

Scrapbooking in the 19th Century

By Sabba Anmol

Scrapbooking is a very universal and personal hobby to most of us. It is where we record our daily activities, where we keep photos or other miscellaneous likes to look back on – whether that is because it holds any sort of enjoyment or sentimental value attached to it. Through the love of scrapbooking in the 19th century, today we are given the insight into how life was like back then. These scrapbookers have allowed us to benefit from their collection as artefacts were stored in them, that may be of interest to us, and so we are able to see, through the Forrest and Turner collections as well as journal entries what theatre was like and also how loved William Shakespeare was.

Mr Henry R Forrest and his family loved scrapbooking, they each made it their own. This family lived in Manchester during the 1800s. When it came to Shakespeare, they curated 76 completed collections of scrapbooking solely based on the playwright. The fact that there are 76 volumes of scrapbooking shows the love the Forrest family had for Shakespeare. It could have become a daily activity for the family where they, perhaps, saw this as an opportunity for some family bonding.



Not only did they collect anything to do with Shakespeare (whether that being illustrations of plays, portraits of actors who played their favourite characters or even theatre playbills) the family also personalised it – making it unique to them. Some images included are coloured-in drawings the Forrest children completed. You can see how the Forrest's included two of the same drawings so one could be personalised by the children; implying how not only did the parents love Shakespeare and his work but so did their children. Also, below the coloured-in picture of Othello with a sleeping Desdemona, you can see Mr Forrest's annotation linking the image of Othello and his wife Desdemona with himself and

his own wife. To see annotations like these in the Forrest collection is something quite special and personal.

Mr James Turner was also another lover of Shakespeare and scrapbooking. Unfortunately, not much is known about him except for the volumes of scrapbooking he created that remain today. There are a range of portraits Turner collected of how Othello was perceived as. It is quite fascinating to see the costumes of Othello as well as the actors who played him.

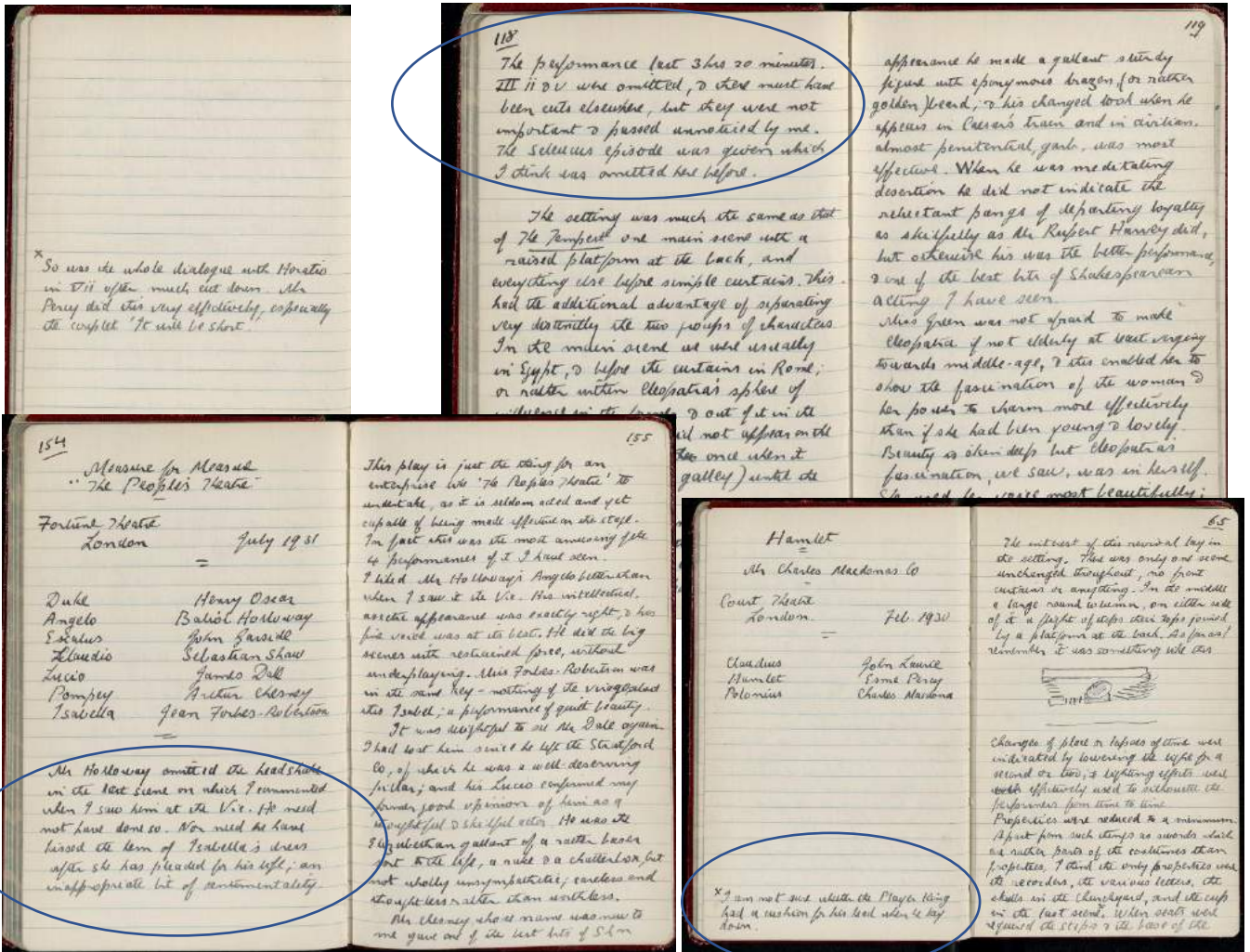


Recording this was just an enjoyment for Turner but thanks to him, we are given much more insight into theatre back then and how far, in theatre, we have come. Furthermore, we see how the love of the playwright's plays seem to transcend through keeping copies of newspaper clippings from different languages (i.e. French and German). This reinforces the message behind scrapbooking and Shakespeare as both were universally loved. His plays were adored so much so that language did not seem as a barrier when it came to accessing Shakespeare's plays. The Shakespeare Memorial Library has over 94 languages of Shakespeare's plays showing just how vast the collection actually is.



Gordon Crosse, though he did not scrapbook, he did keep journal entries of every Shakespeare play he went to and so he seems just as important to talk about. Crosse was born in 1874, his father would read the playwright's plays to him when he was a child and this was how his love for Shakespeare began. It further developed due to his English master Dick Chalker and his school's Shakespeare society. He loved Shakespeare's work so much that according to his obituary his only hobby was theatregoing. Because of this hobby, Crosse was able to attend over 500 of these performances and 207 of these were recorded in his journals; he even went to productions that were not advertised as much, showing his in-depth knowledge and research about Shakespeare plays. Crosse's notebooks are very significant pieces in the Shakespeare collection; he included alternations and changes made in plays, however small, in his journals, which gives us a broader understanding of how plays and performances ran back in the day. In some of the images of his journals there are comments made by Crosse about how the actor shook his head when it was not needed and also how long plays were and where parts were cut from. Crosse's theatregoing's coincided with one of the two major revolutions in the staging of Shakespeare¹ showing just how important his journal keeping was.

¹ Gordon Crosse's theatre diaries from *Forgotten Treasures: The World's First Great Shakespeare Library* (2022)



Going back to scrapbooking, there seems to be various amounts of playbills included; due to these playbills being kept and preserved, there is a better understanding of how theatres used to operate. In some of the images, of the playbills, below you can see the strange intervals that would be included in the performances. 'Dogs & Monkeys' would make an appearance and 'go through their surprising performances' and there would be a gymnastics performance too. In image two, you can see that the actor (Ira Aldridge) playing Othello is not mentioned even though he was a well-known and accomplished actor of the time, which is unfortunate and this piece of information would have been missed if not kept in scrapbooks. Aldridge was a playwright, theatre manager and one of the 'first black American tragedians' so seeing that he was not mentioned in the playbill for a showing of Othello seems very biased and unnecessary.

THEATRE ROYAL, BIRMINGHAM.
 UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR. BIRNBOURNE.

FOR THE BENEFIT
YOUNG HENGLER
 THE MIRACULOUS ROPE EQUILIBRIST,
 AND THE LAST NIGHT BUT ONE OF HIS APPEARANCE.

Who will be brought forward the GREATEST VERSATILITY OF TALENT AND GENIUS ever created in one Person.
 THE PERFORMANCES WILL COMMENCE WITH SHAKESPEARE'S SUBLIME TRAGEDY OF

HAMLET.
 Hamlet, (Prince of Denmark,) YOUNG HENGLER.

WHICH HE WILL APPEAR IN HIS EXTRAORDINARY AND UNPARALLELED TIGHT ROPE PERFORMANCE.

LAST APPEARANCE BUT ONE OF
MONS. DESARAIS
 WITH HIS WONDERFUL TROUPE OF HISTORIC

DOGS & MONKEYS

WHY HAVE BEEN LATELY DIVORCED WITH THE FAVORABLE OF HIS REGIMENT THE LATE LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND.

ON FRIDAY, MAY THE 2nd, 1851.
 WILL BE PERFORMED SHAKESPEARE'S SUBLIME TRAGEDY OF

HAMLET
 BY YOUNG HENGLER.

GRAND PAS DE FASCINATION—from the Ballet of "AZORA," by Maffio, and Mons. GILBERT.

MONS. DESARAIS AND HIS EXTRAORDINARY TROUPE OF HISTORIC
DOGS AND MONKEYS!

WILL APPEAR AND GO THROUGH THEIR SURPRISING PERFORMANCE.

YOUNG HENGLER, THE PRINCE OF ROPE ARTISTES, will introduce his amazing Gymnastic Feats on THE ELASTIC CORD.

STATE SECRETS!

FOR ONE NIGHT MORE.

The Performances of the **AFRICAN ROSCIUS** having been nightly hailed with Enthusiastic Applause, and his delineation of the characters he has appeared in having been the subject of universal admiration. By the request of several parties who have been prevented from attending the previous Performances he is induced to give **ONE MORE PERFORMANCE**, on which occasion Mrs. STEPHENS will appear and sing a variety of FAVORITE SONGS.

V. R.

FASHIONABLE
DRAMATIC ENTERTAINMENT,
IN COOKE'S ROYAL CIRCUS, DOCK GREEN, HULL.

By Permission and under the immediate PATRONAGE of the Nobility and Gentry of ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, and IRELAND.

On this Evening, FRIDAY, July 2nd, 1841.

The nature of the Entertainments of the **AFRICAN ROSCIUS** being entirely different from Stage Representation is pure and divested of every thing that may be thought objectionable, has been patronized by the Clergy in every part of the Kingdom.

Grand Classical and Dramatic Entertainments, by the Celebrated

AFRICAN ROSCIUS
 OF THE THEATRES ROYAL, DRURY-LANE, AND COVENT-GARDEN.

Written with the view of displaying his extraordinary powers as an Actor, and endowing the Characters so enthusiastically patronized in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, &c.

PROGRAMME OF THE ENTERTAINMENT.
A BRIEF INTRODUCTORY LECTURE ON THE DRAMA.
 ILLUSTRATION FIRST.

OTHELLO!
 OR, THE MOOR OF VENICE.

By Mr. EDMONSTON. It is the green-eyed monster.

By Mr. STEPHENS. "Oh, Give me but my Arab Steed."

ILLUSTRATION SECOND—OTHELLO'S DYING SCENE.

Violin Solo, - "Overture to Lodoiska," - Mr. STEPHENS.
 Song, - "Oh, Give me but my Arab Steed," - Mrs. STEPHENS.

It is never too late to pick up scrapbooking or journaling, remember the wise words of theatre critic, Kenneth Tynan: 'reviews are letters addressed to the future.'² The significance of something as small as scrapbooking could have such a huge effect on history. Not only does the message of scrapbooking show how universally loved Shakespeare was and still is, it also shows the importance of preserving such safekeeps as is signifies how personal Shakespeare's plays were to people and how their love for his plays added a lot more meaning to the playwright's work as well as broadcasting his work.

² Theatre press cuttings from Forgotten Treasures: The World's First Great Shakespeare Library (2022)