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LIVE ART DATA

NEW STRATEGIES IN THEATRE ARCHIVING
NEUE STRATEGIEN DER THEATERARCHIVIERUNG
SCOTLAND // NIEDERSACHSEN

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Neue Strategien der Theaterarchivierung

Scotland // Niedersachsen

unter Mitarbeit von Anne Küper und Frida Stein

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Theatre and Performance in Scottish Archives

Michael Bachmann/Anselm Heinrich

Abstract

The authors provide a survey of archives in Scotland – and in one case beyond its national borders – that collect relevant materials regarding Scottish theatre and performance history. Their mostly descriptive account supplements two other contributions in this White Paper: a practical case study on teaching with visualiser technology at the Scottish Theatre Archive (Christopher Field and Jenny Knotts); and a critical history of live art in Scotland, with a particular focus on the archival situation (Stephen Greer).

Die Autoren geben einen Überblick zu Archiven, die in Schottland – und in einem Fall über die Grenzen Schottlands hinaus – relevante Materialien zur schottischen Theater- und Performancegeschichte sammeln. Die deskriptiv gehaltene Darstellung wird im weiteren Verlauf des White Papers durch eine praktische Fallstudie zum Scottish Theatre Archive (Christopher Field und Jenny Knotts) sowie durch eine kritische Darstellung der Geschichte schottischer live art, insbesondere mit Blick auf die Archivsituation, ergänzt (Stephen Greer).

Overview

The most important archive for theatre and performance in Scotland is located at the University of Glasgow. The *Scottish Theatre Archive* was founded in 1981, with initial funding from charitable organisations and the Scottish Arts Council (now: Creative Scotland),¹ It is a national collection, yet financed and administered through the University Library's Archives and Special Collections. There are other national collections of relevance to Scottish theatre and performance history. These include the Scottish Theatre Programmes database and the Moving Image Archive, both part of the *National Library of Scotland*.

In addition to these national archives, significant theatre and performance collections are held at universities and local authorities. For instance, *University of Dundee Archive Services* have collections of theatre photographs, programmes, posters and press cuttings for the Dundee Rep, one of the only repertory theatres in Great Britain, supplementing that theatre's collection at the Scottish Theatre Archive. *Glasgow City Archives'* collections include programmes and playbills of Glasgow's theatres and music halls, especially from the Victorian period. This and other material can be accessed via Glasgow's Mitchell Library, one of the largest public libraries in Europe. The Mitchell Library also hosts exhibitions and teams up with external partners. In recent years, collaborations with Theatre Studies at the University of Glasgow have included the Panto-

1 On the archive's history see Hepworth, Sarah. »Unique and Distinctive Collections: The Scottish Theatre Archive«. In Davies, Peter V. et al. (eds.). *The University of Glasgow Library: Friendly Shelves*. Glasgow, 2016.

mime in Scotland research project² as well as research on the Glasgow Jewish Institute Players, which also incorporated material from the Scottish Theatre Archive.³

Regarding live art and performance art in Scotland, three further archives are of particular importance: First, the archive of Glasgow's *Third Eye Centre*, which—from 1974 until its closure in 1991—was an internationally significant venue for visual and performing arts. Second, the collections of Richard Demarco (*1930) at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the *Demarco European Art Foundation* at Edinburgh's Summerhall.⁴ A co-founder of the Traverse Theatre and important figure during the heyday of the Edinburgh Fringe, Demarco is well-known for promoting the work of Marina Abramović, NSK, Joseph Beuys and Tadeusz Kantor, amongst others. Third, the *National Review of Live Art (NRLA) Archive* at the University of Bristol. Though clearly not based in Scotland, this collection is closely linked to Scottish theatre and performance history through the NRLA, a live art festival hosted at Glasgow during much of its existence (1979–2010).

In addition to the archives and collections listed below, a vast array of sources can also be searched via the National Records of Scotland website (catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/welcome.aspx). The Scottish Council on Archives has produced a useful online map of Scotland's Archives (www.scottisharchives.org.uk/explore/scottish-archives-map/).

Scottish Theatre Archive (STA)

Website: www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/collections/STA/index.html

Online catalogue: collections.gla.ac.uk

The archive's vast collections contain programmes, scripts, production notes, photographs, recordings (most notably of productions by the National Theatre of Scotland), posters, press cuttings, business papers and correspondence. Among its most important holdings are the archives of the Citizens Theatre (Glasgow), for which the STA is the official depository, and of Giles Havergal (*1938) who was one of the artistic directors of that theatre from 1969 to 2003 and a driving force behind the theatre's programming of (near) contemporary European theatre.⁵ The STA is also the main repository for the National Theatre of Scotland (founded in 2006) and Scottish Ballet (founded in 1969). Items relating to the third—and largest—national company, Scottish Opera (founded in 1962) can also be found at the archive.

Regarding live art, the most significant holdings of the STA are the collections of The Arches, the archives of the late Adrian Howells, and its collection of Edinburgh Fringe material. The Arches was a nightclub and arts venue in Glasgow (situated underneath the city's iconic Central Station) which operated from 1991–2015 and whose importance for fostering live art and supporting emerging performance artists in Scotland and beyond can hardly be overstated.⁶ Alongside Tramway and the Third Eye Centre,

2 See University of Glasgow. *Celebrating the cultural impact of pantomime in Scotland*. <https://impact.ref.ac.uk/casestudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=33611> (accessed October 9, 2021).

3 See Maloney, Paul/Scullion, Adrienne. »From the Gorbals to the Lower East Side: The Cosmopolitanism of the Glasgow Jewish Institute Players«. *New Theatre Quarterly* 34:1 (February 2018): pp. 58–73.

4 Summerhall. *Selection from the Richard Demarco Archive*. <https://www.summerhall.co.uk/event/selection-from-the-richard-demarco-archive/> (accessed October 9, 2021).

5 On the Citizens Theatre and its importance for Scottish (as well as British) theatre in general see Brown, Mark. *Modernism and Scottish Theatre since 1969: A Revolution on Stage*. Basingstoke, 2019.

6 On The Arches and its unique business model and configuration as night club and performance venue see Overend, David. »Clubbing Audiences: Relational Theatre Practice at »Death Disco««. *New Theatre Quarterly* 28:1 (February 2012): pp. 67–79. For a history of The Arches also see the forthcoming book by Bratchpiece, David/Innes, Kristin. *Brickwork: A Biography of The Arches*. Glasgow, 2021.

it was one of the host venues for the National Review of Live Art, and continued NLRA's mission with its Behaviour and Arches Lives programmes. The STA's Arches collection includes brochures, flyers, press cuttings, posters, general correspondence, photographs, marketing material, audio and video recordings. Adrian Howells (1962–2014) was one of the UK's leading performance artists, in particular with intimate one-to-one performances such as his award-winning *Foot Washing for the Sole* (2008). STA holds his correspondence, production files, notebooks, posters, press cuttings and photographs as well as recordings of Howells' work.⁷ While the STA holds material on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (brochures, correspondence, leaflets, press cuttings and programmes), the Fringe is a good example of a collection that is spread across several archives: STA, the National Library, and the Demarco Archives.

Most of the STA collections can be consulted on site only, though a small selection of photographs, playbills, posters and costume sketches may be found on Flickr (www.flickr.com/photos/uofglibrary/albums/72157623915689260/). During the Covid-19 pandemic, Archives and Special Collections have invested in visualiser technology that allows for researchers to access artifacts remotely, with the help of onsite librarians and archivists.⁸

7 On Howells' work see Heddon, Dee/Johnson, Dominic (eds.). *It's All Allowed: The Performances of Adrian Howells*. Bristol, 2016. On Howells' archives in particular see Greer, Stephen. »The Economies of Adrian Howells«. In Heddon, Dee/Johnson, Dominic, op. cit.

8 See the chapter by Field, Christopher/Knotts, Jenny in this volume.

National Library of Scotland (NLS)

Website: www.nls.uk/collections/theatre/

Online catalogues:

- digital.nls.uk/catalogues/theatre-programmes/ (*Scottish Theatre Programmes database*);
- movingimage.nls.uk/search (*Moving Image Archive*);
- manuscripts.nls.uk/ (*Archives and Manuscripts Collections*).

The National Library of Scotland (NLS) is the legal deposit library of Scotland and is one of the country's National Collections. Its main collections and reading rooms are situated in Edinburgh. The National Library has produced a searchable database of Scottish Theatre programmes, posters and playbills from its collections. Currently, over 13,000 records can be searched, beginning with playbills from the early 1800s. The NLS has an almost complete run of programmes for the King's Theatre Edinburgh (1907-) and the Royal Lyceum, also in Edinburgh (1883-). While most programmes can only be consulted on site, over two hundred early nineteenth century playbills from Edinburgh's Theatre Royal have been digitized (digital.nls.uk/playbills).

Another important resource provided by the NLS is the Moving Image Archive (formerly: Scottish Screen Archive, based at Kelvin Hall in Glasgow). Dedicated to preserving films made by amateur and professional film-makers that capture Scotland's history, the collection includes quite a few theatre- and performance-related recordings. While some can only be viewed on site, many of the films are available online. For instance, there is the cinema advert for a 1934 variety show at Glasgow's Metropole Theatre (movingimage.nls.uk/film/3533), recordings of Pantomime productions (e.g., movingimage.nls.uk/film/1138), and a 1946 documentary on the Citizens Theatre, *Plays for the People*, directed by Gordon Begg (movingimage.nls.uk/film/0479).

In addition to the Scottish Theatre Programmes database and the Moving Image Archive, the NLS holds theatre and performance material in its Archives and Manuscripts collections. This includes programmes, publicity items and

photographs of the Edinburgh International Festival and Festival Fringe. From 2009–2017, the Fringe Performance Archive project recorded select performances of Fringe shows to be made available by the NLS after a two decades moratorium.⁹ A unique item in the Archives and Manuscripts collections is the set for John McGrath's *The Cheviot, The Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* (1973). McGrath's 7:84 was one of Scotland's most renowned theatre companies, and their collections are held at STA and NLS.¹⁰ Designed by artist and dramatist John Byrne, the *Cheviot* set is a large pop-up book that can be opened at different »pages«, revealing a new scene every time. A 3D model can be accessed online (www.nls.uk/collections/theatre/cheviot-3d/).

Other Archives

Websites and online catalogues:

- archives.dundee.ac.uk/ (University of Dundee Archive Services);
- libcat.csghlasgow.org/web/arena/glasgow-collection (Glasgow City Archives);
- www.glasgowmiraclearchives.org/archive-catalogue/ (Third Eye Centre);
- www.demarco-archive.ac.uk/ (Demarco Digital Archive);
- www.bristol.ac.uk/nrla/ (NRLA Archive)

The Glasgow Collection at Glasgow City Archives includes programmes and playbills since the early 1800s, of Glasgow's many theatres including The King's, Theatre Royal, and the Metropole variety theatre. Similarly, the University of Dundee Archive Services have a good collection on the Dundee rep, including photographs, press cuttings, and programmes.

The archives and collections of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) are held off-site at the Whisky Bond, Speirs Lock, in Glasgow. They do not only document the history of the institution dating back to 1847 but also feature diverse holdings, including collections of instruments, manuscripts, artworks, photographs, performance ephemera and memorabilia. The collections are only available to consult in person (www.rcs.ac.uk/why-rcs/campusandfacilities/archives/).

Regarding live art in Scotland, a number of projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) have led to archival online presences. *The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories*, located at Glasgow School of Art and the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), has catalogued the archives of the Third Eye Centre and its successor institution, the CCA. A number of video recordings are available online, including a 1973 Allen Ginsberg performance of songs and poems (www.glasgowmiraclearchives.org/video-archive/allen-ginsberg-performance-1973-part-1/).

The archives of Richard Demarco are mostly held at Summerhall (Demarco European Art Foundation) and at the

9 See https://fringearchive.org/?page_id=42 (accessed September 13, 2021). The Fringe Performance Archive now seems to be defunct.

10 On McGrath and 7:84 see, for instance, Kershaw, Baz. *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*. London, 1992, pp. 132–167, and Fiebach, Joachim/Schramm, Helmar. *Kreativität und Dialog: Theaterversuche der 70er Jahre in Westeuropa*. Berlin, 1983.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. However, about 10,000 records have been made available online through an AHRC-funded project at the University of Dundee from 2005–2008. The digitized theatre collections in particular encompass photographs, press cuttings and personal correspondence, e.g., to John McGrath (www.demarco-archive.ac.uk/collections/57-theatre). In addition to the Demarco material, the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh hold a number of performance related sketches, paintings, drawings, edgings and prints (www.nationalgalleries.org/visit/archives-special-collections/national-galleries-scotland-archive).

The *National Review of Live Art* (NRLA), the most significant festival for live art in Britain was held at Glasgow from 1988 to 1990, in 1994 and 1996 and between 1998–2010, at venues including the Third Eye Centre, Tramway, and The Arches. A vast video collection of performances (1,800 hours of footage) is now held the University of Bristol. Two ARHC-funded digitisation projects have made these videos available online. However, the project's reliance on the now defunct Flash player make them difficult to access except on site.¹¹

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11 Based on archival research and oral histories, Stephen Greer's AHRC-funded project at the University of Glasgow, *Live Art in Scotland: Tracing Histories of Experimental Performance*, currently traces the histories of experimental performance in Scotland since the late 1980s. See Greer's contribution to this volume.

This White Paper is the result of a cross-institutional collaboration between Scottish and German researchers, artists, and programmers. The volume brings together historical, theoretical, and digital research into archival practices of storing and dealing with »Live Art Data« in a comparative approach that encompasses both historical and contemporary practices. It is interested in data that is produced in theatres and other cultural venues, in theatre pedagogical projects, by performing artists, and their audiences. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the White Paper looks at archival configurations and relations of performative data in teaching and information infrastructures today, focusing on four aspects: historiography, theory, digitalization, and the international dimension.

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