

# Reading Rayner Collection

Jack Reading's Programmes

Accession code: UKC/PRG/READ

**Theatre, revue, ballet, opera, concert, "son et lumière" programmes, fliers and other advertising material.**

Jack Reading's programme collecting began in the late 1920s. As a teenager he was visiting Tussaud's Cinema, and the Golder's Green Hippodrome on a regular basis. He also went to The Palace Theatre and The Queen's Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue, The Savoy Theatre and The Lyceum in the Strand, and The Alhambra in Leicester Square. On the whole he seems to have favoured musical plays and comedies, like "Bitter Sweet" and "Cavalcade" by Noel Coward, "White Horse Inn" by Erik Charell, and "The Chocolate Soldier"; but he also saw "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Hamlet", and plays by Somerset Maugham and John Galsworthy.

The war saw a decrease in the production of plays and theatre going but Jack still managed to go to the Duchess Theatre, Aldwych, and the Globe Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue amongst others. He still visited cinemas like the Studio Cinema, Oxford Circus, and he went to some of the war-time concerts at the National Gallery. However during his career in the armed forces he was obviously stationed in the North West. In 1944 he visited the Royalty Theatre, Chester, The Playhouse, and The Royal Court in Liverpool, and the Opera House in Manchester.

These war time programmes, and to a certain extent those of the immediate post-war years are much thinner than those of the pre-war era. Many contain instructions about what to do if an air-raid started during the performance. There is still a proportion of advertising material, but not so much as in the pre-war years. The paper they are printed on is of poor quality, and brittle. In the late fifties and sixties the programmes begin to get much more lavish, and contain more and more photographs of the stars. They become more like souvenirs of the evening out, rather than merely ephemera to help you enjoy the play at the time. The paper and consequently the programmes themselves become more glossy and expensive. They are more often than not in colour. Strangely there are fewer advertisements in them than in the pre-war years.

There are more and more fliers included in Jack's collection as the years go on, and fewer actual programmes. He visited Stratford almost every year in the fifties going to 5 or 6 plays in a season. In London too his taste veered towards serious drama, and also experimental drama at Theatre Clubs. The collection ends in 1988- the point at which Jack himself decided programmes had become too expensive, and refused to buy them on principle.