



The Stephen Joseph Archives: A Theatre Researcher's Guide



Stephen Joseph c.1960
(Photo Courtesy Scarborough Theatre Trust)

Introduction

The ABTT Stephen Joseph Committee has drawn up this inventory of the archive holdings for this visionary post-war theatre producer who introduced theatre in the round to the United Kingdom and established this as an exciting and very immediate theatre form. Our objective is to encourage more active research and publications on the work of a man who died over sixty years ago aged only 48, but through whose writings, correspondence and theatre companies made a profound contribution to the course of British theatre in the 1950s and 1960s, and who continues to influence the practice of much innovative theatre today.

Our assumption is that, before embarking on any serious research on Stephen Joseph, readers will make use of the two books published on his career - both of which are available in print and eBook form.

Lane, Terry (2006) *The Full Round, The Several Lives and Theatrical Legacy of Stephen Joseph*, Duca Della Corgna, Italy /reprint 2021, Amazon, Kindle Edition

Elsam, Paul (2014) *Theatre Pioneer and Provocateur*, Bloomsbury, London

Both books make considerable use of archive correspondence and interviews with people involved with Joseph's career. While Elsam's book is perhaps the most critically focused, Lane's biography is more wide-ranging and benefits from his own close knowledge and

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experience of work with the producer over four seasons. As a result, a sharper picture of Joseph's engaging personality emerges.

The archive holdings are quite widely distributed across England. There are dedicated collections for Stephen Joseph at Manchester and Scarborough. But there are other holdings interspersed through the collections of the several leading theatre figures who have come to regard Joseph as an important mentor in their early careers, such as Sir Alan Ayckbourn, Peter Cheeseman, David Campton and Terry Lane.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this inventory at the time of publication. It is inevitable that changes will need to be made in the course of time when new materials become available and access arrangements for public viewing are changed, as for instance when the Victoria and Albert Museum opens its new archive building. It will help us keep this document up to date if you could alert **us** to any additions or revisions that should be made. Please address these to the Stephen Joseph Committee at: admin@abtt.org.com.

Please note that the information presented in the *Scope and Content* of each collection is reproduced information direct from the websites of the various archive centres so that our readers may get an idea of how respective curators are choosing to present the materials they have available for viewing.

1) The John Rylands University Library Manchester

The Stephen Joseph Papers (Special Collection)

<https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/57800119-8605-37c4-9ee4-29522ca50c20>

“Scope and Content

The collection consists mainly of correspondence, much of which has retained its original arrangement. From 1955 to 1961, the letters are arranged alphabetically within years. Following the establishment of a permanent company at the Victoria Theatre in Stoke, the letters are divided into those for Scarborough and Stoke, and are no longer sorted alphabetically, instead being in chronological order. There is a large amount of especially detailed correspondence concerning the disagreement between Stephen Joseph and Peter Cheeseman over the Victoria Theatre. There is also much private correspondence from Stephen Joseph's friends and family, as well as more professional letters relating to his work at Manchester University, his position in the ABTT, his visits to, and contact with, America, and his writing career. In addition, there are many original manuscripts of books, articles and open letters, as well as plans and photographs which illustrate his work.”

The collection is divided into SJ/1 Correspondence and papers, SJ2 Writings, SJ3Books, SJ4/Photographs, SJ/5 Plans, SJ6 Theatre Designs, SJ/7 Miscellaneous

This is the most substantial archive holding of SJ materials, but it contains almost no photographic records of the man, or his productions. It is fully catalogued and curated.

Details of box contents can be searched online via Elgar. All materials are viewable to readers via prior appointment. More detailed information about specific holdings is available via the web site. This is most useful to access in advance of a visit to order materials.

For details about advance booking and accessing special collection materials see website and email: uml.special-collections@manchester.ac.uk

2) Holdings at Scarborough

<http://stephenjoseph.alanayckbourn.net>

The Alan Ayckbourn website curated by Simon Murgatroyd includes a fascinating overview of Stephen Joseph's career and his influence on Sir Alan. It includes a biographical timeline and a most useful list of all Stephen Joseph's directing and acting activities for the Studio Theatre Group/Theatre in the Round between 1955 -1966 We acknowledge our significant debt to the site and its curator, Simon Murgatroyd in compiling this document.

2A. At Scarborough Library

The Stephen Joseph Theatre Collection

[Scarborough library | North Yorkshire County Council](#) (General site link)

“Scope and Content

Scarborough Library holds “The Stephen Joseph Theatre Collection, a small but important research archive pertaining predominantly to the early years of the Library Theatre. It is particularly significant given the correspondence it holds between Stephen Joseph and Scarborough Library relating to the foundation and running of the venue during its first decade.”

The collection includes but is not limited to:

- Original correspondence between Stephen Joseph and the directors of Scarborough Library;
- Original theatre programmes from the first performance at the Library Theatre through to performances at the theatre's second home, the Stephen Joseph Theatre in The Round;
- Collected newspaper articles published in the Scarborough Evening News from the first performance at the venue in 1955 to June 2011;
- Collection of the annual In-The-Round Festival programmes, which began at the Library Theatre in 1960 and were initially adjudicated by Stephen Joseph;
- Photographs of the Library Theatre.

Uncatalogued, but the collection is accessible during the times the library is open. There is no need to book an appointment to view these materials, however advanced notification would ensure ready access.”

NB Stephen Joseph's correspondence developing the Theatre in the Round at Scarborough is also available at the John Rylands University Library, Manchester

2B. The Bob Watson Archive, at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough

“Scope and Content

The collection consists of material pertaining to the history of the Stephen Joseph Theatre from its founding as The Library Theatre in 1955 through to the present day. The focus of the archive is predominantly productions staged by the company and press cuttings relating to the history of the company.

A small collection of material is held specifically relating to Stephen Joseph which includes a number of his articles, his four major publications, photographs and a selection of theatre designs.

Folders pertaining to all the plays Stephen Joseph directed or acted in as well as every production staged during his tenure as Artistic Director (Director of productions) are also held. The content of these folders varies individually and can range from just a photocopy of the original programme to original programmes, photographs, press cuttings and reviews.”

Arrangement

Material directly related to Stephen Joseph is held in one document box split into seven folders by topic.

Access Information: The Bob Watson Archive is named after the first archivist of the SJT and is not accessible to the public. Enquiries regarding the collection should be made to the Stephen Joseph Theatre via: enquiries@sjt.uk.com

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3) The Victoria Theatre Collection: (Stoke Vic etc)

At The University of Staffordshire Library, Stoke-on-Trent

<https://libguides.staffs.ac.uk/special-collections/vta>

“Scope and Content

The Victoria Theatre Collection is an important and extensive resource for researchers, theatre and social historians and postgraduate students. The theatre production, documentary research and community work carried out by Peter Cheeseman's internationally famous Victoria Theatre Company between 1962 and 1998 has been meticulously recorded, archived and preserved over four decades.

The documents, photographs and tape-recordings contained within the collection offer unique research opportunities, unparalleled by other theatre archive collections.

The collection contains extensive theatre production records, scripts, photographs, film and sound recordings of performances, documentaries and forty-years-worth of press cuttings, correspondence and contracts with actors, musicians, directors, designers, agents, many other arts practitioners and organisations - including local people and institutions.

The collection also contains drawings, photographs and other records relating to the creation of two theatres-in-the-round - the old and the New Vic theatres.”

Peter Cheeseman’s papers are currently being indexed, and include correspondence with Stephen Joseph 1961-1967. In many respects these duplicate the correspondence available at the John Rylands, Manchester. Victoria theatre production photographs and other enquiries to Romy Cheeseman, hon.archivist of the VTA collection.

R.Cheeseman@staffs.ac.uk

4) The Victoria and Albert Museum, Theatre and Performance

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/archives/unit/ARC123452>

Scope and Content

“Material relating to the career of Terry Lane, founder of the Traverse Theatre and to the work of Theatre-in-the-Round Pioneer Stephen Joseph. Collection includes scrapbooks, programmes, sketches, photographs, press cuttings and correspondence.”

10 boxes

SJ holdings are currently interspersed in the “Terry Lane archive”. They include the photographs and research materials used to compile *The Full Round*, such as the substantial wartime correspondence between Stephen and his half-sister, Shirley. There are programmes, press reviews and other information from Terry’s seasons with Theatre in the Round at Scarborough, on Tour, including at The Municipal Hall Newcastle and The Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent. Materials await detailed cataloguing.

NB Materials on this site are not currently available to the public, awaiting the opening of the new V&A East Storehouse in Stratford’s Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2024. They may be available via special request in advance.

5) The Association of British Theatre Technicians, the Stephen Joseph Committee

Stephen Joseph was also one of the founders of the ABTT in 1961, and he helped establish its important role in providing free consultancies for the design and planning of new theatres. In recognition of his contribution to the association, a special committee has been formed to help perpetuate his legacy. The Stephen Joseph Committee (SJC) provides, via its website, online access to a number of mostly contemporary writings, videos and webinars that offer a range of perspectives on his contribution to theatre.

[Stephen Joseph Committee - Association of British Theatre Technicians \(abtt.org.uk\)](http://abtt.org.uk).

These include, for instance, Rodney Wood’s hitherto unpublished dissertation on Stephen Joseph, the first study of Stephen Joseph’s contribution to British Theatre. Rodney was Stephen’s theatre manager for several seasons.

“Stephen Joseph: His Work and Ideas” unpub dissertation University of Cardiff, 1979

[RODNEY-WOODS-THESIS.pdf \(abtt.org.uk\)](#)

As part of the Centenary celebrations the SJC organized and contributed to a series of ABTT seminars (webinars) featuring practitioners, some of whom had worked with Stephen Joseph, discussing key aspects of his creative legacy to contemporary theatre. These are available online at the ABTT site and also on YouTube.

6) Other Relevant Materials

Productions involving Stephen Joseph and other relevant materials may also be found interspersed in the archives for the two playwrights that he most influenced: Sir Alan Ayckbourn and David Campton

6A Alan Ayckbourn Archive at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York

<https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/index.php/ayck>

Scope and Content

“Personal papers and other items, including photographs, programmes and newspaper cuttings relating to Alan Ayckbourn’s acting career, 1956-1964, correspondence, 1970-2008,

Material relating to Ayckbourn’s involvement with the Library Theatre Company and the Stephen Joseph Theatre, including season brochures, 1955-2011, minutes, plans, financial papers, correspondence and publicity concerning the creation of the Westwood Auditorium, 1976-1996, and the Stephen Joseph Theatre, 1990-2011, correspondence, reports, meeting minutes and contacts concerning the establishment of the Stephen Joseph Theatre Education Department, 1991-2004, material concerning the Stephen Joseph Theatre 50th anniversary celebrations, ‘Fifty Years New,’ 2005.”

NB Artefacts, such as production photographs and programmes, that belonged to Rodney Wood have recently been forwarded to the Borthwick Institute with a view to their accession and cataloguing. Rodney Wood was the production manager of Studio Theatre Company for a number of Scarborough Seasons and Regional tours 1956-60. As such, he was responsible for first inviting Alan Ayckbourn to join the summer company in 1957.

For more information contact:

borthwick-institute@york.ac.uk

6B David Campton Collection at University of Leicester Library Special Collections

<https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/b04bb0d7-c140-3667-a226-7beecabaf532>

David Campton was a long-standing company member of Theatre Studio Group and subsequently a close friend and adviser to Stephen Joseph. In the 1970s he was responsible for disposing of the producer’s literary estate when his house was sold. It was he who took the decision to divide this two ways to John Rylands, Manchester and the Scarborough Theatre Trust.

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“Scope and Content

The collection contains the literary papers of David Campton, author and playwright. The literary papers comprise correspondence with publishers, agents, friends and peers; manuscript and typescript drafts of Campton's stage and radio plays; manuscript and typescript television scripts; manuscript and typescript drafts of his short stories, both published and unpublished; and files of news cuttings and reviews.”

Of greatest interest to Stephen Joseph researchers are production scripts and other documents for the plays “Dragons are Dangerous”, “Ring of Roses”, “Dead and Alive” and “Cock and Bull Story”, all of which were produced by Stephen Joseph, and the correspondence between Joseph and Campton 1964-1966.

Researchers are required to book an appointment before their visit, through specialcollections@le.ac.uk or 0116 252 2056.

7) Media Materials

Almost no moving-images of Stephen Joseph, or his productions have yet come to light.

- a) Some US TV footage features Stephen on his mother's (Hermione Gingold) *This is Your Life, USA*, 1962.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLUGdd8WnOA&t=36s>

- b) There is an interesting 26 min BBC Radio-4 documentary on Stephen Joseph and the development of theatre in the round presented by Robert Powell featuring Sir Alan Ayckbourn, Sir Tom Courtenay, Peter Cheeseman and others. That was produced in 2005, fifty years after the first experimental season of TIR at Scarborough. One of its producers, Faynia Williams (née Jeffrey), worked for several seasons as an actor with Stephen's company. This is now available for purchase online as part of the Spokenworld Audio collection.

Surrounded (pres. Robert Powell, prod. Richard Bannerman, Faynia Williams) BBC. Radio 4, UK 2005

Surrounded | Robert Powell | Spokenworld Audio (ladbrokeradio.com)

- c) There is a 10 min YouTube video slide-show produced for Stephen Joseph's Centenary by the ABTT. Utilising many of the photographic images made available by the Terry Lane collection and other holders, this provides a retrospective overview of the man and his work.

Stephen Joseph, A Pictorial Round-Up (pres. Maggie Mash, prod. Bob Millington), ABTT/YouTube 2021.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsHSXutMY6s&t=6s>

(Bob Millington, for SJC/ABTT, 12/04/2023)