



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Stead Collection**

1672-1932

\*T-Mss 1933-001

## Summary

**Creator:** Stead, Hiram

**Title:** Stead Collection

**Date:** 1672-1932

**Size:** 600 portfolios>

**Source:** Purchase, Stead, Hiram, 1932

**Abstract:** The Stead Collection gives a comprehensive depiction of the English theater. \$bThe collection consists primarily of playbills, programs, clippings and prints, but also contains manuscript material consisting of letters, photographs, legal and financial documents, and ephemera.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:  
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

**Conditions Governing Use:** Photocopying prohibited

**Preferred citation:** Stead Collection, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

## Creator History

Collector and theater-goer, Stead travelled through Great Britain collecting playbills, programs and other ephemera to document British theater history.

## Scope and Content Note

The Stead Collection gives a comprehensive depiction of the English theater. \$bThe collection consists primarily of playbills, programs, clippings and prints, but also contains manuscript material consisting of

letters, photographs, legal and financial documents, and ephemera. Broad­sides and programs, usually single sheets, comprise the bulk of the collection. There are often complete or nearly complete runs in the 18th and 19th centuries for some London theaters including the Theatres Royal at Haymarket, Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Other London theaters include the Adelphi and Royal Victoria, and some that were subsequently demolished or converted to other uses such as the Lyceum, Olympic, St. James, and Surrey. Also contains some programs for theaters outside London: in Bath, Leeds, Liverpool, and other cities. Subject files created by Stead consist of material in various formats relating to particular actors, plays, theaters, or playwrights. For example, there are letters of actors such as Edmund Kean and William Macready; many files under title for individual plays by Shakespeare and other playwrights; small amounts of material on pantomime and the circus; and general files on British theatrical history. Legal documents include leases and other material relating to theatrical litigation. Financial records include account books, ledgers and box office statements. The collection also contains music; drawings; time-books, which are records kept by stage managers of artists' attendances at rehearsals and performances; and ephemera such as tickets. Though the focus of the collection is on British theater, there is a small amount of material documenting the American, French and German stage.

## Key Terms

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Broad­sides  
Clippings  
Letters  
Prints  
Programs

### Subjects

Circus -- England  
Pantomime -- England  
Theater -- England -- History -- 17th century  
Theater -- England -- History -- 18th century  
Theater -- England -- History -- 19th century  
Theater -- England -- History -- 20th century  
Theaters -- England  
Theaters -- England -- London  
Theaters -- Great Britain

### Names

Stead, Hiram  
Kean, Edmund, 1787-1833  
Macready, William Charles, 1793-1873  
Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616  
Adelphi Theatre (London, England)  
Covent Garden Theatre  
Haymarket Theatre (London, England)  
Lyceum Theatre (London, England)  
Old Vic Theatre (London, England)  
Olympic Theatre (London, England)  
St. James Theatre (London, England)  
Surrey Theatre  
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (London, England)