As comments like “It’s just nicer. Seems more fancy” suggest, performance documents need to not only be a record containing data, but also a work of art in themselves, to be worthy of storage.

However, although they may not consider it as documentation in the same way, many people do store collections of theatre-related documents online - on their social media accounts. As will be shown below, only 8.8% of responders said that they “never” documented their experience of live performance on social media. Online depositories may not be seen by traditional theatregoers as any kind of performance-related “collection”, but the numbers from this survey show that social websites, especially picture-based ones such as Facebook and Instagram, are go-to mediums for documenting performance in the modern age.

**Question 9:** Do you document your live performance experience on social media? This could include taking pictures of yourself and/or friends at the theatre, taking pictures of your ticket or other documents, 'checking in' at a theatre's location, attending an event on Facebook, discussing a performance on a forum, etc.

Yes – always: 67 (24.5%)

Yes – sometimes: 133 (48.5%)

Rarely: 50 (18.2%)

Never: 24 (8.8%)

**Question 10:** If yes, on which platforms do you usually use?

Facebook: 171 (72.2%)

Twitter: 78 (47.3%)

Instagram: 112 (47.3%)

Snapchat: 70 (95.5%)

A dedicated forum: 18 (7.6%)

Tumblr: 41 (17.3%)

Pinterest: 1 (0.4%)

Options added by responders;

- own blog and website.
- i sometimes 'attend an event on facebook', but usually i send pictures to groups of friends who i know are interested in the performance i am seeing or theatre in general
- Guardian comments
- Blog
- Personal blog

**Question 11:** (Optional, for those who regularly collect performance documents). Do you use your collection for any particular purpose, or is it purely recreational?

The response field for this question was a simple text field, so for this set of responses, I have edited those that simply read "recreational/purely recreational", "no purpose", or similar.

- To show my children when they are older. My parents didn't really keep keepsakes and I cherish the life I lead and want to be able to share this with my children when I'm older. Plus my husband has a terrible memory so I can remind him of things we've done!
- As a memento. To refer to what shows I've seen actors in before.
- **As a theatre professional, I'll occasionally use them for research.**
- As a way to remember in the future what performances I have or have not seen
- For display (eventually)
- Generally recreational but in the past May have used them as source material for academic work.
- I have a dedicated room in the house for framed show posters of shows I've been in
- **i have bad memory and having smth to remind me of a performance helps to keep it in my mind**



- i simply like looking through them and remember the show. sometimes i forget where i put them and it's nice to rediscover them by chance
- I sometimes use them for reference - I'm a theatre student. It's mostly a hobby though.
- I sometimes use them in collage work
- I sometimes use them on pin boards or to decorate the walls of my room
- I suppose it's recreational; time is weird for me when it comes to recollection and how long ago certain events were, so **having a record of where I was at a specific time and what I was doing helps connect with other memories of events around the same time**
- I use it partially as a tool to manage my anxiety - **a visible archive and reminder of good and fun things that have happened in my life.**
- I usually keep one item per performance so that if I'm going through the file for a particular span of time I have a record of every show I went to.
- I worked in Fringe theatre behind the scenes so began keeping documentation for professional purposes, which then spread to personal.
- I'd like to create a big frame full of the tickets to my favourite shows one day, although it might have to be more like a wall...
- It is a personal aide de memoire, but I sometimes draw on it for work.
- It's like a collection
- It's nice to check if you've seen a performer before when you find you've seen a show they've been in. Other than that I have the things because I like having them as memories.
- Just to remember & to refer to if seen an actor in something before
- Keep track of what and who I have seen
- Looking through them is a nice exercise in nostalgia and challenge of memory...Do I remember what every show was like?
- Mostly recreational- though I may donate my collection to a library later in life
- Mostly recreational, but also as a collection others could look back on in the future
- Nostalgia
- Occasionally I stick things to my wall
- Personal interest
- Personal use and occasionally research/reference.
- Professional research and own use.
- Purely for memories, or aesthetic value of the ticket/playbill
- Purely recreational- for sentimental reasons
- Purely recreational, though I intend to frame my tickets as wall art some day!

- Purely recreational. I like to put all my stubs and such into a fram dedicated to a certain place, show, or trip.
- Purely recreational--I like to remember what performances and which actors, singers, and/or dancers I've seen.
- **Radio show review**
- Recreation - occasionally for display (e.g. blutacked to the wall)
- **Recreation mostly. Only really 'treasure' signed items though I do keep most with or without.**
- Recreational - eventually a scrapbook maybe
- Recreational and to cross reference other productions performers have been in
- Recreational and to pass to my children - they have performed in/have written some of the things I see
- recreational! i like to be able to look back and see what i've been to - sometimes i find something that i'd forgotten about.
- Recreational, and it also kind of serves as a diary.
- Recreational, but it's nice stumbling across such documents and being reminded of a good experience
- Reminder of what I've seen
- Sentimental - it's a memento of the performance.
- Share with a particular friend and to look back at
- they look nicer on my wall than the simpsons posters i used to have there? does it count as recreational if it's for the Aesthetic?
- They're sort of just reminders.
- To decorate my walls
- To help me remember
- Yes, I use it to supplement memory. I like to go through my collection and look at all the stubs and remember what happened. I also use t to place memories. If I remember that something happened "around the time I went to see All My Sons" the. I can look for the ticket stub and know what month it was that the other thing happened.

A few main themes came out in the answers to this question; documents as decoration, documents as an aide-memoire, and documents as research. I was particularly intrigued by the response which talked about having "a visible archive of good memories". An archive of memory, not just of theatrical memories, but of any memories associated with a particular night or show. Memories that are not written down or photographed, but exist in relation to a specific document, only able to be accessed in the mind by a singular person. An archive of memory is an extremely personal thing, as many of these responses show. On the other end of the spectrum, many responses to this question were very straightforward. "They look nicer on my wall than the simpsons posters I used to have there", for instance, and "radio show review".

**Question 12:** Have you ever used a performance archive, or accessed performance documents in a library?

Yes: 39 (14.2%)

No: 235 (85.8%)

**Question 13:** To which age bracket do you belong?

Under 18: 17 (6.2%)

18 – 24: 123 (44.9%)

25 – 34: 45 (16.4%)

35 – 44: 19 (6.9%)

45 – 54: 30 (10.9%)

55 – 64: 30 (10.9%)

65+: 5 (1.8%)

Prefer not to say: 5 (1.8%)

(As this survey was shared on the many of the author's social media accounts, it is understandable that the greatest number of responders fell into the 18-24 age group.)

**Question 14:** Optional: if answering from outside of the United Kingdom, where are you based? (The country in which you go to the theatre most often.)

Due to inconsistent spelling, the results of this question were difficult to lay out in graph form. I have consolidated the responses into a list below;

- United States of America: 54
- Germany: 5
- The Netherlands: 5
- Canada: 3
- France: 3
- Australia: 2
- Ireland: 2
- Austria: 1
- Belgium: 1
- Denmark: 1
- Japan: 1
- Lithuania: 1
- New Zealand: 1
- Peru: 1

- Singapore: 1
- South Africa: 1
- Taiwan: 1

Those who responded with “England” or “United Kingdom” despite the wording of the original question: 3

Mixed responses:

- I was in London for most of this past year, but normally I'm based part time in New York, and part time in San Francisco.
- I'm based in Canada, but I've been lucky enough to see theatre performances here, in Chicago, and in London

### Conclusions on the survey

I had several preconceptions prior to releasing this survey. Firstly, I assumed that the number of people choosing e-tickets for performances would outweigh those who chose hard copies. In hindsight, it should have been more obvious to me that fans of theatre and ballet would prefer to have tangible records of their attendance at shows, seeing as the shows themselves are so ephemeral. The strength of nostalgia and aesthetics should not be underestimated – many of the responses to questions asking why responders chose to keep documents talked about the importance of being able to connect documents to specific memories. This, apparently, is easier or more “proper” with hard copies of documents rather than their born-digital counterparts. As documenting and collecting can be seen as such a systematic, ‘collect-them-all’ kind of hobby, like collecting stamps, I was surprised to learn that the majority of responders were so passionate about the side of collecting that dealt with aesthetics and sentiment.

The majority of people who took this survey, (which was directed and advertised towards serious or regular theatregoers), responded that they always kept complimentary documents from trips to the theatre. ‘Complimentary’ is an important factor; the largest response for the question on whether or not responders *bought* programmes was “sometimes”, and “always” and “rarely” had similar numbers of responders, which suggests a higher level of subjectivity. The expense of the programme was by far the biggest issue responders had when it came to choosing whether to buy one, not the content or level of enjoyment they had for the performance. This would suggest that many serious theatregoers buy and collect theatre documents on a routine, perfunctory level rather than for sentimental reasons – however, responses to later questions on hard copies versus e-documents completely disproved this idea.

As mentioned earlier, responders with a preference for hard copies of documents by far outweighed those in the e-tickets camp. Notions of aesthetics, tradition, and storage came up as the most important factors of this. An interesting theme gathered from the answers of those who heavily preferred physical documents was that the need to have a physical document to use as a decoration outweighed the need to have memory aids. So, if we assume that digital documents are the ‘endgame’ for event management, how will collectors and collections move past this issue? It could be that photography-based applications (“apps”) such as Instagram become a bigger party in online collections. There need to be more interesting online repositories for the art of performance collecting to survive – as it is an art – much like the website AusStage, but for individuals. I was also surprised to learn that responders from countries other than the United Kingdom pointed out that programmes are usually always free when they visit the theatre. This puts an entirely different spin on

the notion of collecting – if programmes are free, this negates the entire factor of whether or not the document is good enough to be paid for and kept.

The financial aspect of collecting is especially prevalent here. The preference for e-documents displayed by some presented itself as a sort of “necessary evil”; the most chosen factors were that e-tickets are more convenient and more eco-friendly than hard copies, and only 11 people said they liked the aesthetics of digital documents. Finance was also mentioned a number of times in regards to the preference for e-documents. E-tickets and downloadable programmes are almost always free, and it appears that for many people this takes precedence over sentiment.

What does this mean for online collections, if such a thing exist? Most responders to this survey said that they used social media websites to document their own experience of a performance, with varying levels of frequency. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, and dedicated forums were the most popular answers. There are two important themes I would like to address from this: photography and fandom. Born-digital collections could most definitely have a place in theatre and performance collecting through photography-based apps such as Instagram. Taking pictures of one’s tickets is already a common practice of theatregoers. These online posts also typically include selfies and pictures of the stage or venue.

Tickets in photographs are of course still physical documents, but as the aesthetic of a ticket was deemed such an important factor by responders, perhaps an increase in born-digital documents for theatre and performance would in turn inspire more effort to be put into their design, which would therefore make them more “Instagrammable” and allow online collections to thrive. In small ways this has already begun to take place, although in no way as frequently and seriously as theatre collectors treat physical documents.

On this subject, it was discovered through this survey that the majority of the responders had not and do not access other people’s performance collections – specifically professional ones, in a specialist library or archive. This suggests that theatre and performance collecting is highly personal, and may not, as some other forms of collecting do, transfer as easily to an online format. This makes a certain degree of sense when looking at performance collections as an ‘archive of memory’, where documents hold associated memories in an individual’s mind – is looking through the locked containers of other people’s memories quite as satisfying as reliving your own? This is where social media might make a big difference – with captions, live video streaming, and personalised posts, people are now able to coherently share their memories with the click of a button. It is up to the theatregoing and theatre collecting community to decide if this form of documentation is worthwhile, and of course, as this is a leisure activity, as enjoyable as the sentiment and nostalgia-soaked practice of, for example, scrapbooking.

Barely any traditional collecting hobby has been left untouched by the onset of the digital age. From the results of this survey, keeping in mind the limitations of the number of responders, I have gathered that while there is obviously hostility to the idea of born-digital theatre documents such as e-tickets, the majority of theatregoers are already documenting their experience of performances online. Whether or not they consider these online posts part of their theatre and performance collections or not is clearly a personal issue, as theatre collecting is such a personal hobby. I do not believe that this will change with increasing digitisation. If anything, I think that documentation through social media offers a new lease of life for performance archiving. Audiences, after all, are the essential component to any performance, and social media offers audiences the chance to compliment, criticise, and ultimately influence every performance they see. Theatre and performance creators are starting to take advantage of this, by collecting feedback from their audience on various social media applications. This was demonstrated recently in a “world premiere” workshop of *Heathers: The Musical* at The Other Palace in London for a run beginning from May 30 and ending on June 3, 2017. During the workshop performance, audience members were encourage to take pictures

and record their thoughts and feelings throughout the show on a downloadable mobile application called Slido.<sup>5</sup> Slido is an application which allows producers and directors to ‘crowdsource the best questions’ from their audience, send out live polls, and distribute slides by giving audience members an ‘event code’ which directed the app on their phone to a specific channel. The responses and questions put on Slido by audience members were public, many of the questions and comments were debated, and ultimately all responses were collected by the directors and helped to influence a work in progress. By allowing audience members to use their phones (in a non-disruptive way) throughout the performance, every single watcher was able to record their personal thoughts and capture their particular experience of the show. This may herald a new age of theatre archiving: audience documentation, a collaborative and online enterprise.

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<sup>5</sup> *Slido*, ‘Audience Interaction Made Easy’, <https://www.sli.do/>.

## Chapter Three: Literature Review

### “Who Tells Your Story?”: Social Documentation and the Digital Age

*“Let me tell you what I wish I’d known  
When I was young and dreamed of glory  
You have no control:*

*Who lives  
Who dies  
Who tells your story?”*

- “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story”, from the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, written by Lin-Manuel Miranda.

In chapter eight of *Documenting Performance*, a book that heavily inspired this project, Joanna Bucknall and Kirsty Sedgman write about audience experience in the digital age. “While individual audience members carry with them their own personal memories, unless their recollections are shared more widely this embodied knowledge becomes lost to cultural memory.” (Bucknall and Sedgman 2017). This is a key theme of social documentation in modern theatrical audiences; personal memories are being uploaded to the internet to form a collaborative web of performance history. In the ‘digital shoeboxes’ survey I provided a small list of websites on which people might share their experience – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, a dedicated forum, Tumblr, Pinterest – but the possibilities of online sharing are endless. From the survey I gathered that individuals do not tend to use online repositories to store collections of photos or documents relating to live performance, but to share them with others. This perhaps heralds a new age of collaborative collecting – recreating performances as a group effort, individuals combining as many different records and recollections as they can find.

Often people balk at the idea of online documentation of live performance – they imagine teenagers with their phones out, taking selfies in the theatre, tweeting during a show. However, online documentation is a fast-growing and often respectful practice. (The debate about filming and ‘bootlegs’ notwithstanding, which will be explored further in this chapter). Indeed, while researching ‘paradocumentation’ for the National Theatre’s NT Live screening of *Hamlet* with Benedict Cumberbatch, (a magnet for attracting large and diverse audiences), researchers stated that paradocumentation during the broadcast was ‘very low’, with only four percent of responders stating that they had posted a tweet or status about their attendance online, and only seven respondents had taken pictures of themselves or friends at the venue. (Abbott and Read 2017). However, this information may be skewed towards cinematic performance, and not a live stage event. I believe social media documentation to be more prevalent in the modern audience community. Vanessa Bartlett treats this subject in *Documenting Performance: social media as a ‘democratised’ archive*, regarding websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. She writes that “users who may have no awareness of themselves as web archivists fill these sites with performance documents such as audience commentary, photographs and videos”. (Bartlett 2017). She also mentions that digital photographs and videos are by no means permanent, and that many online documents such as these are taken down. This brings us to the subject of copyright and bootlegs. Several theatre stars have been outspoken on the subject, including two previously mentioned in this essay; Lin Manuel-Miranda

and Benedict Cumberbatch. Miranda responded to posts on the social media blogging site Tumblr seeking a bootleg:

“We’re going to make a really good recording of the show this summer and I want you to hear that. I’m thrilled you haven’t heard a shitty, half-iphone recorded version yet, because I spent 6 years writing this and when you hear it, I want you to hear what I intended. I’m sorry theater only exists in one place at a time but that is also its magic. A bootleg cannot capture it. I’m grateful and glad you want to hear it, and I want you to hear it RIGHT. I ask your patience.” (Gioia 2015).

Cumberbatch also had a similarly negative reaction to this illicit form of documentation, though for slightly different reasons;

“I can see cameras – I can see red lights in the auditorium (...) It’s very, very obvious, and I saw one again tonight at the start of “to be or not to be”, which is not the easiest part of the play, full stop (...) I could see a red light in about the third row, on the right. It’s mortifying. There’s nothing less supportive or less enjoyable than being an actor on stage experiencing that. And I can’t give you what I want to give you, which is a live performance that you will remember in your minds and brains whether it’s good, bad, or indifferent.”<sup>6</sup>

While the point regarding distracting the performers is at least a reasonable one, I (and several others) have had to take issue with the notion of a performance only existing in an individual’s brain. Theatre is an extremely undemocratic process – locations are restricting, tickets are expensive, and in the case of popular shows, very hard to access in time. Bootlegs, pictures, and audio recordings bring snippets of a the experience of a live performance to those who would otherwise not be able to witness it. This collaborative enterprise which enables an individual to piece together a show in their mind from various different uploads of videos, pictures, and commentaries is an important part of modern live performance documentation.

While praising online collections; especially videos and photographs, it is important to recognise that just because something is digital does not mean it is immortal. Due to issues of copyright, hardware and software decay, and closure of accounts, many stores of online documents can disappear practically overnight. Kristin Snawder describes the act of putting a document online without safeguarding its existence as creating ‘digital orphans’. (Snawder 2011). While online, collaborative documentation is still, I think, a goal to aspire to, it is unlikely that you could go to your physical scrapbook and see that one of your photographs had been cut out and replaced with a post-it note that reads “This has violated our terms of service.” Collaborative sourcing which isn’t bound by copyright, however, is making a big impact with museum and library-led crowdsourcing projects.

Crowdsourcing is becoming a big part of collaborative documentation, and has already inspired an important textbook on the subject: ‘Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage’, edited by Mia Ridge. Crowdsourcing is the practice of recruiting the services of a large number of people, (usually a public volunteer effort), to find resources for or complete a task. This is typically an internet-based enterprise. Several museum and library institutions have used crowdsourcing to enhance their collections. For example, the British Library, “participants in the British Library’s *Georeferencer* project have added special coordinates to thousands of historic maps.” (Ridge 2014) The British Library as an institution makes heavy use of crowdsourcing for the British Library Labs and other such projects.

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<sup>6</sup> Benedict Cumberbatch (transcribed from video) in *The Guardian*:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/aug/09/cumberbatch-asks-fans-to-resist-filming-his-performance-as-hamlet>



Recently, a crowdsourcing project called *In The Spotlight* was released on the British Library blog to call for participants to help enhance the library's collection of digitised playbills.

"The Library's collection of approximately 234,000 playbills has been bound into over 1000 volumes, some of which have been digitised - and now we need your help to bring them back into the spotlight.

These single-sheet items are usually ephemeral (fires always needed lighting!) and the Library's collection only exists thanks to zealous collectors who saved a large number of sheets. These playbills offer a wealth of historical detail with thousands of personal names of actors, playwrights, composers, and theatre managers. Less well-known and even forgotten plays are preserved alongside popular performances and much-loved dramas. Some of these plays may not have been independently recorded in printed form, while some songs may not have been committed to any printed score - transcribers may well discover previously lost plays or songs!

The rich details captured on each historical page - from forgotten personal names to popular songs and plays to lost moments in theatrical history - aren't yet available to search online. You can help unlock this important collection - every contribution, large or small, makes a difference."(British Library Digital Scholarship and Printed Heritage team 2017).

While this dissertation has been primarily concerned with the idea of collaborative documentation from a modern standpoint – ie. audiences uploading their own collections to help document recent performances – this is still highly relevant. It highlights several important reasons as to why these collections are stored and studied; they contain a 'wealth of historical detail'. This is not, necessarily, why individuals collect performance documents, but this does show us that these 'archives of personal memory' can hold a dual purpose. Perhaps personal recollections can become public memory if enough are gathered in number.

While projects like this are mostly positively received, there are criticisms of crowdsourcing. "Crowdsourcing initiatives in archives, as in related professional fields, are also haunted and constrained by the feat that a contributor might be wrong, or that descriptive data might be pulled out of archival context, and that researchers might somehow swallow all of this without question or substantiation", writes Alexandra Eveleigh, describing the fears of archivists regarding crowdsourcing in Ridge's *Crowdsourcing* book. (Eveleigh 2014). While these criticisms seem old-fashioned, even elitist, in projects that involve a more intense job than simply uploading or reading documents, these fears are understandable. However, with a project that collects more subjective documents, such as social media posts and photographs, collaborative documentation is surely the future of personal performance collecting.

Collaborative documentation of this kind is already starting to make its mark on the theatre and performance world specifically. While writing this dissertation, I attended a concert by The Magnetic Fields in London and documented my experience by uploading a photo of the stage to Instagram, (as well as in other ways such as scrapbooking and writing summaries for social media). A few days later, I was contacted by a website called "Amondo", who notified me that they had put the picture in their 'imprint'. This 'imprint' is a page of Instagram photos and Tweets concerning the same concert, put together by this website/application, with the aim of "capturing the best gigs, club nights and festivals across London. Relive the experience." (@helloamondo, Instagram). The website also offers a similar description on its banner: "WERE YOU THERE? DOWNLOAD THE AMONDO APP AND SEE YOUR PERSONALISED IMPRINT FEATURING THE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS YOU TOOK AT THE EVENT." The website tells the readers that "you just experienced (x) moments from (x)", (in this case, "41 moments

from The Magnetic Fields”).<sup>7</sup> The pictures taken by audience members and uploaded to this collection are photos of the stage, people’s tickets, the free cast sheet (no other type of programme was available), the performers, and one screenshot of a digital image used to advertise the event. There was also a short video of one of the songs performed, despite the strict no-phone rule in the venue. I found three parts of this experience particularly interesting. Firstly, the language used in this website mirrored the kind of language used by myself and by responders to the survey when it came to documenting performance; “personalised”, “moments”, “relive the experience”. Secondly, there was a sense that these “moments”, (which of course are not moments at all in the traditional sense, but digital images,) could allow someone to live out an experience by reading social media posts about the event, and that collaborative documentation could still be deeply personal even while gathering the recollections and viewpoints of a myriad of different people.

This real-world example gives weight to current theories concerning the digital future of social documentation in audiences. Finally, there is the less positive and slightly concerning issue of permissions and consent. Pictures are gathered from public social media accounts and used with credit, but no permission is asked for, and in the case of the person who took the video, permission may not have been given. Collaborative audience documentation is a positive thing, but a website such as Amondo is not a democratised inter-audience enterprise, but something more akin to an obsessive digital scrapbooker. However, I do believe websites and applications such as this will and such as the feedback application Slido, mentioned earlier, will become more prevalent in and important to the modern audience community.

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<sup>7</sup> Amondo Imprint: *The Magnetic Fields*, Barbican Centre, London, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2017.  
<https://amo.im/themagneticfields-170909>

## Conclusion

Performance documents are an ever-evolving type of record. While playbills and programmes evolved from small, single sheets of paper to glossy booklets, I think it no less likely that these documents will enter a new digital age in turn, becoming born-digital, interactive documents. This may result in a decrease of performance collectors. The results I gathered from my survey of theatregoers indicated that digital documents were very much not in favour among collectors, and were only chosen for convenience, if chosen at all. Regarding the maintenance of personal performance archives, I envision three possible (and not mutually exclusive) outcomes. Firstly, the art of performance collecting could dwindle significantly among theatregoers, especially those who are mostly concerned with the aesthetics of the hobby. A large majority of people suggested that their main impetus for collecting was for decoration, and eschewed born-digital documents because of this. Secondly, performance collecting could shift to accommodate digital collections, but only, I suspect, if ticket sellers and programme writers became much more concerned with digital aesthetics and graphic design. It would also help if there were more popular or prevalent online depositories specifically for theatregoers, with an emphasis on collaborative documentation. Thirdly, we could witness a more dramatic shift, with live performance venues embracing video, 360 degree photo technology, and virtual reality to create online (and most importantly) interactive documents which blur the lines between performance documentation and actual performance.

Virtual reality is the most technologically advanced addition to the world of documenting performance, however, as of yet, it is difficult to ‘collect’ this type of document. Still, more and more theatres are making use of virtual reality as both full performances and companion pieces to shows. One notable example from this year is a virtual reality companion piece to Paul Aster’s *City of Glass*, showing in the main stage of the Manchester Home venue. Ashton, the video director for the show, makes an important point about democratising theatre through technological mediums:

“In the actual act of producing shows it will be so useful,” he says. “Working in parallel with *City of Glass*, it’s been so interesting to create virtual sets, walk around them, and tweak the bits that didn’t work. One VR headset in a production office will allow everyone to look at a show – from directors, to actors, to investors. It’s a fantastic tool in that way, already.” (East 2017)

Theatre and performance collecting is fundamentally, I believe, about promoting accessibility. Whether this is on a personal (extending capacity for memory), or public (recreating history, exhibiting documents) level, performance archiving is primarily concerned with saving performances past the point of watching them live. What better medium to advance this than the digital, and primarily, the virtual? Performance documentation from a non-public viewpoint is driven by fan communities and dedicated hobbyists. These people have always adapted to and thrived on changes in medium and new technologies, as illustrated by Robinson and Price:

Fans were one of the first groups to make wide use of the Internet during its early years [4], embracing the digital world and information networks that had previously been bound to the offline and the analogue. It was not merely a question of access. The Internet afforded the opportunity to contribute to this growing body of fan-related knowledge. Photocopied fanzines could migrate online and gain a wider readership; fans could exchange the latest news on dedicated Usenet and Listserv boards and set up their own personal sites, where they could showcase their own fan-related work, particularly stories and artwork. (Price and Robinson 2016)

I believe, from my research and from the survey responses, that in order to preserve the practice of performance archiving, online repositories and digital mediums must adapt to accommodate a method of collecting that is so dedicated to accessibility. This could be most effectively produced through digital, interactive programmes that provide a virtual experience and plenty of 'bonus content' to accompany a live performance. Despite the animosity shown from regular collectors and theatregoers toward digital documents, digitisation appears to be a trend that, barring global catastrophe, is not likely to go anywhere any time soon. I have faith that the theatrical world and those who document it, as they always have, will adapt to and thrive in the digital world.

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## Appendix 1: Proposal

Dissertation Project Proposal

City, University of London, MSc Library Science

INM363 Dissertation Project, Supervisor: Lyn Robinson

Adelaide Robinson

### Working Title:

*Digital shoeboxes: Live performance data and its place in the digital age.*

'Digital Shoeboxes' will be a paper on the subject of live performance data and performance archiving, and how the digital era has affected these collections.

Performance archives and special libraries are full of theatre ephemera such as programmes and ticket stubs. Many theatregoers store programmes, tickets and autographs for scrapbooking or personal collections. At the 2016 'Documenting Performance' symposium, Ramona Riedzewski explained the thinking behind the AusStage live performance database by asking "What if all those shoeboxes of programmes were dumped into one big shoebox that everyone could share? A shoebox in the digital cloud." (Quote taken from my own notes from the lecture.) As more production houses opt for e-programmes and tickets rather than physical copies, and special libraries and archives go through processes of digitisation for older documents, this could have a measurable effect on performance archives and the way we choose to document live performance in the future.

As a performance studies and LIS researcher, I have two concerns over the continuing growth of e-documents in regards to performance documentation. Firstly, that personal collections will suffer. Hobbyist collections are a vital part of performance archives, and I doubt that if performance ephemera moved to completely digital spaces, hobbyists would continue to collect and preserve these documents. Secondly, there is the problem of 'digital orphans': vast amounts of performance ephemera could be scanned in and essentially left to rot, while the physical copies are ignored or discarded. Scanning is not preserving.<sup>8</sup> For example, the British Library has an enormous collection of digitised playbills - 264 volumes of digitised theatrical playbills published between 1660 – 1902 (mostly 19th century) from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. These digital archive folders are enormous and are comprised of TXT files that are the result of physical programmes being run through an OCR reader. While I hope to use them to compare the information given on a modern-day playbill to a historic one, the files are almost unintelligible and will require a lot of work to make them coherent and useful.

In this dissertation I plan to explore the reasons behind keeping/storing such documents as programmes and tickets and to pose the following questions: What information do documents such as programmes give us, and how has this changed? How will born-digital documents and processes of digitisation change things in the future for performance archives?

I plan to answer the following questions in my paper, which will divide my project up into three main sections;

- 1: What is performance data, and why do we record it?
- 2: How have these types of documents evolved?
- 3: The future of performance archiving – how will digitisation affect it?

### Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- To contribute to the growing field of LIS-related performance studies research.
- Better understand the practice of performance archiving and its role in the digital age.
- Manage my workload and writing time effectively.

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<sup>8</sup> Kristin Snawder, "Digitization Is Different than Digital Preservation: Help Prevent Digital Orphans! | The Signal," *The Signal Blog: Library of Congress*, 2011, <http://blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2011/07/digitization-is-different-than-digital-preservation-help-prevent-digital-orphans/>.

### Objectives:

- Use (and self-curate) the British Library's dataset of 19<sup>th</sup> century playbills to provide meaningful comparisons between performance data of the past compared to current programmes and related documents.
- Provide an analysis of current trends and practices in the field of digitisation for performance data and what impact this will have on the LIS-performance sector.
- Compare the information/metadata given in free cast sheets compared to commercial programmes. For this I could look at publications from the Royal Ballet or English National Ballet, because I have a large collection of these myself and access to archival material.

### Scope and Definition

I will be limiting this study to programmes for theatres in England, specifically London, due to issues of access. The British Library dataset programmes span from 1660 – 1902 and cover theatres in Bath (Royal), Bristol (Royal), Dublin (Royal), Edinburgh (miscellaneous), Hull (Royal), King's Lynn, Liverpool (Royal), London (Covent Garden, Drury Lane, Lyceum, Princess's, Old Vic, Olympic), Manchester (Royal), Margate (Royal), Market Drayton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham (Royal and miscellaneous), Plymouth (miscellaneous), Portsmouth, Scarborough, Stafford (Royal), Tyneside (Newcastle upon-Tyne), Windsor (Castle), Wolverhampton and York (Royal), among others. I will focus on the documents from London, for easier comparison with their modern equivalents.

I will also be using the Australian live performance database AusStage and their affiliated research papers, as this a good source of papers regarding performance archiving.

### Research Context

The subject areas I will be reading from most are performance studies, special libraries and archives, and digitisation in the LIS field. As this area of study was brought to my attention by the October 2016 'Documenting Performance' symposium, I will be using several works and research papers from or related to this event – most notably 'Documenting Performance' by Toni Sant.

Two areas of study have lead me to this research project: my independent study on dance documentation, and my digital libraries essay on digitisation and archives. *Notes Made in the Theatre and in the Dark* tackled the issue of live performance (ballet) documentation and the various ephemera found in performance archives; programmes, cast sheets, scores, and drawings. In my digital libraries coursework, I researched the digitisation of physical collections and the positives and negatives of this process. I found both of these areas extremely interesting, and plan to combine them for my dissertation project. I will also be looking at performance documents such as programmes, and exploring how processes of digitisation and the introduction of born-digital documents like e-tickets will affect performance archiving.

As LIS-performance studies is a small field, I am still collecting literature to review. Many of the textbooks and articles I plan to work from are unavailable to borrow from any nearby libraries, and so I have requested that some be bought by the university library and hope to access those soon. I have also signed up for a National Art Library membership so that I can utilise the V&A's Theatre and Performance collection, which will be an invaluable resource for this project. Below is my working bibliography:

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### Methodology and Work Plan

As I live with both a chronic and mental illness there will always be an element of improvisation in any study plan, but as I plan to move to Portsmouth in July, I will be doing the bulk of my "physical" research in June and half of July, writing my project up in July and August, and doing final revisions and formatting in September.

### Resources

By using the British Library's collection of digitised theatrical playbills and modern programme equivalents, (using my own collections and that of performance archives such as the V&A Performance Collection at Blythe House), I can compare how the information given on programmes has changed. I am also interested in looking at the economics of this and the difference between the information given on free programmes (simple cast sheet handouts, for example,) and the information given on larger, paid-for documents, but this may not find its way into the final dissertation paper. No special equipment or software should be required. As I am currently based in London and already belong to several useful libraries and archives, my transportation and resource costs will be minimal.

## Appendix 2: Ethics checklist

<b>If your answer to any of the following questions (1 – 3) is YES, you must apply to an appropriate external ethics committee for approval:</b>		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
1.	Does your project require approval from the National Research Ethics Service (NRES)? (E.g. because you are recruiting current NHS patients or staff? If you are unsure, please check at <a href="http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/">http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/</a> )	<b>No</b>
2.	Will you recruit any participants who fall under the auspices of the Mental Capacity Act? (Such research needs to be approved by an external ethics committee such as NRES or the Social Care Research Ethics Committee <a href="http://www.scie.org.uk/research/ethics-committee/">http://www.scie.org.uk/research/ethics-committee/</a> )	<b>No</b>
3.	Will you recruit any participants who are currently under the auspices of the Criminal Justice System, for example, but not limited to, people on remand, prisoners and those on probation? (Such research needs to be authorised by the ethics approval system of the National Offender Management Service.)	<b>No</b>

<b>If your answer to any of the following questions (4 – 11) is YES, you must apply to the Senate Research Ethics Committee for approval (unless you are applying to an external ethics committee):</b>	<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
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4.	Does your project involve participants who are unable to give informed consent, for example, but not limited to, people who may have a degree of learning disability or mental health problem, that means they are unable to make an informed decision on their own behalf?	<b>No</b>
5.	Is there a risk that your project might lead to disclosures from participants concerning their involvement in illegal activities?	<b>No</b>
6.	Is there a risk that obscene and or illegal material may need to be accessed for your project (including online content and other material)?	<b>No</b>
7.	Does your project involve participants disclosing information about sensitive subjects?	<b>No</b>
8.	Does your project involve you travelling to another country outside of the UK, where the Foreign & Commonwealth Office has issued a travel warning? ( <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/">http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/</a> )	<b>No</b>
9.	Does your project involve invasive or intrusive procedures? For example, these may include, but are not limited to, electrical stimulation, heat, cold or bruising.	<b>No</b>
10.	Does your project involve animals?	<b>No</b>
11.	Does your project involve the administration of drugs, placebos or other substances to study participants?	<b>No</b>

<b>If your answer to any of the following questions (12 – 18) is YES, you should consult your supervisor, as you may need to apply to an ethics committee for approval.</b>		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
12.	Does your project involve participants who are under the age of 18?	<b>Yes</b>
13.	Does your project involve adults who are vulnerable because of their social, psychological or medical circumstances (vulnerable adults)? This includes adults with cognitive and / or learning disabilities, adults with physical disabilities and older people.	<b>No</b>
14.	Does your project involve participants who are recruited because they are staff or students of City University London? For example, students studying on a particular course or module. (If yes, approval is also required from the Project Tutor.)	<b>No</b>
15.	Does your project involve intentional deception of participants?	<b>No</b>
16.	Does your project involve identifiable participants taking part without their informed consent?	<b>No</b>

17.	Does your project pose a risk to participants or other individuals greater than that in normal working life?	<b>No</b>
18.	Does your project pose a risk to you, the researcher, greater than that in normal working life?	<b>No</b>

**If your answer to the following question (19) is YES and your answer to all questions 1 – 18 is NO, you must complete part B of this form.**

19.	Does your project involve human participants? For example, as interviewees, respondents to a questionnaire or participants in evaluation or testing.	<b>Yes</b>
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### Part B: Ethics Proportionate Review Form

If you answered YES to question 19 and NO to all questions 1 – 18, you may use this part of the form to submit an application for a proportionate ethics review of your project. Your dissertation project supervisor will review and approve this application.

<b>The following questions (20 – 24) must be answered fully.</b>		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
20.	Will you ensure that participants taking part in your project are fully informed about the purpose of the research?	<b>Yes</b>
21.	Will you ensure that participants taking part in your project are fully informed about the procedures affecting them or affecting any information collected about them, including information about how the data will be used, to whom it will be disclosed, and how long it will be kept?	<b>Yes</b>
22.	When people agree to participate in your project, will it be made clear to them that they may withdraw (i.e. not participate) at any time without any penalty?	<b>Yes</b>
23.	<p>Will consent be obtained from the participants in your project, if necessary?</p> <p>Consent from participants will only be necessary if you plan to gather personal data. "Personal data" means data relating to an identifiable living person, e.g. data you collect using questionnaires, observations, interviews, computer logs. The person might be identifiable if you record their name, username, student id, DNA, fingerprint, etc.</p> <p><i>If YES, attach the participant information sheet(s) and consent request form(s) that you will use. You must retain these for subsequent inspection. Failure to provide the filled consent request forms will automatically result in withdrawal of any earlier ethical approval of your project.</i></p>	<b>No</b>
24.	<p>Have you made arrangements to ensure that material and/or private information obtained from or about the participating individuals will remain confidential?</p> <p>Provide details:</p> <p>Names and emails were not collected by the survey.</p>	<b>Yes</b>

<b>If the answer to the following question (25) is YES, you must provide details</b>		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
25.	<p>Will the research involving participants be conducted in the participant's home or other non-University location?</p> <p><i>If YES, provide details of how your safety will be ensured:</i></p>	<b>No</b>

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<b>Attachments (these must be provided if applicable):</b>	<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
Participant information sheet(s)	<b>Not applicable</b>
Consent form(s)	<b>Not applicable</b>
Questionnaire(s)**	<b>Yes</b>
Topic guide(s) for interviews and focus groups**	<b>Not applicable</b>
Permission from external organisations (e.g. for recruitment of participants)**	<b>Not applicable</b>

## Appendix 3: Reflection

This dissertation was inspired by the Documenting Performance conference held at City University, London in 2016, and my own experiences as a collector of performance documents, especially those to do with ballet. I had a summer job at the English National Ballet in 2016 and thoroughly enjoyed learning about its history and attending shows, for which I kept many programmes and ticket stubs. During my classes at the City library school I was especially interested in the topics of serious leisure, fandom, and documenting performance. After a guest speaker from the British Library Labs showed us the collection of digitised playbills I referenced so often in this project, I decided to focus on the subject of performance documentation through performance documents such as these playbills, which was a subject I had not previously managed to find particular research on.

Performance documents are important to me as a regular theatre and ballet-goer, and during the Documenting Performance conference I was struck by how many people referenced 'shoebox under the bed' collections of performance documents, much like the ones I had at home. While inspired by this subject I found little to no research specifically done on programmes and playbills. I decided to use the British Library labs collection of digitised playbills to compare live performance data through different periods and to provide a contemplative platform for how performance data will change in the digital world.

My biggest challenge while writing this dissertation was poor health and time management. In the Spring of this year I was diagnosed with depression which affected my ability to motivate myself and stick to deadlines. While completing my coursework for this year I fell behind on research for this project and ended up submitting my proposal several weeks late. This had a knock-on effect on the entire project. Thanks to the support of my supervisor and the university counselling service I began to manage my workload better over the summer months. I wrote most of the main text of the project in late summer, after doing the bulk of my research in July and August. Another challenge was that of secondary reading; while my original research for the proposal was far-reaching, there were not many works written on the subject of programmes and other such performance documents that I could find. Therefore, while the background reading for this project was vast, the essay itself cites mostly modern articles, chapters of recently published books, and my own findings from collections of programmes and my survey results. I do not believe this to be a negative issue in regards to the quality of my work, however, the lack of a typically long dissertation bibliography can cast a negative light on a project and this is regrettable.

My project kept fairly well to the specifications of my original proposal; I researched and discussed the history and possible future of personal performance archiving, and used examples of performance documents from several different eras to compare and contrast types of performance data. In the proposal I suggested that I might put out a survey on current archiving trends of modern theatregoers. I decided to write this survey after reviewing my marked proposal, realising that it would fit into the middle of my project and bridge the gap between history and future very neatly. The survey was the most interesting learning experience of my project; I had not written one previously, and spent a week researching best practices and platforms. I was not expecting the survey to get as many responses as it did, which perhaps further illustrates my point on the collaborative power of social media users; many academics of performance studies and library science shared my survey and posted it to groups of interest. This gave me much to write about and I am glad I chose to include a survey in this project.

This project has been highly beneficial for my interest in and knowledge of the study of documenting performance. During my research I came across several avenues of further study that I would like to pursue, especially concerning the more futuristic practices of performance documentation such as virtual reality and interactive, online theatrical experiences. I think the field of documenting

performance could use further academic research on this subject. Overall, while my finished dissertation did not include every topic I am interested in, especially when it comes to dance, I found it vastly improved my knowledge of the broad subject of performance documentation. There were many subjects I was not able to cover in this project due to problems with time management and poor health, but I intend to continue with this field of study in my academic life and in my future career.

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